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REAL AND DECLARED INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN LEGISLATIVE ACTS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION DURING THE SOVIET ERA

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Abstract

This article examines anthropological grounds for the formation of fundamental documents on freedom of conscience and religion in the Soviet Union. It also considers ideological prerequisites for the development of a new type of person—the Soviet man. A comparison is made between the two main ideological struggles with religious consciousness—state-church relations and the sphere of education. The separation of the church from the state and the state from the church, which were enshrined by the relevant decrees of the Soviet government, resulted in a false idea that the Soviet citizen is free in his/her worldview choice. However, a careful analysis of the implementation of the decrees on freedom of conscience shows a total lack of this freedom. The ideological machinery of the Soviet government widely used the spheres of education, culture, and religion to build a strong negative and degrading attitude towards believers and, on the contrary, a positive and exalting attitude towards atheists. Under such conditions, there emerged a type of person—an atheist, who was not capable of critically analyzing whether he/she had his/her own worldview freedoms and who was sure he/she had them in their absence.

Keywords: freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, church, state-church relations, believer, atheist, ideology.

Introduction

In the Soviet Union, the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of freedom as a certain phenomenon regulated by law underlie the formation of basic legislation on freedom of conscience and religion, since "legally recognized freedom exists in the state in the form of the law."¹ This situation was necessitated by the need to forge a new type of man—the Soviet man. This type of personality was supposed to embrace the main slogans of Soviet ideology—"freedom, equality, brotherhood," but in a very specific way, i.e., within the state ideology,

¹ Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Соч. Т. 1. С. 62. [K. Marx, F. Engels Collected works. Vol. 1, .p. 62]

because according to Lenin, "absolute freedom of the individual is a bourgeois or anarchic phrase (for as a worldview, anarchism is an inside-out bourgeoisie). It is impossible to live in society and be free from society."² In this way, the Soviet ideological machine formed from the very beginning a type of personality full of antinomic, opposite principles. Despite being restricted in their freedom to choose their worldview or beliefs, since the state ideological machinery aimed to make them materialists and atheists, the Soviet people were convinced they were free, independent, fraternal, and equal to other nations.

Presentation of the Main Material

The program of developing a new type of personality—the Soviet man—was carried out in two main directions. The former is establishing a new model of state-church relations; the latter is educational programs. In the context of establishing a new model of state-church relations, the key point was to break the church-state union, common for tsarist Russia. The separation of the church from the state and the state from the church was interpreted as an example of the embodiment of freedom of conscience and religion and the definition of its boundaries. In this regard, of great importance was the Land Decree, adopted on October 26 (November 8), 1917, according to which the church was deprived of economic privileges, because the decree abolished private ownership of land, thus the land became public property.³ Although the decree eliminated private ownership of land, declared its transfer to national ownership, land did not actually become "people's," but an instrument of oppression of millions of people. This decree severely proscribed the use of hired labor, while the state itself used people as slave mercenaries.⁴

Another declaration that guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion was the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" dated November 2 (15), 1917. The declaration "set out the main provisions of the national policy of the Soviet government: 1) equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia; 2) the right to free self-determination up to the separation and formation of independent states; 3) abolition of any national and national-religious privileges and restrictions; and 4) free development of national minorities and ethnic groups residing in Russia."⁵

² Ленин В.И. Полн. собр. соч. Т. 12. С. 104 [V. Lenin Full collected works. Vol. 12, p. 104.]

³ Хміль І.В. "ДЕКРЕТ ПРО ЗЕМЛЮ 1917" // *Енциклопедія історії України*: Т. 2: Г-Д / [І. Khmil LAND DECREE 1917 // *Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine*: Т. 2] Редкол.: В. А. Смолій (голова) та ін. НАН України. Інститут історії України. – (Київ: В-во "Наукова думка", 2004.), 688 с.: іл. – Режим доступу: http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Dekret_pro_zemlyu_1917.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Therefore, the aforementioned declaration ostensibly had to ensure the support of the Soviet government by non-Russian peoples and their national liberation movements. However, the provisions proclaimed in it did not correspond to real intentions of the RSDLP (b), which ignored the aspirations of certain national regions—Ukraine, Finland, the Caucasus, etc.—to national autonomy and independence. Lenin and the RSDLP (b) believed that the right to self-determination should not belong to the nation, but to workers and poorer peasants. Therefore, they did not recognize the right to self-determination of "bourgeois-nationalist" movements; in particular, they did not recognize the Ukrainian Central *Rada* as the legitimate government in Ukraine.⁶

