



ELSEVIER



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 236 (2016) 368 – 373

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

International Conference on Communication in Multicultural Society, CMSC 2015, 6-8 December 2015, Moscow, Russian Federation

“Probably We should Strengthen the Fight against such Regionalists”: The Policy of the Central Committee of the CPSU towards the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians - Baptists (1964 - 1969)

Nikita Pivovarov*

Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, Ilinka, 12, Moscow 119311, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article explores the attitude of the highest party authorities towards the emergence, development and activity of such a religious protest movement as the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the early years of the Brezhnev administration. The analysis of authentic documents enables to see exactly what guided the CC CPSU and what steps were taken towards the "Initiative" movement. The results suggest that despite numerous requests from the KGB the Brezhnev administration restrained itself from using repressive actions against the faithful until the "Initsiativniki" demonstration on the Old Square in 1966.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the National Research Nuclear University MEPhI (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute).

Keywords: Baptists; initiative movement; CPSU; KGB; Council for Religious Affairs

1. Introduction

Religion in the modern multicultural Russia is one of the foundation, shaping cross-cultural communication. At the same time, giving great attention to traditionally large religious denominations, the Russian government ignores

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-929-681-7650; fax: +7-495-606-5003.

E-mail address: pivovarov.hist@gmail.com

the possibility of dialogue with relatively small in size and activities religious groups. Authorities violently persecute "totalitarian sects" and hold aggressive information campaign against them. However, as historical experience shows, persecution is becoming a key factor in the development of a phenomenon of a religious dissidence. As a result, some religious leaders use the fact of persecution as an opportunity to express their protest against the official Church and state structures. The most striking example of this kind is the history of Evangelical Christian Baptists, their breakup in the early 1960s and the emergence of a new religious organization on the basis of the protest movement – the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (CC ECB) and its opposition to the Soviet power.

A number of studies have been carried out on the history of the Soviet Baptists protest movement. Thus, in 1981 in a now classical monograph by Sawatsky (1981) there are disclosed causes and consequences of dissidence. This work aims at tracing the reaction of the higher party authorities on the emergence, development and activity of such a religious protest movement as the CC ECB. The Interest to the relation of the Soviet power and Baptism is not accidental. Evangelical Christian Baptists, Christians of Evangelical belief, Christians in the spirit of the apostles and brotherly Mennonites united into the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUC ECB) in 1944 and it was the largest Christian denomination in the Soviet Union. According to the church data the total number of the follower in 1960 was about 230 thousand people and there were about three thousand registered communities [A]. The split, affecting the AUC ECB in the late 1950s – early 1960s, led to the formation of the movement "Initsiativniki". It became one of the biggest groups in the Soviet history. Only according to the data of the Council for Religious Affairs in 1965 around 50 thousand people joined the CC ECB [B]. The "Initiative" movement in its scale was comparable to the revolutionary breakup of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1920s.

In the last few years, considerable attention has been paid to church-state relations. In Science there exists a large amount of factual material, summaries of the first results of the studies and important conclusions, that have been drawn from the analysis. The main focus of researchers (Soskovets, 2003; Shiller, 2003; Gorbatov, 2008; Zherebjatjeva, 2012; Glushajev, 2013; Serova, 2013) has been concentrated on the study of the local authorities' policy towards adherents of the CC ECB. To uncover the policies of the central authorities, historians mostly used materials of a personal origin, available materials of the Council of Affairs for Religious Cults (since the end of 1965 - the Council for Religious Affairs), as well as some decisions of higher party bodies – the Secretariat and the Bureau (since 1966 - Politburo) of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

2. Materials and method

A large set of documentary materials deposited in the former archive of the CC CPSU (now - RGANI) serves for the historical basis of the article. We will focus on the documents submitted to the employees of the Propaganda and Agitation Department (since 1966 – just Propaganda Department), as well as to the Administrative department, secretaries and members of the Politburo of the CC CPSU. The primary analysis of sources suggests that the major institutions that influenced the policy of the CC CPSU towards the "Initsiativniki" were the Council for Religious Affairs (hereinafter referred to as the CRA) and the Committee State Security of the Soviet Union (hereinafter - the KGB). Other regulatory authorities (Ministry of State Security, the Office of Public Prosecutor, the Supreme Court) also sent their records to the governing body of the Central Committee. However, the amount of such records was considerably smaller and they mainly concerned specific matters (e.g. the arrest of certain members of sects or elimination of clandestine press offices) rather than a set of measures of anti-religious activity. We should also mention terminology used in the Soviet record keeping. Advocates of CC ECB received different names in the party and governmental documents: "Baptist-Initsiativniki" "baptists - prokovievets" "ecb," "ecb baptist", "Initsiativniki", "schismatics", "sectarians", "sectarian extremists", "supporters "of the organizing committee", " CC ECB".

This study is based on a critical analysis of processes under consideration from the standpoint of human values within historical methods, scientific content and objectivity. In the study we have used historical-systematic, legal-historical, descriptive methods. Complex analysis of various sources and information evaluation method have been applied in the analysis documentation.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5125858>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5125858>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)