

UDC 94(477):329.361]:323.1(=161.2)“1960/1970”
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.25.269552

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Bibliographic Description of the Article: Kindrachuk, N. & Vasylchuk, V. (2022). The Ukrainians' Resistance to the Anti-Religious Policy of the Soviet Totalitarian State on the Way of Preserving Their National and Spiritual Values: the 1960s – the 1970s. *Skhidnoievropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 25, 189–199. doi: 10.24919/2519-058X.25.269552

THE UKRAINIANS' RESISTANCE TO THE ANTI-RELIGIOUS POLICY OF THE SOVIET TOTALITARIAN STATE ON THE WAY OF PRESERVING THEIR NATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES: the 1960s – the 1970s

Abstract. Seeing the spread of a religious worldview as a serious threat to the monopoly of the CPSU – KPU, the Soviet government during the 1960s – the 1970s of the 20th century strongly exercised control over the spiritual life of the Ukrainians and instilled atheism in them forcibly. The Ukrainian worshippers became the object of increased attention of the state security authorities. However, the party leadership did not succeed in displacing the religious worldview from the Ukrainian ethnic environment completely. Persecution of worshippers gave rise to religious dissidence. **The purpose of the article** is to do research on the active resistance of the Ukrainians to the anti-religious policy of the communist authorities of the Ukrainian SSR during the 1960s and the 1970s on the way to preserve their

own national and spiritual values. **The Research Methodology.** During the research, such scientific methods as analytical and logical, historical and systemic, explanation, search, synthesis, comparison, complex selection have been applied. In the article there has been also used the method of analysis to find out the level of growth of the Ukrainians' national consciousness. The principles of systematicity and multifactoriality, etc., have been used to determine the role of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the defense, preservation and promotion of the Ukrainian national identity in the 1960s and the 1970s. **The Scientific Novelty.** In the the article there has been elucidated the role of spiritual opposition in preserving the ethnic identity of the Ukrainians in the 1960s and the 1970s; the manifestation of national self-awareness of the Ukrainians during the Soviet anti-religious campaign of the 60s – 70s of the 20th century has been demonstrated; the desire of the Ukrainians to preserve their own national and spiritual separateness has been highlighted. **The Conclusion.** Despite the anti-religious policy of the Soviet totalitarian state, total oppression by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Ukrainians did not retreat from the church, but resisted the communists' atheistic policy actively. Christian values continued to be the basis of the spiritual life of the absolute majority of the Ukrainian ethnic group.

Key words: church, religion, the Ukrainians, national identity, totalitarianism, communist ideology, atheism.

ОПР АНТИРЕЛІГІЙНІЙ ПОЛІТИЦІ РАДЯНСЬКОЇ ТОТАЛІТАРНОЇ ДЕРЖАВИ НА ШЛЯХУ ЗБЕРЕЖЕННЯ УКРАЇНЦЯМИ СВОЇХ НАЦІОНАЛЬНО-ДУХОВНИХ ЦІННОСТЕЙ: 1960 – 1970-ті рр.

Анотація. Вбачаючи у розповсюдженні релігійного світогляду серйозну загрозу монопольному пануванню КПРС–КПУ, радянська влада впродовж 1960-х – 1970-х рр. ХХ ст. посилено вела контроль за духовним життям українців та примусово насаджувала їм атеїзм. Віруючі українці стали об'єктом посиленої уваги органів державної безпеки. Однак повністю витіснити релігійний світогляд з українського етнічного середовища партійній верхівці не вдалося. Переслідування віруючих викликали до життя релігійне дисидентство. **Мета статті** полягає у тому, щоб дослідити активний опір українців антирелігійній політиці комуністичної влади УРСР протягом 60-х – 70-х рр. ХХ ст. на шляху збереження власних національно-духовних цінностей. **Методологія дослідження.** Під час здійснення дослідження було застосовано конкретні наукові методи, зокрема, аналітико-логічний, історико-системний, пояснення, пошуку, синтезу, зіставлення, комплексного добору. У роботі також використано метод аналізу – для з'ясування рівня зростання національної свідомості українців. Для визначення ролі української інтелігенції 60-х – 70-х рр. ХХ ст. в обстоюванні, збереженні та пропагуванні української національної ідентичності використані принципи системності і багатофакторності тощо. **Наукова новизна.** У статті уперше в українській історіографії розкрито роль духовної опозиції у збереженні етнічної самобутності українців 60-х – 70-х рр. ХХ ст.; продемонстровано вияв їх національної самосвідомості під час радянської антирелігійної кампанії у цей період; висвітлено прагнення українців зберегти власну національно-духовну окремішність. **Висновки.** Незважаючи на антирелігійну політику радянської тоталітарної держави, тотальні утиски з боку КПРС–КПУ, українці не відступили від церкви, а чинили активний спротив атеїстичній політиці комуністів. Християнські цінності продовжували залишатися основою духовного життя абсолютної більшості представників українського етносу.

