

Periodization of State-Confessional relations in the Russian Far East in 1917-1939Oxana Fedirko¹, Svetlana Dudarenok², Maria Serduk³¹Far Eastern Federal University, The Department of the National History and Archival Studies, School of Humanities. Russkiy (Russian) island, Ayaks, office 427, building 26 F, Vladivostok, 690922, Russia²Far Eastern Federal University, Neebut Str., office 228, building 87, Vladivostok, 690109, Russia³Far Eastern Federal University, Chkalov Str., office 12, building 16, Vladivostok, 690068, Russia

Abstract. The article in hand suggests the author's periodization of the state-confessional relations in the Russian Far East according to the region's internal and foreign political and ethno confessional peculiarities. The author studies the patterns of interrelations between the state and religious entities in the Far East during a certain historical period, outlines the reasons and conditions of changing the patterns, and analyzes all-Russia tendencies and regional peculiarities of each phase.

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Introduction

Analyzing the basic trends of developing the state-confessional relations in the Russian Far East in 1917 - 1939 we relied on three fundamental propositions:

- firstly, state-confessional relations are not a phenomenon but a process which involves several subjects: the state and both registered and unregistered religious entities;

- secondly, the development of state-confessional relations in the Russian Far East is of rather peculiar character due to the ethno cultural and religious diversity of the region;

- thirdly, the Russian Far East is a multinational and polyconfessional region where the orthodoxy, traditional beliefs of the indigenous population, the Old Belief and old Russian sectarianism and various denominations of Protestantism are regarded as traditional religions.

When drawing the conclusions we used the comparative historical, historical and genetic, historical and typological and historical systemic methods of historical study.

While formulating the author's concept of periodization of state-confessional relations in the Russian Far East we relied on the works of the leading Russian researchers of history and religion (E. Miroshnikova [1], M. Odintsov [2,3,4,5] S. Dudarenok [6] and others).

According to the data received we have singled out three patterns of state-confessional relations which replaced each other in the Russian Far East during the period of 1917-1939.

1) "Traditional" pattern (a variant of identificational one, according to E.Miroshnikova's terms). This pattern rested upon the principles of

state-confessional relations that had established in the Russian Empire, with the status of the state church belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). This pattern started to collapse after the February revolution, but if we take into account the specific political situation in the Far East during the Revolution and the Civil War we will be able to see that it was not entirely eliminated but was supported at certain times (for example, under the Diterikhs's government);

2) "Liberal" (a pattern which combines the features of cooperative and separative patterns, according to E.Miroshnikova's terms) – is the pattern of mutual non-interference between the state and the church. However, the Bolsheviks used to practice the "liberal" pattern in dealing with all confessions except the Russian Orthodox Church.

3) "Administrative" (the toughest possible variant of the separative pattern according to E.Miroshnikova's terms, with antireligious policy as its extreme form) is characterized by state's suppression of any religious form and society's intolerant attitude towards religion. After this pattern had gradually emerged in the Soviet State, it was legally established in 1929 and operated till the end of the period under consideration[7].

There are three main phases in the process of establishing state-confessional relations in the Russian Far East within the period from 1917 to 1939: (1) from 1917 to 1922, (2) from 1923 to 1929 and (3) from 1929 to 1939.

The first phase includes the reforms of the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks rise to power and the start of the Soviet reformations, the Civil War, the formation of the Far Eastern Republic

(*abbrev.FER* or *translit.DVR*) and its entry into the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR).

Chronologically the start of the first phase of establishing state-confessional relations in the Far East coincides with that of all Russia and it ended in a very peculiar way. In the European part of Russia the Civil war was over in 1921 while in the Far East it continued during the whole year of 1922 and it was only in late autumn of 1922 when the interventionists and white guards were driven out of the region.

During the first phase there were two patterns of the state-confessional relations operating simultaneously – the traditional and the liberal [7]. Such a situation was tightly bound to the local inner policy.

