

Repressions against the Baptist Church during the period 1945-1989 year

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Summary: The report sets out the facts of the relationship between the state and the Baptist Church in the period 1945-1989. When forming government policy the following factors have influence - the atheist position of the Communist Party, the construction of the Iron Curtain between East and West, and the Soviet policy against the Baptist Churches in the Union. The administrative approach of power includes legal processes, restrictive measures, displacements, withdrawal of registrations, demolition. Countering the church consists in taking personal responsibility on the part of believers to evangelize and build Christ's disciples and churches.

Keywords: church, repression, instructions, Directorate of Religious Affairs, State Security

In Bulgarian history there is insufficient lit facts about religions in the period 1945-1989. An important observation is the realization that the history of the Baptist denomination is difficult to describe a number of objective reasons. One of them is the fact that Baptists worked and mainly comed from the ranks of the poor and left few written records. Secondly, the history of Baptists was held mostly during periods of persecution and rejection and most of the documents held in the archives are records of interrogations and inventory of confiscated property.

In the first years after World War II Bulgarian state guarantees relative freedom of religion. The reasons for this are to use the Church in order to meet the social needs of post-war society, creating a positive image of democracy of the free world. Meanwhile the state was able to use the time for setting and formingf new leaders for the denominations. Directorate of Religious Affairs, following the new policy, wass loaded with the task to put under effective control the non-Orthodox denominations through unification and centralization of their governing bodies. So it builds regulations. In response to given their relative freedom of action, the managements of various evangelical churches, members of the Union of Evangelical Churches United (UECU), appoint their own religious representatives, empowered to represent them in front of the public authorities. The new government wants to resolve the relations simultaneously with all evangelical churches. For this purpose, a joint was made "Project

regulation of the structure and management of evangelical churches". Through increased contacts between the Directorate of Religious Affairs and representatives of UECU whose opinion is sought in any matter which may arise, the communist government creates the illusion of the existence of a real religious freedom and desire for dialogue with the churches. The true feelings of the state we learn from the Director of the Directorate of Religious Affairs Dimitar Iliev. In September 1947, he formed a commission to study the submitted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Affairs (MFARD) church statutes. The commission conclusion reaffirms the official position that adoption of a general regulation is necessary the, since it was found that by their statutes evangelical churches are trying to "avoid any supervision or control by the Ministry." (See Evangelical churches - between formal and resistance.Zh.Lefterov: Resistance against the communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989); The Proceedings of the national Conference New Bulgarian University, 23-24 March 2011 [CD-ROM]. S., 2012. 221-246)

The first stage of persecution against believers of Baptist Church began in November 1948. "Conceived and performed by public order as "full exposure of the faith traders and traitors to the motherland ", the trial of those evangelical pastors arrested in 1948 begins on 25 February and continues until March 8, 1949, as it was sentenced by the Party. "(Evangelical churches - between formal and resistance.Zh.Lefterov: Resistance against the communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989); The Proceedings of the national Conference New Bulgarian University, 23-24 March 2011 [CD-ROM]. 2012. s.228)

The charges were for spying for foreign countries, transmission of information from the military, economic and political nature, spreading malicious rumors enemy propaganda etc.

The following pastors were accused:

Nikola Michailov Naumov - 49-year-old from Sofia, chairman of the Supreme Council of United Evangelical Church(UEC) and secretary of the board of Allied Baptist Church;

Georgi Nikolov Vasev - 48 years old, from Lom, fromf the Evangelical Baptist Church, a member of the Supreme Council of UEC;

Ivan Angelov Stankulov - 44-year-old from Mladenovo, near Lom, from the Evangelical Baptist Church;

Zachary Spasov Rajchev - 50-year-old from Chirpan, from the Evangelical Baptist Church;

Mitko Dimitrov Mateev - 39-year-old from Sofia, from Evangelical Baptist Church.

The accused Nikola Michailov Naumov is sentenced to combination of penalties - life in solitary confinement, he also had to pay three million BGN fine to the state and lack of rights forever. The entire property of the same defendant shall be forfeited to the State.