Ключові слова: церква, релігія, українці, національна ідентичність, тоталітаризм, комуністична ідеологія, атеїзм.

The Problem Statement. The Church for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – the Communist Party of Ukraine was a big competitor in the ideological plane and in the sphere of influence on the consciousness and formation of the worldview of the Ukrainians. In view of this, the Communist Party ruling elite directed its political activity against the church actively, tried to introduce a new atheistic ideology. In this context, it is necessary

to focus attention on the 60s and the 70s of the 20th century, which were characterized by the strengthening of repressions against the clergy and worshippers in the Ukrainian ethnic environment. However, the Soviet authorities only managed to temporarily weaken, but not eradicate religion from the consciousness of the most numerous native Ukrainian people in the Ukrainian SSR. The religiosity of the Ukrainians turned out to be stronger than the pressure exerted on it.

With the state independence of Ukraine, democratization of socio-political life, opening access to many archival sources, favourable conditions were created for free, unbiased, methodologically balanced study of the Soviet past of the Ukrainian nation and expanding the field of national memory and historical consciousness of citizens. Therefore, a comprehensive study of national and spiritual values of the Ukrainians under the conditions of anti-religious offensive of the Soviet totalitarian state during the 60s – the 70s of the 20th century is extremely relevant and requires a special approach to study.

The Analysis of Recent Research Papers. The issue of religion and the church during second half of the XXth century in the USSR was highlighted in the works of such authors as: M. Palinchak and V. Bokoch (2021), P. Bondarchuk and V. Danylenko (Danylenko, 2012; 2021), Yu. Danylets and V. Myszchanyyn (Danylets & Myszchanyyn, 2022), I. Datskiv and L. Kapitan (Datskiv & Kapitan, 2022), Yu. Kaganov and V. Chura (Kaganov & Chura, 2022), V. Kononenko (Kononenko, 2004), O. Mikhalchuk (Mikhalchuk, 2010), B. Maksymets and V. Marchuk (Maksymets & Marchuk, 2022), S. Mochkin (Mochkin, 2015), T. Savchuk and H. Vasylchuk (Savchuk & Vasylchuk, 2020), V. Voinalovich (Voinalovich, 2005) and the others. However, in the scientific literature the topic under analysis remains understudied. This enables us to continue working in this promising area.

The Purpose of the Article. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to do research on the active resistance of the Ukrainians to the anti-religious policy of the communist authorities of the Ukrainian SSR during the 60s and the 70s of the XXth century on the way to preserve their own national and spiritual values.

The Results of the Research. The beginning of the 60s of the XXth century was characterized by a multifaceted religious palette in Ukraine, which included about 40 religious denominations (Central State Archive of Public Associations of Ukraine – CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 2741, p. 394). At the same time, the dominant position in Soviet Ukraine was occupied by the Russian Orthodox Church, which operated legally and enjoyed a kind of support from the then authorities. The Soviet leadership tried to strengthen the position of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially in the Western region of the Ukrainian SSR, where Greek Catholics predominated, who were forced to convert to Orthodoxy.

Archive documents show that the Soviet authorities fought against various illegal Protestant communities actively, in particular with the Baptists, the Pentecostals, and the Jehovahs, whose number as of January 1, 1961 was 1,619 communities in the Ukrainian SSR (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 5297, p. 47). According to the party leadership, it was the Baptists, the Pentecostals, and the Jehovahs, who consistently conducted anti-Soviet agitation, spread rumors about the imminent end of the Soviet power (Kononenko, 2004, p. 65). Because of this, they were publicly ridiculed, accused of espionage, called mentally ill, attributed to religious sacrifices, criminal cases were initiated against them (Bondarchuk & Danylenko, 2012, p. 166).