An important tool of ideological work in the context of generating a new type of personality—the Soviet man—was the Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars dated 11 (24) December on the transfer of education from the Religious Department to the People's Commissariat of Education. This Resolution was recognized by Soviet scholars as an important vehicle in the field of state guarantees of freedom of conscience.⁷ Pursuant to the aforementioned resolution, church-parish schools, teachers' seminaries, theological schools, women's diocesan schools, missionary schools, academies, etc., were closed.⁸ Paragraph 9 of the "Decree on Freedom of Conscience, Church and Religious Societies" prescribed that "the school is separated from the church" and, in accordance with the decree, the teaching of any religious science in public and private educational institutions was prohibited.⁹

In the aftermath of the adoption of these documents, which were supposed to guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, there began repressions against the clergy as a "hostile class element." The issue of spiritual education was delegated to the family, but even there it was subject to state control, and only children who reached 18 years of age had the right to religious education.

The provisions of the Decree on Freedom of Conscience laid the groundwork for all other subsequent Union-wide republican legislative acts that defined the scope of religious

⁶ Бойко О.Д. “ДЕКЛАРАЦІЯ ПРАВ НАРОДІВ РОСІЇ 1917” [Електронний ресурс] // *Енциклопедія історії України*: Т. 2: Г-Д [О. Войко “DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLES OF RUSSIA 1917” [Electronic resource] // *Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine*: Т. 2: Г-Д] / Редкол.: В. А. Смолій (голова) та ін. НАН України. Інститут історії України. Київ.: В-во "Наукова думка", 2004. - 688 с.: іл. – Access mode: http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Deklaraciya_prav_narodiv_Rosii.

⁷ Бабий М.Е. “Законодательство о свободе совести в СССР”. Вопросы религии и религиоведения. [М. Babiy “Legislation on Freedom of Conscience in the USSR”. *Issues of Religion and Religious Studies*]. Вып. VI. *Антология отечественного религиоведения: Религиоведение Украины* [Текст]: сборник. Часть 1: Феномен советского религиоведения: украинский контекст / сост. и общ. ред. Ю.П. Зуева, А.Н. Клодного, Л.А.Филипович, В.В. Шмидта, П.Л. Яроцкого – (Moscow: ИД “МедиаПрои,” 2010), p. 325. ⁸ Преловська І. “Організація навчальних закладів УАПЦ в Києві у 1920-х роках”. *Український археографічний збірник*. Вип. 7. Т. 10. [I. Prelovska “Organization of UAOC Educational Institutions in Kyiv in the 1920s”. *Ukrainian Archeographic Collection*. Pub. 7. V. 10.] (Київ and Нью-Йорк: Видавництво М.П. Коць., 2002), p. 109.

⁹ Ibid.

organizations. On April 8, 1929, the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted the Resolution "On Religious Associations." In May 1929, the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR was amended to expand the interpretation of the concept of "anti-government activities" in relation to the clergy and believers, while the activity of religious communities was drastically curtailed. Under these amendments, worship and religious rites were permitted only in houses of worship, while charitable activities were prohibited.

Thus, under the guise of slogans on freedom of conscience and religion, atheism was coercively imposed on society. At a time when it was officially emphasized that "Lenin's requirement to prevent any violence against the conscience of citizens during the ideological struggle against religion was legally enshrined in the worship legislation,"¹⁰ religious interests and the rights of believers were neglected and disregarded.

