

ARCHIVAL FONDS 951 AND 952 OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AS SOURCES ON THE HISTORY OF STATE-CONFESSIONAL RELATIONS IN THE BSSR IN 1943– 1964

D. A. Holubeu

*Belarusian State University, Nezavisimosti Av., 4,
220030, Minsk, Belarus, dzm.holubeu@gmail.com*

*Supervisors – E. F. Poddubskay., Candidate of Science (History), Associate Professor;
N. V. Vashchinskaya, Senior Lecturer*

The paper analyzes documents in two archival fonds of National Archives of the Republic of Belarus. The article analyzes system of documents in the archival fonds, their formal characteristics and research potential.

Keywords: National Archives of the Republic of Belarus; formal analysis; historical source studies; soviet confessional policy; religion in USSR.

АРХИВНЫЕ ФОНДЫ 951 И 952 НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО АРХИВА РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ КАК ИСТОЧНИКИ ПО ИСТОРИИ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННО-КОНФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В БССР В 1943–1964 гг.

Д. А. Голубев

*Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4,
220030, Минск, Беларусь, dzm.holubeu@gmail.com*

*Научные руководители – Е. Ф. Поддубская, кандидат исторических наук, доцент;
Н. В. Ващинская, старший преподаватель*

В статье рассматриваются документы двух архивных фондов Национального архива Республики Беларусь. Анализируется система документов в архивных фондах, их формальные характеристики и исследовательский потенциал.

Ключевые слова: Национальный архив Республики Беларусь; формальный анализ; историческое источниковедение; религия в СССР.

Our main research – «Religious policy in BSSR in 1943–1964» was mainly aimed at studying the activities of two special state bodies – the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) and the Council for Religious Cults (CRC), therefore, sources on the activities of these bodies were taken from the archival fonds of the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus. The National Archives contain sources grouped into two archival fonds: «Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian

Orthodox Church under the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the USSR for the BSSR, from 03/26/1946 – under the Council of Ministers of the USSR for the BSSR, Minsk» (Archival fond 951); «Commissioner of the Council for Religious Cults under the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the USSR according to the BSSR, from 03/26/1946 – at the Council of Ministers of the USSR for the BSSR, Minsk» (Archival fond 952). Each archival fond is presented in 4 inventories. All inventories are digitized.

The documents this archival fonds contain are predominantly of a state origin. These documents are presented by the minutes of the meetings of the SDRPC and the SDRC, the correspondence of the authorized representatives of the SDRPC and the SDRC with the leadership in Moscow and correspondence among republican and regional commissioners. These notes and reports made possible to restore the system by which the Soviets determined to decline the religiosity among the population.

Information reports are extremely valuable for restoring the surnames of employees of the CAROC and the CRC. The formalization of the letters shows the accents and the processes let them to determine their position to the described phenomena such as: their life styles, attitudes to their work and so on.

The system-forming principle of documents is the principle of systematization of sources. The classification of sources can define written sources as the predominant ones. The most useful documents are reports from commissioners of all levels, correspondence between objects of religious policy and complaints from citizen and clergy.

Firstly, these reports from commissioners represent officials of all levels. These kinds of documents usually combine two classical types of written historical sources: documents and narrations. From documental sources one can find out statistic information, for example, number of clergy or budget of orthodox monastery. From narrative sources – description of relations, which show us how soviet administration conducted religious policy in the republic. One of the reports clears out why in middle of 1950s Minsk Seminary built the fence to separate itself from the other city.

The second important source of information is correspondence between different sides of religious institutions. Commissioners were in constant correspondence relations with the administration of Orthodox church and between themselves. Information from correspondence gives us understanding of problems of every day's religious life. Somehow such type of information helps us to reconstruct 'religious life realities' of soviet time. For example, correspondence of first post-war year shows big problems with paper and office supplies needed for the Soviet administration and the way how the Orthodox church administration tried to solve this problem or problems of the lecturing stuff for the Seminary.

The third block of information is complaints from citizen and clergy to local or Supreme soviet organs. This kind of sources is very informative from the point of how soviet system got the feedback reaction from the effects of its religious policy conducted in the country.

For more details, let's focus on correspondence, since it is the most diverse source of information. The correspondence of the soviet officials can be presented in many ways. Its local level (region, district) in the vast majority of cases is presented by the letters in pencil (most often purple, red, green or black) on a thin sheet of paper "tracing paper" of small size. Since the texts were written by hand, the deciphering is usually difficult. The nature of correspondence gradually began to change since the 1950s when many authors started to use typewriters, and the paper became of a better quality. However, the letters of the CAROC and CRC from Moscow to Minsk and back in their vast majority of cases are always typewritten on thick high-quality paper.

The detailed examination of the reports of the commissioners shows that in the first post-war years they had the similar feature of fixing information on paper: with pencil, by hand. Reports are more voluminous than ordinary correspondence: they were created on standard sheets of paper and contain at least two sheets of text. The presentation in the reports begins with a quantitative description of the clergy stuff: compulsory number of bishops and priests, psalmists and deacons. It is followed by the explanation of the reasons to decrease or increase the quantitative stuff of the clergy. Periodically, together with information on the clergy stuff, these reports contained the number of religious building and constructions. After submitting the numerical information, the commissioners usually describe their work for the corresponding period of time. This information is usually submitted in two ways: a) recommendations for solving some problems; b) recommendations to stop the submission of local information. The order of presentation of information in the CRC has the differential feature caused by the multi-confessional specifics of this body: the report is structured by the names of the denominations. In most cases, the order of presentation by the denomination is arranged as follows: Catholic denomination, Old Believers, Evangelical Christians-Baptists and so on. The description of the confessions is similar to the reports of the SDRPC: first, the description of quantitative indicators then the reasons for their changes, then the information from the commissioners' trips.

Thus, sources on the history of state-confessional relations allow us to reconstruct the events of the confessional policy of the Soviet state in the BSSR in 1943–1964. The cognitive capabilities of the sources give us the opportunity to look at these events from the point of view presented by CAROC and CRC as well as ordinary citizens-believers.

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