In accordance with the historical circumstances of the time, the communist authorities implemented new Soviet legislation on cults, which legally strengthened the total attack on religion and thereby violated the constitutional rights of the Ukrainian worshippers

(Kindrachuk, 2016, p. 26). According to archival documents, significant changes in the Soviet legislation took place in 1961, when in April of that year a special All-Union meeting of church officials under the governments of the republics of the USSR and the executive committees of the councils of workers' deputies in the regions was held (Central State Archive of the highest authorities and administration of Ukraine – CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 255, p. 75). The purpose of this meeting was to clarify the resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers dated March 16, 1961 “On Strengthening Control over the Implementation of Legislation on Cults”, according to which special commissions were formed under district executive committees, village councils, the activities of which were mostly limited to denunciations, surveillance and interference in the internal life of the church, etc.

Another intensified attempt to introduce atheistic ideology and eliminate the ways of religiosity among the Ukrainians took place after the adoption of the Party Programme by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October of 1961. This document provided for the intensification of atheistic work as a component of the education of the “new Soviet man”. The Programme indicated that: “it is necessary to carry out a systematic scientific and atheistic propaganda, to patiently explain to the citizens of the USSR the impossibility of religious beliefs...” (Prohramma Kommunistycheskoi party Sovetskoho Soiuzu, 1962, p. 95). These tasks were also reflected in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine dated October 9, 1962 “On the State and Measures to Improve the Scientific and Atheistic Education of Workers in the Ukrainian SSR”, which was written on the traditional basis of the ideology of the Communist Party and denied the religious worldview and everything that was connected with it (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 31, c. 2166, p. 5). Thus, the political course of the communists was aimed at limiting the activities of the church.

Everything that bore the imprint of the spiritual existence of the Ukrainian nation was declared a “relic of the past”, “the Church thing”. The atheistic campaign of the Soviet authorities led to the reduction of religious institutions in Ukraine, the liquidation of monasteries, the deregistration of religious associations, the reduction of the number of priests, the destruction of a large number of chapels, roadside crosses, and the reduction of the list of architectural monuments of a religious nature by more than a half (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 2, d. 9, c. 6434, p. 37; CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 4494, p. 168). Centuries-old cultural and ideological values of the Ukrainian clergy collided with the Soviet atheistic experiments (Savchuk & Vasylichuk, 2020, p. 164).

Thus, for example, according to archival sources, 1,308 chapels and roadside crosses were demolished in the territory of Lviv region in 1962 (State Archives of Lviv Region – SALR, f. R-368, d. 1, c. 915, p. 33), in Ivano-Frankivsk region as of 1965, more than 10,000 chapels and crosses were removed and dismantled (State Archives of Ivano-Frankivsk region – SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 2991, p. 55).

All regions of Ukraine suffered from the Soviet atheist policy. Thus, during the years of 1960 – 1964, 26 church premises were confiscated from religious communities of Kherson region (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 433, p. 68). During the same period, 191 religious communities and 191 churches and 31 places of worship were deregistered in Chernihiv region (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 433, p. 84). During the period from 1961 till 1965, 225 premises were confiscated from Orthodox worshippers in the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 433, p. 38).

During the first half of the 60s of the XXth century in the Ukrainian SSR, 81,1% of churches and prayer houses were deregistered, during the same period the activities of

3,933 religious communities were terminated, 855 of which were located in rural areas of the republic (Shlikhta, 2000, p. 260). According to the researcher P. Panchenko, during this period the largest number of churches and prayer houses were deregistered in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi, etc. (Panchenko, 1993, p. 8).

The mass closing of churches was of an all-Ukrainian character and dealt a great blow to the spiritual life of the Ukrainians at that time. The reasons for the closure were groundless accusations figured out by the party workers about “unsuccessful” location of the church, the noise of church bells, impossibility of using church premises for worship due to their mythical accident incidence rate. Another false reason for the closing of churches was claiming of the quantitative decrease of the believing population, which, in fact, distorted the level of religiosity of the Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR in general. All this confirmed the existence of a specific and well-thought-out plan by the Soviet authorities to liquidate the Ukrainian Church as a spiritual and social institution of the titular nation of the Ukrainian SSR.