Given that the religious consciousness of Ukrainians was shaped and established throughout history, religious worldviews and moral values were the core of national consciousness and self-consciousness of the nation. In particular, M. Kostomarov wrote: "Ukrainians have a strong sense of God's omnipresence, emotional distress, inner conversation with God, secret thinking about God's will over themselves."¹¹ Thus, the Soviet government's policy of atheizing public consciousness only outwardly and at the level of laws seemed to establish freedom of conscience and religion, but in reality, it was a painful process of destroying the worldview of the vast majority of the population, which, by virtue of its inherent deep religiosity, will retain "the religious foundations in itself as long as there is a set of the basic qualities making up its nationality."¹²

It is paradoxical that as the notion got entrenched in the public consciousness that Soviet legislation on religious cults provided every opportunity to meet religious needs and prevented the abuse of these opportunities, the persecution of the church took on even greater dimensions. While in early 1919, during the preparation of the draft new program of the RCP (b), the Lenin-led Soviet government assumed that the policy of separation of church and state should be based on "the broadest scientific, educational and anti-religious propaganda," and the insult of

¹⁰ Бабий М.Е. "Законодательство о свободе совести в СССР". Вопросы религии и религиоведения . Вып. VI [M. Babiyy Legislation on Freedom of Conscience in the USSR. Issues of Religion and Religious Studies. Pub. VI.] *Антология отечественного религиоведения: Религиоведение Украины* [Текст]: сборник. Часть 1: Феномен советского религиоведения: украинский контекст / сост. и общ. ред. Ю.П. Зуева, А.Н. Клодного, Л.А.Филипович, В.В. Шмидта, П.Л. Яроцкого – М.: ИД «МедиаПроИ», 2010. p. 327.

¹¹ Костомаров Н. *Две русские народности*. - Київ, 1991. – с. 58, 59. [N. Kostomarov *Two Russian Nations*. – Kyiv, 1991. pp. 58, 59.]

¹² Ibid.

the feelings of believers in the process of establishing materialist worldview should be avoided, "the new state agents still preferred violent methods, in line with the laws of 'red' terror <...> Thus, starting from 1918, in the information reports of the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Cheka), the Chekists singled out a special column on 'counterrevolutionary sentiments and activities' of the clergy."¹³

Proclaiming the right of everyone to freely profess their own beliefs, the Soviet government explicitly pursued a God-opposing policy. The prospect of building a non-religious society seemed quite simple and near-term to the Bolsheviks, because being fascinated by the ephemeral slogans of building a society of "freedom, equality and brotherhood" they did not consider the depth of religious traditions. Any popular or clerical resistance was interpreted as counterrevolutionary actions and was subject to the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissar of the Ukrainian SSR of May 10, 1921, which strictly prescribed in paragraphs 3-4: "To entrust the People's Commissariat of Justice to finalize the actual separation of the Church and the State not later than September 1, 1921. (...) To combat religious prejudice, to invite the People's Commissariat of Justice to use all its investigative and judicial machinery to expose church fraud and the crimes of its ministers."¹⁴ In addition, pursuant to the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Ukraine (Minutes No. 52 of May 28, 1921), "the All-Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution is entrusted with the strictest possible monitoring of the counterrevolution being disguised as religion."¹⁵

Consequently, at the backdrop of burgeoning new state-church relations, freedom of conscience and religion was established as freedom "from," rather than freedom "for." Characterizing the church as an exploiter and a counter-revolutionary, anti-national force, the mass consciousness of citizens was artificially instilled with the idea that freedom in the world can be actualized only within the framework of atheism. All possible means of intimidation and terror, on the one hand, and all possible latest advances in science and philosophy, on the other hand, were put into place to create a specific "split" public consciousness, which was made to accept as true only the decisions and slogans of the party, often contrary to common sense.

¹³ Бабенко Л. "Як українців робили атеїстами: державна політика проти релігії у перші десятиліття радянської влади" // *Україна Модерна*. Міжнародний інтелектуальний часопис. [L. Babenko "How Ukrainians were made atheists: state policy against religion in the first decades of Soviet power" // *Modern Ukraine*. International intellectual magazine.] <https://uamoderna.com/md/babenko-atheism>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

In particular, the Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On major shortcomings in scientific and atheistic propaganda and measures to improve it," adopted on July 7, 1954, stated the following: "The Central Committee of the CPSU notes that many party organizations are poorly conducting scientific and atheistic propaganda among the population, as a result of which this important area of ideological work is flouted. At the same time, the church and various religious sects have significantly revived their activities, strengthened their staff and intensively spread religious ideology, flexibly adapting to modern conditions ..."¹⁶ In order to meet the need to implement the resolution, oral and lecture propaganda was therefore enhanced and the press, cinema, educational institutions, libraries, etc., were involved in the ideological struggle.