The liberal pattern of state-confessional relations operated in the Far East during the first phase. In 1917 the Far Eastern religious entities took advantage of the freedom of consciousness proclaimed by the Provisional government and made a significant success in reinforcing the propaganda of their doctrine and recruitment of new adherents. The situation in the region did not change very much with the Bolsheviks' rise to power in spite of the fact that teaching religion had been forbidden by the Soviet law. Sovietization of the Far East was often interrupted by bourgeois-liberals' attempts to seize power and stopped with the beginning of intervention and the proclamation of the bourgeois governments. This pattern of state-confessional relations was practiced by the multiparty government of the Far Eastern Republic.

The liberal pattern was stable during the first phase due to several factors.

Firstly, the region was polyconfessional and multinational.

The Provisional government proclaimed the freedom of consciousness and the 1918 Constitution of RSFSR declared the freedom of propaganda. Consequently, the Far Eastern confessions got the possibility to legalize their activities and they successfully took advantage of it.

Secondly, the Far Eastern towns became an arena for power struggle. It was extremely important for the conservative rural people to preserve the religious component of their life. That is the reason why the pattern of mutual non-interference between the state and the confessions existing in the Far East at that time let the authorities attract the majority of the population and win the Civil War in the region.

Thirdly, one more reason for this was Protestant preachers' efforts supported by the declared freedom of consciousness and strong exterior aid both ideological and financial[8].

The traditional pattern of state-confessional relations proclaimed the return to the principles of the

Russian Orthodox Church domination which had been established in the Russian Empire. This pattern could be traced in the bourgeois governments' activities (eg. The Governments of Alexeevskiy, Horvat and Diterikh). The subversion of the bourgeois governments resulted in the downfall of this pattern of state-confessional relations in the Far East and in Russia.

The phase that in the Far East started in 1923 and finished in 1929 is characterized by liberal approach in the state-confessional relations.

The liberal pattern was chosen due to the following factors:

- Foreign-policy: aggravation of the international situation, struggle for the international prestige of the Soviet power which was essential for its survival and expansion of its ideology;

- Economic: the religious new economic policy (NEP), declared by L.Trotsky

- Political and ideological: the anti-religious fight of the Soviet government was directed towards the Russian Orthodox Church, though the authorities did not exclude the possibility of providing some temporary privilege and freedom to non-Orthodox entities.

- Subjective: the forms and means of anti-religious activity depended on the party officials' viewpoints on the peculiarities and prospects of state-confessional relations[7].

After the Far East had become a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) it joined the anti-religious propaganda according to the decisions of the party congresses of the early 1920s. The ideological support of the anti-religious policy in the Far East was provided by the Agitation and Propaganda Department (“Agitpropotdel”) of the Far Eastern Bureau of Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). They got the Young Pioneers, Komsomol and public organizations involved into this work.

State-confessional relations in the Far East had their own features. The anti-religious propaganda in the USSR was aimed against the Russian Orthodox Church and so it did not infringe the Protestant entities very much. Schools established by non-Orthodox confessions continued their work and their number increased and reached its peak in 1926. The means of their religious propaganda expanded and improved.

Far Eastern Protestants organized confessional congresses to discuss the tasks of expanding their influence. Regional authorities set practically no limits to their activity [9].

On 8 April 1929 the resolution “About Religious Entities” was adopted and the third phase

of state-confessional relations began. During this period the Bolsheviks party started implementing the administrative pattern which implied suppression of any form of religiousness in society and prohibition on religious education and propaganda. In the Far East open attacks towards religion started in 1931 after the Standing Commission for Cult Affairs under the Far Eastern territory executive committee (Kraispolkom) had been set. It dealt with organizing anti-religious fight [10]. However, despite the repressive nature of the USSR policy towards religious entities the latter continued spreading their doctrine even in the institutions of confinement.

In early 1930s trying to build the secular society the state changes its policy from controlling religious entities to their elimination. However, despite the extraordinary efforts to conquer piety in the USSR the authorities could not win entirely. Some part of the society considered religious beliefs to be the basis of their world-view and an essential part of moral up-bringing and behavior. And the reported by the party agencies decline of the population's religiousness in the Far East was the result of the repressive policy of the Soviet Union and not the consequence of the active antireligious propaganda or activities of the League of Atheists.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Oxana Fedirko

Doctor of History, Professor

Far Eastern Federal University, The Department of the National History and Archival Studies, School of Humanities. Russkiy (Russian) island, Ayaks, office 427, building 26 F, Vladivostok, 690922, Russia

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