Closed down temples were turned into clubs, cinemas, sports halls, museums of atheism, and were also used as warehouses for storing grain and other agricultural products, fuel and lubricants, as a result of which they suffered enormous destruction. In this context, it is expedient to cite data from SALR documents. Thus, according to the decision of the executive committee of the Lviv Regional Council of Workers' Deputies and the official conclusion of the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR in Lviv Region in 1962, the church premises of the villages of Volia (Drohobysky district), Maksymovychi, Lopushna (Sambirsky district), Tetylkivtsi (Brodiv district), Kotoryn (Zhydachiv district), Volia-Zhovtanetska (Kamianko-Buzky district) were converted into grain storage; the villages of Mezhyrichia (Zabuzsky district), Mistkovychi (Sambirsky district), Lypovets, Horodyshe (Drohobysky district) – for a school sports hall and a village club; villages of Borduliak and Hai-Ditkovetsky (Brodiv district) – for the medical centre and pantry of the local collective farm (SALR, f. R-368, d. 1, c. 915, pp. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 31, 36, 241).

The disappointing picture of the destruction of spiritual shrines of the Ukrainians was also observed in Chernivtsi region. Thus, SACHR documents indicate that in 1962 Ye. Protsenko, the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs in Chernivtsi region, submitted to the higher party bodies a list of closed church premises, which were proposed to be used for various state needs. In particular, in the village of Putyla, the Uniate church (1898) was recommended to be dismantled into building materials for the construction of a local school, in Vyzhnytsia the local church (1923) was given over to the sports hall of a boarding school, and in Sadhora the church (1890) was used as premises for the consumer cooperative, in Stara Zhuchka (Sadhora) the Dmytrivska Church (1895) – for a cinema hall, in Storozhynets the church (1897) was given for a lumberyard, in Chernivtsi the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1821) used as the premises of the city industrial trade center, etc. (State Archives of Chernivtsi region – SACHR, f. 1, d. 22, c. 184, pp. 44, 45, 50, 57, 59, 61).

One of the examples that testifies to the infamous events of that time was the closing of the church in the village of Okhlopiv of Horokhiv district in Vinnytsia region, as stated in the letter of the Ukrainian artist I. Honchar, addressed to the representatives of the local authorities: “After learning about my arrival, the residents immediately rushed to the church and with tears in their eyes complained that the church had been illegally closed and asked me to help figure it out in the case” (Mykhalchuk, 2010, p. 152). According to the author of the letter, the closing of the church caused dissatisfaction among the local population.

For the Ukrainians, the Soviet fight against the church meant the fight against the culture of their people, because the church was always the guardian of monuments of national art and contributed to the preservation of centuries-old cultural values. The anti-religious policy of the party-Soviet bodies, which was based on the illegal closure of religious communities, the destruction of religious buildings, and the persecution of the clergy, caused active opposition from the indigenous Ukrainian people, the most numerous in the Ukrainian SSR (Kindrachuk, 2015, p. 275). Representatives of the titular nation of Ukraine, opposed to the communist ideology and administrative system, organized large gatherings that turned into unauthorized rallies, round-the-clock vigils near monasteries and temples that had not yet been taken away (Kindrachuk, 2015, p. 275). The Ukrainians wrote petitions and sent numerous complaints and petitions addressed to the central party and state institutions, in which they noted violations of their rights to freedom of religion.

One of these complaints was written by the villagers of Skarzhyntsi of Khmilnytskyi district of Vinnytsia region in 1965. Officially addressing the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU L. Brezhnev, the Ukrainians expressed a request to return to the local community the premises of the chapel of faithful Catholics, which was illegally taken from them by the decision of the Vinnytsia Regional Executive Committee (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 2, c. 449, p. 1)

Another convincing example demonstrating the desire of the Ukrainians to defend their religious rights was the numerous appeals of worshippers from the villages of Danube and Roztoka in Kremenets district of Ternopil region, who, according to archival sources, for 5 years (from 1961 to 1966) continuously wrote statements to the higher party officials instances, sent delegations to the cities of Ternopil, Kyiv, and Moscow with a request to open their local church and provide them with a priest (State Archives of Ternopil region – SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 3844, p. 104).

According to archival documents, during the year of 1969, many such appeals, addressed to the Soviet ideologues, came from residents of the village of Pashkivtsi Khotynskoho and from the village of Nove settlements of Kitsman district of Chernivtsi region (SACHR, f. 1, d. 22, c. 260, p. 67). At the same time, the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs in Chernivtsi region, O. Podolsky, repeatedly pointed at numerous oral and written statements of worshippers in the region regarding the resumption of the activities of previously closed churches (SACHR, f. 1, d. 22, c. 260, p. 67).