Sensitization by lecturing was considered the most important means of atheistic education, hence the number of lectures on topics that "debunked" the religious worldview increased incredibly, especially on natural sciences. At the same time, the content of lectures had to "expose the 'reactionary character' of religion, its 'harmful' impact on society, 'hostile activities of clergy and sectarians,' the reactionary nature of religious prejudices by using a case study in a certain locality (activities of clergy, sectarians, nuns)."¹⁷

The article by O. Tevikova, published on the website of the Poltava Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, notes that in the year 1955, 3,054 lectures were given in rural clubs of Poltava district, which covered 148,028 people. Moreover, "in terms of the number of lectures given, scientific and atheistic topics ranked second among the others and covered a quarter of the population of Poltava region. The leading place was taken by the lectures that promoted the decisions of the plenums of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Central Committee of the CPU."¹⁸ During the so-called "ideological struggle against religion", a negative attitude towards clergy was consolidated. Offensive remarks were frequently used during lectures or in publications, and priests were characterized as a harmful element of society, which had to be ruthlessly combatted. Any affiliation with a religious organization

¹⁶ КПРС і радянська держава про релігію та атеїстичну пропаганду (36. док. і матеріалів). – К.: Держполітвидав УРСР, 1962. – С. 96; [CPSU and Soviet State on Religion and Atheistic Propaganda (Collection of docs and materials). (Kyiv: Держполітвидав УРСР, 1962), p. 96.]

¹⁷ Тевікова О. "Антирелігійна пропаганда у закладах культури УРСР у 1953-1964 роках (на прикладі Полтавської області)" [O.Tevikova "Anti-religious propaganda in cultural institutions of the USSR in 1953-1964 (on the example of Poltava region)"] http://www.cerkva.pl.ua/index.php?view=orthodox_article&id_orth=99&date=2011-07&ikl=18&id_cat=63&nm=%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B4%D1%96

¹⁸ Ibid.

could lead to job loss or threats from leadership. For example, as noted by P. Bondaruk and V. Danylenko,

In the village of Horodyshche (district center) of Cherkasy region, members of the registered Evangelical Christians Baptist community were called by local authorities and warned: 'If you continue to attend ECB worship meetings, we will fire you.' To intimidate believers, one worker was fired. After such pressure, some believers stopped attending services in the house of prayer and decided to go underground; some chose to leave the village, others were preparing for persecution.¹⁹

It is noteworthy that in the 1950s and 1960s, despite 30 years of active struggle against the religious worldview, the Soviet authorities failed to eradicate it. At the same time, a new young generation was growing up, whose worldview was shaped by state educational institutions rather than family. This generation tended to view the religious faith of grandparents as a kind of backwardness, so in the 1970s a new stage in the militant materialism movement began.

Art. 52 of the Constitution of the USSR, adopted in 1977, said: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, i.e., the right to profess any religion or not to profess any, to practice religious cults or to conduct atheistic propaganda. Incitement to hostility and hatred on religious grounds is prohibited. The Church in the USSR is separated from the State, and the school is separated from the Church." According to Soviet scholars, this article "more fully and profoundly exposed the meaning of freedom of conscience, defined it, highlighted structural elements, emphasized the strengthening of the positive role of atheistic propaganda, legislated the humanistic nature of freedom of conscience in society."²⁰ At the same time, however, it was fair to say that by virtue of this article, "believers were eventually denied the protection of their beliefs from the arbitrariness of anti-religious propaganda."²¹

Militant atheism at this time took the form of scientific atheism, armed with numerous scientific studies on the nature and forms of religious consciousness. The question of whether a religious worldview could be finally overcome, or in other words, whether it was possible to