The defendant Georgi Nikolov Vasev was determined to endure the punishment of 15 years solitary confinement and pay a fine of 250 000 BGN to the state by depriving it of rights for a period of 15 years. Also property of 250 000 BGN value was confiscated in favor of the state

Defendants Ivan Angelov Stankulov and Zachary Spasov Rajchev were condemned to combination of 10 years in solitary confinement and fines, respectively 150,000 BGN and 100,000 B in favor of the state. These defendants are deprived of rights for a period of 15 years. Properties of both were confiscated in favor of the state property at values of 150 000 BGN and 10 000 BGN.

The defendant Mitko Dimitrov was ordered of six years and eight months solitary confinement and 10,000 BGN fine to the state, depriving of all rights for a period of eight years and confiscation of property in the amount of 10 000 BGN.

The objective is achieved. Pastors are branded as spies and enemies of "people's power".

It is necessary to say that intelligence and operational work among Religions began in 1946 "Evangelical churches are in sight to the existing Division I of the"State Security "group" Clergy and sects. Depending on various restructuring of the security services, they will be monitored and developed by various departments and their respective compartments in the 50s of the 20th century. Churches have been observed from the third ward "Clergy and sects" Division I to III Management of State Security under the "Protestants and sects." The central process witnesses are 24 other pastors, arrested, residing in prison even after the completion of the process. (Evangelical churches - between formal and resistance.Zh.Lefterov: Resistance against the communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989); The Proceedings of the national Conference New Bulgarian University, 23-24 March 2011 [CD-ROM]. 2012. 241-242)

The following year the second pastoral process was held. Convicted by a judgment are the pastors Milan Zheliazkov Kostov and Hristo Dobrev Neychev. The following were lying in jail without a sentence: the pastors Ivan Petrov Igov, Angel Petrov Igov, Konstantin Brankov and member of the church Tsocho Ivanov Kovachev. Punished by evictions are families the Igovs and Mihailovs. Repressed during this period are in total 19 people.

With the entry of judgments of both processes in force, Baptist community in the country practically remained without its authoritative and experienced management, which is the reason why the churches were forced to participate in the formulation of new guidelines of the loyal and friendly "people power". The arrests since 1948, running a consequence and a wide propaganda campaign to dissuade the communist authorities of the followers of the Baptist churches and enable the force leave people prone to compromise with the authorities, against the depersonalization of the churches. Ultimately, the power is not reasonable to resort to this measure of "centralization" of the evangelical community, but just the opposite. Obviously

prevalent view that the existence of a general representative body rather contributes to strengthening and consolidating the evangelical churches than to help them being more effectively monitored. Due to this the people who demonstrated greater activity immediately stand out amongst the rest. This trend is promptly registered by the Directorate of Religious Affairs and State Security. According to Art. 30 which came into force on March 1, 1949 Denominations Act within three months from its promulgation different faiths should draw up their statutes to submit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval. Although all denominations have to deposit their statutes to the Directorate, authorities delay their adoption for almost two years. By mid-1952 it was approved statutes of the Orthodox Church, Muslim and Jews religion and the Armenian Church. Despite the opinion of the responsible Commission, the Directorate of Religious Affairs does not confirm the statutes of the Evangelical churches, the Catholic Church and the White Brotherhood. Not before February 20, 1951 the Council of Ministers appointed a committee to review again submitted statutes of various denominations and to make a proposal to the Council of Ministers for their approval. Because of the late approval of the statutes of religion, the churches are deprived of the opportunity to acquire the status of legal organizations and therefore the right to possess as property according to Article 16 of the Religious Denominations Act adopted in 1947. In the summer 1957 the Committee of Bulgarian Ortodox Church and religious cults started large-scale check in Sofia and the country on the implementation of the law. Eventually, after almost five years of working on the issue on November 19, 1962 the mentioned Comitee and the "people's councils" in the Council of Ministers issued a confidential instruction № A 1-455 "On registration of Protestant sects and religious community White Brotherhood". It has been sent to the chairmen of the Executive Committee of all district council and City Council in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, accompanied by explanatory notes the president M. Kjachukov. Although instructions and explanatory memorandum have never been officially published, they become the basis for the registration. After receiving the approval of the party organs of January 30, 1964, the Committee sent confidential explanatory note from M. Kjachukov on "conducting final registration of Protestant sects" to all regional committees of the Communist Party and regional council. In the note the president of the Committee asks the Regional people's council to order "termination of any public religious activity by unregistered units of these sects." (see Evangelical churches - between formal and resistance. Zh.Lefterov: Resistance against the communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989); The Proceedings of the national Conference New Bulgarian University, 23-24 March 2011 [CD-ROM]. 221-246)