It should be emphasized that the 1970s as compared to the 1960s were marked by an even greater strengthening of a total control over the religious life of the Ukrainians. However, the resilience of the spirit of the titular nation of the Ukrainian SSR in opposition to the Soviet atheistic policy only grew stronger. This was evidenced by a report of the acting Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR for Lviv Region B. Inshina, addressed to the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR for the Ukrainian SSR Comrade P. Pylypenko in 1974, in which it was said that the unmanaged and neglected attitude towards the former church premises, which were not used, generated negative feelings among a certain part of the worshippers of Lviv region, who, trying to resolve the situation, wrote statements to various authorities, sent delegation with a request to allow them to repair the churches with their own resources and restore worship in them (SALR, f. R-1332, d. 3, c. 220, p. 1). Another convincing example of the Ukrainians protecting their centuries-old religion was the fact that during the year of 1979, the executive committee of Mykolayiv District Council of Workers'

Deputies of Lviv Region considered 360 letters, statements and complaints from worshippers of the region, in which requests were made to open religious premises for church services (SALR, f. R-1332, d. 3, c. 280, p. 95). Archival documents show that dozens, hundreds, and thousands of signatures of outraged worshippers were under the majority of such statements (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d.1, c. 443).

The conflict between the interests of the state and the Ukrainian worshippers sometimes turned into open conflicts with representatives of the Soviet government. Thus, in 1960, during the expropriation of a church building, 100–150 Ukrainian worshippers resisted the representatives of local authorities in the village of Siomaky of Khmelnytsky district of Vinnytsia region (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 5205, p. 400). In the village of Zavadiivka district of the same region, believers also stood up for their church, since the head of the village council S. Kuzmin took the keys to the church in 1965, threw away religious property from it, and offered the local priest to leave the village (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 448, p. 54).

According to archival documents, O. Chernov, the secretary of Ivano-Frankivsk regional committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, in a report dated 1965 and addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, reported on the facts of the self-rule of the religious community of the village of Piilo of Kalush district of Ivano-Frankivsk region and its disdainful attitude towards the KGB bodies (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 2991, p. 61). It concerns the fact that during the attempt to close the local church, the authorized KGB Comrade Kochuev, who was in the immediate vicinity of the church was injured. Local residents with the words “they are dismantling the church” threw a stone at an employee of the state security agencies (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 2991, p. 61).

Thus, the desire to defend one's religious rights was also observed among the inhabitants of the villages of Krasnosilka – Staro-Kostiantynivskiy, Liutark – Iziaslavsky, Peremyshl – Shepetivsky districts of Khmelnytskyi region (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d.1, c. 443, pp. 71–72).

All over the territory of the Ukrainian SSR, the facts of arbitrary opening of churches closed and taken away from the Ukrainians were recorded. Thus, in 1963 faithful residents of the village of Rososhans of Kelmen district of Chernivtsi region voluntarily opened the church that had been closed for more than a year (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 5663, p. 121). In the same region, during Easter of 1969, previously closed churches were also opened by the Ukrainians spontaneously. These facts took place in the villages of Yuzhynets, Davydivtsi, Kalnivtsi – Kitsmanskyy, villages Pashkivtsi and Ruhotyn – Khotynskyy districts (SACHR, f. 1, d. 22, c. 260, p. 67).

The situation with spontaneous opening of deregistered churches by the Ukrainians was also observed in Lviv region. These cases mainly concern the end of the 70s of the 20th century. As of July 1978, the following district councils of people's deputies reported the Communist Party about these cases: Brodivska (the villages of Ponykva, Kutyshche, Biliavtsi), Horodotska (the villages of Dobriani, Mypiatyn, Tuchapy, Berezets), Kamiansko-Buzka (the villages of Kolodentsi, Zheldets), Mykolaivska (the villages of Rozdol, Verbizh), Mostyska (the villages of Hodyn, Hostyntsyve, Zaviazantsi), Nesterovska (the villages of Zahir'ya and Richky), Peremyshlianska (the villages of Tuchne, Ladantsi) district councils of people's deputies, etc. (SALR, f. R-1332, d. 3, c. 261, pp. 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

There were quite frequent cases when the Ukrainian worshippers kept the keys to churches that had already been deregistered and conducted religious services there on their own. For example, the researcher O. Mykhalchuk indicates that in 1977 the Easter liturgy was held in

the closed church of the village of Kulchyn of Kivertsy district of Volyn region, which was served by an old priest Kviatkovsky (Mykhalchuk, 2010, p. 162). Despite repeated warnings from local authorities, Kviatkovsky continued to occasionally hold services there while keeping the keys to the church.

