

THE SOVIET STATE'S ANTI-RELIGIOUS POLICY AND THE POLITICAL-LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF ITS PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: *In New Uzbekistan, due to reforms leading to openness and the revival of religious values within modern needs, there is an increasing study of Soviet-era policies towards religion and religious values. This article provides information on the political and legal foundations of the Soviet state's anti-religious policy and propaganda activities.*

Keywords: *Islam, October Revolution, Church, Trotsky, revolutionary, Bolshevik, reactionary, Godless Society, Navruz, Stalin.*

The Soviet Union, established in 1922, set forth an ambitious agenda to reshape society according to Marxist-Leninist principles. This agenda included a staunch anti-religious stance that viewed religion as a tool of the ruling class used to control the working masses. The state's policy was aimed at diminishing the influence of religious institutions and beliefs, which were seen as obstacles to the creation of a communist society. For thousands of years, the Uzbek people have adhered to Islam, an inseparable part of our national culture. Islam has become deeply ingrained in the spirit and way of life of the Uzbek people, to the extent that "all our national values are formed under the influence of Islam." Therefore, we can rightfully regard Islam as a core national value. After the October Revolution, the Soviet authorities attempted to suppress Uzbek religious and national values, realizing they could not maintain lasting control over our region without altering these values.

The People's Commissariat of the Russian Soviet Republic announced on November 20, 1917, in a message signed by V.I. Lenin, "Your religion and customs... are now free and inviolable." However, a decree to separate the church from the state and schools from religious institutions was issued on January 23, 1918, also signed by Lenin. While the 1927 and 1937 Constitutions promoted the idea of freedom of conscience, other laws took effect in practice. Trotsky, regarded as second to Lenin, introduced many irregularities in implementing anti-religious measures.

Between 1917 and 1922, the Soviet authorities conducted violent and repressive policies against Muslim religious institutions, marking an initial phase of establishing a strategic path against religion. From 1922 to 1926, there

was a phase of limited religious freedom, with Soviet authorities temporarily abandoning anti-religious policies for their goals. Soviet policy mandated that anti-religious activities be conducted through education and propaganda, though Trotsky's approach was more revolutionary, urging widespread repression against clergy and closing churches.

As a result, from the 1930s, the Soviet regime banned religious festivals and cultural traditions like Eid and Navruz, even attempting to prohibit Sumalak, a traditional Uzbek dish, which had been beloved for centuries. Soviet holidays were imposed in place of these cultural celebrations, like October Revolution Day and the Red Army Day. On February 13, 1931, the Union of Militant Atheists was established in Uzbekistan, intensifying anti-religious activities and persecution of sacred places and religious ceremonies.

Propaganda played a significant role in the Soviet Union's efforts to spread atheistic beliefs and undermine religious institutions. The state employed several propaganda methods:

1. Media Campaigns: Through newspapers, radio, and film, the Soviet state disseminated atheistic messages, often portraying religion as backward, superstitious, or counterrevolutionary. Publications like *Bezbozhnik* (The Godless) directly targeted religious beliefs.

2. Education: Schools were a primary means of instilling atheistic principles in the youth. Religious instruction was replaced by Marxist-Leninist teachings, which emphasized scientific atheism. Youth organizations like the Komsomol (Communist Youth League) also promoted atheistic values.

3. Art and Literature: Art, literature, and theater were employed to mock religious beliefs and highlight the virtues of socialism and atheism. Authors and playwrights produced works that promoted scientific materialism and dismissed religious ideas as outdated and irrational.

4. Institutions and Societies: Organizations such as the League of Militant Atheists mobilized citizens against religion, encouraging public debates and demonstrations that reinforced state atheism.

The oppressive Soviet regime tried to stamp out Islam by closing mosques, destroying religious texts, and repurposing remaining religious buildings as warehouses and shops. Despite the 1937 Uzbek SSR Constitution recognizing freedom of worship, persecution of religious figures and destruction of religious institutions persisted, particularly in the 1930s.

In conclusion, the dominance of anti-religious ideas forcibly imposed for several decades shows how deeply the Soviet state interfered in religious and cultural matters. The mistaken belief that Islam opposed science, literature, and art fueled oppressive policies. Although labeled as progress, these actions

were ultimately distortions of the truth, marked by cultural blindness and efforts to defame the Uzbek people's spiritual heritage.

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