¹⁹ Bondaruk P.M., Danylenko V.M. "Особливості релігійної ситуації в УРСР (середина 1950-х – перша половина 1960-х років)" [P. Bondaruk, V. Danylenko "Specificities of the Religious Situation in the USSR (mid-1950s - first half of the 1960s)"] <http://mdu.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/24.pdf>

²⁰ Бабий М.Е. "Законодавство о свободе совести в СССР". Вопросы религии и религиоведения. [М. Babiy "Legislation on Freedom of Conscience in the USSR". Issues of Religion and Religious Studies.] Вып. VI. *Антология отечественного религиоведения: Религиоведение Украины* [Текст]: сборник. Часть 1: Феномен советского религиоведения: украинский контекст / сост. и общ. ред. Ю.П. Зуева, А.Н. Клодного, Л.А.Филипович, В.В. Шмидта, П.Л. Яроцкого(Мoscow: ИД «МедиаПро», 2010), p. 328.

²¹ Luchterbandt O. Die Grundrechte in der neuen sowjetischen Unionsverfassung in *Osteuropa*. 1978. № 1, pp. 28-40.

displace religious faith with other worldviews, had become even more topical.²² In order to eloquently confirm the priority of the atheistic worldview over the religious one, not only criticism of religion as such was used, but also criticism of religious texts and dogmas. Thus, Yu. Tereshchenko notes:

atheism as an expression of the humanistic essence of existence does not recognize theological anthropocentrism, or, in other words, humanization of God, the most important provision of which is the requirement that man dedicate his life to knowing God, finding Him and daily strengthening this connection with God; otherwise, it is allegedly impossible to achieve the necessary solution to the problem of good and evil, moral perfection.²³

Given that pre-revolutionary Ukraine was predominantly Christian or, rather, Orthodox, Christian anthropological ideas came in for the most severe criticism. Emphasis was placed on degrading factors being used outside the context of a holistic Christian doctrine of man, but with a great deal of authority. For example, it was highlighted that expressions with a negative connotation to describe man outside of his spiritual union with God, such as "dust of the earth," "vessel of filth," "worm," used in Christianity, including the Bible (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Prov. 8:26; Job 25:6; Ps. 21:7; Ex. 41:14, etc.), suppress human dignity and therefore, "atheism is deemed as the spiritual liberation of believers, which directly depends on the nature of addressing civilizational, cultural and moral needs of individuals, in short, on the state of fullness of life."²⁴ This interpretation of Christian anthropology points to its deliberate distortion, as the basis of both the Christian view of man and the social doctrine of Christianity is the "idea of the unique value of man."²⁵ In this way, the believers were put under an incredible moral and ideological pressure despite the fact that the law supposedly protected their right to choose their worldview.

The struggle against the religious worldview was waged in such a manner with a view to creating a new type of personality—seemingly free in their beliefs and worldview choices.

²² Раушенбах Б. "К рационально образной картине" // *Коммунист*. 1988. № 4. С. 123. [B. Rauschenbach. "To the Rationally Figurative Picture" in *Communist*. 1988. № 4, p. 123.]

²³ Терещенко Ю.И. "Научный атеизм как нравственное достояние культуры" // *Вопросы религии и религиоведения*. Вып. VI. [Yu. Tereshchenko "Scientific Atheism as a Moral Cultural Heritage" // *Issues of Religion and Religious Studies*. Pub. VI.] Антология отечественного религиоведения: Религиоведение Украины [Текст]: сборник. Часть 1: Феномен советского религиоведения: украинский контекст / сост. и общ. ред. Ю.П. Зуева, А.Н. Клодного, Л.А. Филипович, В.В. Шмидта, П.Л. Яроцкого (М: ИД «МедиаПро», 2010), p. 128.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Іщук Н.В. "Соціальне вчення християнства як теоетика та теoантропoлoгiя" // *Гілея*. Серія "Історичні науки. Філософські науки. Політичні науки": наук. вісник: зб. наук. праць. Випуск 30, 2010. – С. 225-231. [N. Ishchuk "Social Doctrine of Christianity as Theoethics and Theoanthropology" // *Gilea*. Historical Sciences. Philosophical Sciences. Political Sciences Series: Scientific Bulletin: Collection of Scientific Works. Publication 30, 2010, pp. 225-231.]