Analyzing archival documents, we see that numerous facts of arbitrary opening of churches and holding of services in them were stated by the party bodies of Ivano-Frankivsk region, which indicated that as of September of 1965, in this region, religious services continued to be held in 210 churches (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 2991, p. 58). Thus, based on the above mentioned, we can state that the policy of atheism of the Soviet government encouraged the Ukrainians to look for various ways to preserve their religious centers.

However, the mass resistance of the Ukrainians to the atheistic company resulted in a wave of oppression and repression by the communists. Thus, officials of Cherkasy and a number of other regions of the Ukrainian SSR conducted illegal searches in houses of prayers, dismissed people from their jobs for their religious beliefs, forbade the performance of religious rites and used other administrative illegal actions (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 448, p. 13). Archive documents show that in the Ukrainian SSR there were numerous cases of unjustified prosecution of the Ukrainians for judicial, criminal, and administrative responsibility (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 3367, p. 12).

The Soviet ideologues were fully aware of a great influence of religion and the church on the formation of the worldview of representatives of the Ukrainian ethnic group, therefore, the emphasis in promoting atheism was placed by them on the young, growing generation.

The Ukrainian schoolchildren were prohibited from participating in church services and singing in the church choir. During religious holidays, teachers were forced to wait at the entrance to churches and intercept children who were being led by the hand to church by their parents. Similar actions were observed on the part of representatives of the authorities. Thus, according to archival sources, in 1962, during religious holidays, the Crimean regional committee of the Komsomol posted Komsomol patrols near churches, which forbade children to go to church services (CSAHAA of Ukraine, f. 4648, d. 1, c. 324, p. 52), and the school principal director of Hruzke of Baryshiv district in Kyiv region tried to leave and lock the children at school for the whole night just because they and their relatives visited the village church (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 24, c. 12, p. 278).

However, raised in a traditional Ukrainian family, children continued to honour religious customs and traditions. For example, on January 8, 1969 in the village of Lopushnia, Rohatyn district, Ivano-Frankivsk region, children performed Christmas carols with a nativity scene (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 3412, p. 120). Another case of manifestation of religiosity among children is observed in the village of Bashuk, Kremenets district, Ternopil region, where a boy of preschool age (4–5 years old) learned church prayers with his mother (SATR, f. P.-1, d. 1, c. 3844, p. 105). The desire of the Ukrainians to inculcate respect for the church in their children is also observed in Chernivtsi region, where parents took their children from school and led them to prayer houses openly (SACHR, f. 1, d. 31, c. 66, p. 46).

When atheistic propaganda did not produce the expected results, the then party leadership began to apply repressions. Because of their religious beliefs, people were fired from their jobs, and they were often deprived of their parental rights. A glaring fact of the struggle against the believing families of the Ukrainians was the 1969 decision of the Juvenile Affairs Commission under Dolyna District Executive Committee of Ivano-Frankivsk Region, according to which M. Bolekhan, a student of the 3rd grade of the elementary school of

the village Myslivka, was transferred to a boarding school in Dolyna due to the fact that his mother V. Bolekhan was an underground sectarian (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 3367, p. 12).

Speaking about the unofficial nature of anti-religious education, it is necessary to note the psychological and administrative pressure exerted on the youth by the leadership of the higher educational institutions of the republic. Students were given an unspoken condition: if they want to study at university, they have to forget their religious beliefs.

In places where a high level of religiosity among the Ukrainian youth was recorded, the party activist conducted anti-religious activities with pre-prepared individual plans. Thus, SADR documents indicate that in Dnipropetrovsk region, communists conducted lectures to student youth on the following topics: "Reactionary Essence of Religious Holidays and Rites", "On the Harm of Religion", "Science and Religion are Incompatible", "Religion is Opium" (State Archives of Dnipropetrovsk region – SADR, f. 4359, d. 1, c. 583, pp. 1, 2, 3).