From the written notes of Rusi Dimitrov Tomov - head of the "Organizations" sector in Ruse's Municipality - can be seen how over a year the number of visitors of the Baptist Church has been traced, after the Church registration by the Executive Committee of the Regional People's Council in 1964. That notes show that the believers are five or six, while the documentation of the church at that time shows that 13 people have confirmed their membership to the public. The discrepancy in data is deliberate. Psychological pressure is exerted to believers through visits to their homes and carrying on conversations with their relatives and acquaintances. These actions taken by the Government in order to scare the people and to prepare the official decision on deletion of the registration of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Ruse.

In a meeting in Ruse's Municipality a Protocol № 7 / 22.05.1973 D.7 was made. The council was attended by Angel Bobokov - Chairman; Vice-presidents: Eng. D. Tabakov, Boris Zhelev, Dimitar Rusev, Dr. Dimitar Nochev, Vasil Petkov and members: Gancho Kolarov, Spas Koev, Kaludka Gateva. The meeting was under the following agenda:

1. Information on administrative and technical services to the population;
2. Overview of the results of a financial audit;
3. Information on the work of the Board;
4. The report notes.

One of the decisions, taken at the meeting, is provoked by Rusi Tomov's declarations to "... cancel the Evangelical Baptist Church in Ruse due to reducing the number of believers below the required minimum." In addition there is a decision of the Executive Committee of the Regional people's council to delete the registration of the Evangelical Baptist Church - Ruse based on the decision № A-455 of the Committee for Religious Affairs and explanatory note of 20/01/1964 in the same. Baptists from Ruse joined the Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church, maintaining its identity and in 1992 reconquered their society.

In Varna the property of the Baptist church was taken by the government and believers were forced to personal efforts to break down their own temple.

This is how the second stage of liquidation of churches in Ruse and Varna is completed.

In the late 70s a report to the Interior Minister establishes that the President of the Baptist Union has a negative attitude towards the people's power. A review of the decision of the Committee on dossiers revealed one recruited and deployed agent among Baptist churches.

The processes occurring in Baptist churches, led to:

- Creating new evangelists of truth through a system of internal self-educating,
- Developing illegally book publishment,
- Informal theological training

- Summer camps for families
- Distributing Bibles and built of hidden warehouses in the country,
- Failure of embedded agents as pastors by boycott
- Development of small home groups.

The activity of the Baptist church is very difficult, but not blocked. Development of new methods and forms restrict the effect of the atheistic power. The pastors raised a new generation believers. The conclusion which is imposed is that Baptist believers have not changed their identity. The Baptist churches increased their followers. (See National Statistical Institute, February 28, 2011 in Bulgaria census of population and housing.)

Notes

1 Archives of the Ministry of Interior u . 10, Op. 9 Rev.. 119 l. 1-2, 13-14.

2 Messengers of Truth: A History of the Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria. Race. Dimitar Digests. S .: "BBD", 1994, p. 364.

3 Archives of the Ministry of Interior u. 10, Op. 10 AU 1109, l. 1-2.

4 Archives of the Ministry of Interior u. 10, Op. 10 AU 1109, l. 1-2

5 Note Rusi Dimitrov Tomov Archives VT, f. 1164 Op. 2 AU №161, l. 252.

6 Record book of EBC Russe from 1945 to 1972, p. 75.

7 Minutes № 7 / 22.05.1973, the GSN of Ruse a meeting of the District Council

8 Messengers of Truth: A History of the Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria. Race. Dimitar Digests. S .: "BBD", 1994

9 Committee for the Disclosure of Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the sovereign security and RUMNO Decision № 333 / 20.03.2012