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Unrealized Project of “Demolition” of 26 Villages of the Moscow Region on Account of Functioning Orthodox Churches (1951)

Abstract

The article analyses the document suggesting that in the early 1950s there were plans for a significant reorganization of the administrative division of the Moscow region at the highest state level. The work, based on the principles of historicism, systematicity, and objectivity, using

comparative historical, problem-analytical, and problem-chronological methods of historical research, examines the letter of the plenipotentiary of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Council of Ministers of the USSR for the city of Moscow and the Moscow region A. A. Trushin to the deputy chairman of the Council S. K. Belyshev. Essentially, it proposed to abolish (the word “demolish” was used) 26 large villages, attaching them to the nearby villages, often smaller in size and population. The only exception was, as far as can be judged, the small village of Novaya Derevnya which was to become part of Pushkino, a large city and district center. The formal reason for this reorganization was “merger of kolkhozes and resettlement of some localities to central farmsteads of the kolkhozes.” The analysis of documents, as well as comparison of status and size of the villages suggested for the “resettlement” to the do called “central farmsteads,” disproves this. Meanwhile, true motives for such reorganization are obvious and cited quite unambiguously: “26 villages in which there are functioning churches are scheduled for demolition.” Naturally, villages (or town in case of Pushkino), to which the abolished villages were to be attached, had no functioning temples. Considering general vector of development of the relations between the Church and the state, the authors of the proposed merger had every reason to believe that new churches in the enlarged villages would never be built or restored. The document expressively demonstrates the true attitude of the Soviet government to the Russian Orthodox Church in the period, which is often and not without reason considered a time when anti-church pressure somewhat weakened, following the historic meeting of J. V. Stalin with three metropolitans in September 1943. There is no resolution on the letter of the plenipotentiary A. A. Trushin (at least on the copy with which the author of the article has worked), and we do not know its future fate. As for the plans it contains, they were never realized, as all villages, that were to be abolished on account of functioning Orthodox churches in 1951, can still be found on the map of the Moscow region.

Keywords

Source, archival document, S. K. Belyshev, Moscow region, merger of kolkhozes, Russian Orthodox Church, demolition of villages, Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, A. A. Trushin.

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