However, many young Ukrainians still remained faithful to religion. This devotion was especially observed in the west of Ukraine. According to the researcher N. Khomenko, a student of Lviv Institute of Applied Arts in a conversation with his friends assured everyone that religion does not do any harm to "communist construction", and therefore he will take part in religious holidays (Khomenko, 2008, p. 162). And Savitsky, a student of Lviv Forestry Institute, having good grades in "Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism" and passing the exam in this subject, after classes worked as an assistant to the archbishop (Khomenko, 2008, p. 161). These and other facts confirm that the Ukrainian youth, studying the Marxist-Leninist theory, which denied the existence of God, did not stop believing in him and the church.

Realizing the ineffectiveness of its actions, the CPSU-CPU put the Soviet mass media at the service of atheism. Anti-religious propaganda was especially spread by radio broadcasting. Thus, at the beginning of the 60s of the XXth century anti-religious propaganda unfolded in the programs of Kirovohrad regional radio, which broadcast programmes on anti-religious topics 3–4 times a month (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 70, c. 2447, p. 58). These were broadcast interviews of the former leaders of religious communities and sects, in which they debunked the "reactionary essence" of religion and called on believers to break up with "darkness and obscurantism" (CSAPA of Ukraine, f. 1, d. 70, c. 2447, p. 58). In the documents it is indicated that Dnipropetrovsk regional radio, disclosing the work experience of the region's best atheism advocates, broadcast the programme "On the Atheist's Bookshelf" in 1973 (SADR, f. 4418, d. 2, c. 337, p. 3).

The atheist worldview spread among the masses actively and by means of the world of cinema. In many institutions, there were conducted permanent scientific and atheistic film lectures, etc. According to the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine, their functionaries "awakened a believer from a religious dream", "sowed seeds of doubt in religious views" (SAIFR, f. R-1-P, d. 1, c. 2888, pp. 58–59).

The Conclusion. Thus, during the 60s – the 70s of the XXth century the Ukrainians experienced many spiritual vicissitudes of various aspects of church and religious life. The Soviet authorities refused a balanced criticism of religion and pursued a purposeful policy of eliminating the church from the life of the Ukrainian ethnic environment. The result of such activities was the strengthening of repressions against worshippers, the mass closing of monasteries and churches, which were converted to meet the socio-cultural and economic needs of the state or, in the worst case, dismantled and destroyed.

The anti-religious campaign of communist ideologues gained the greatest scope in the west of Ukraine, which was marked by a higher degree of religiosity. Defending their faith,

representatives of the titular nation of the Ukrainian SSR, opposed to atheistic politics, conducted round-the-clock vigils near churches that had not yet been appropriated, organized large protest gatherings that turned into unauthorized rallies, and wrote numerous petitions and complaints to central and local party and state institutions.

Seeing the ineffectiveness of atheistic propaganda, the party leadership succeeded in repression. Because of their religious beliefs, people were fired from their jobs, threatened with administrative sanctions, and often deprived of parental rights. There were the cases of unjustified prosecution of the Ukrainians for their religious views.

However, the communist leadership did not succeed in a complete ousting of the religious worldview from the Ukrainian ethnic environment, the Christian values remained the basis of a spiritual life among the absolute majority of representatives of the titular nation of the Ukrainian SSR. The reduction of the network of religious associations, which occurred due to administrative measures, did not really reduce the level of religiosity of the Ukrainian ethnic group. The liquidation of church communities did not produce the desired final result for the communists. It only transferred the activity of these communities from the official plane to the illegal one.

Thus, during the 1960s and the 1970s, the Soviet leadership only managed to weaken the religious life of the titular nation of the Ukrainian SSR slightly, but did not destroy it completely.

It is worth highlighting the issue of a further study of the topic under analysis, including: the role of repression against the clergy in the emergence of religious dissidence, the influence of the cooperation of priests of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Soviet authorities on the religious life of the Ukrainians. The relationship between the Ukrainian worshippers of the East and the West, the South and the Centre of the Ukrainian SSR during the period under analysis needs a more in-depth coverage.

Acknowledgements. The authors express their sincere gratitude to the editors for the opportunity to publish the article.

Funding. The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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The article was received April 09, 2022.

Article recommended for publishing 23/11/2022.