Since the centuries-old history of religions, despite their diversity, was not able to solve the problem of the origin of evil and suffering, and, most importantly, the way of overcoming them, this task, according to Soviet scholars, relied on scientific atheism.²⁶

The new version of the CPSU Program, adopted at the XXVII Party Congress, emphasized that taking advantage of the benefits of socialism, the Soviet people could enjoy every opportunity to express and exercise their civic will and interests. Nevertheless, it was also emphasized that the exercise by Soviet citizens of their rights and freedoms is inseparable from fulfilling their constitutional duties. Therefore, "contributing to the expansion and enrichment of socio-economic, political and personal rights and freedoms of citizens," the party persistently demanded that every Soviet resident has a "clear" understanding of the unity of rights, freedoms, and responsibilities.

"Advocating strict adherence to the constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience," the CPSU program said, "the party condemns attempts to use religion to the detriment of society and the individual."²⁷ Meanwhile, the document notes that in the 1980s the place and role of religion in the USSR required special attention, because during that time, "a period of intensification of ideological struggle, intensification of 'psychological warfare' against the USSR," many ideological centers tried to exploit religion as "a means of disarmament of the Soviet people as a channel for the penetration of anti-communist ideas into their consciousness. To give the religion an anti-Soviet, nationalist orientation, they hope to turn it into a source of anti-social sentiment, a source of interethnic enmity and hostility between believers and atheists." In this way, religion was interpreted as a destabilizing factor designed to weaken Soviet society, to slow down its development. It was emphasized that in the new ideological struggle, the enemies of the Soviet Union had high hopes for "religious extremists" who, covering their vested interests with religion, "oppose the Soviet legislation on freedom of conscience and seek to arouse dissatisfaction with Soviet church and religion policies, as well as to spread slander about alleged violations of freedom of conscience in the USSR." Therefore, "one needs to be assertive both in exposing ideological sabotage and in proving truthful information about the real achievements of socialism, the socialist way of life."²⁸

²⁶ Токарев С.А. "Религия как Социальное явление" // *Вопросы философии*. 1979. № 10. С. 96. [S. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon" // *Questions of Philosophy*. 1979. № 10. p. 96.]

²⁷ Программа Коммунистической партии Советского Союза Новая редакция. 1986 г. – С. 54. [Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. New Edition. 1986. p. 54.]

²⁸ Материалы XXVII съезда Коммунистической партии Советского Союза. Т. 1. М., 1986. - С. 88. [Materials of the XXVII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. V. 1. M., 1986. p. 88.]

Conclusions

According to the implementation of regulations on freedom of conscience and religion in the USSR, the faithful and the clergy were the least protected from humiliation. The proclamation of the separation of the church from the state led to securing the right of the atheistic worldview, while the religious worldview was subject to devastating criticism. It therefore contributed to an environment in which atheists alone, not believers, could enjoy the freedom of opinion. The fact that the state was declared "separate from the church" did not preclude its obligation to protect the right to disseminate convictions not only by atheists, but also by believers. However, this obligation was violated at all levels, which led to the fundamentally erroneous but widespread approach, whereby freedom of speech belonged to critics of the faith, while freedom of conscience applied to religious people. The slogan that everyone has the right to profess any religion or not to profess any, and everyone has the right to freedom of speech, the right to express one's beliefs, both theistic and atheistic, remained only a slogan throughout the Soviet era.

Consequently, out of the fundamental rights declared by the Constitution of the USSR 1) the free exercise of religious cults; 2) the right to conduct atheistic propaganda, avoiding insults to the religious feelings of believers; 3) equal rights of citizens regardless of their religious affiliation or non-affiliation; 4) inadmissibility of administrative coercion in relation to religion or non-religion; 5) non-interference of the state in the internal affairs of the church and non-interference of the church and religious organizations in the affairs of the state on the basis of complete separation of church and state—none was ever implemented, but only declared.

Thus, with the help of basic legal acts on freedom of conscience and religion, there emerged a specific type of the split public consciousness during the Soviet era, characterized by a false sense of freedom to choose worldviews against the backdrop of their strict and total ideological control by the state.

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