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An Orthodox Parish in the Mari Region in the Context of Antireligious Policies of the 1930s:
Based on Materials of the State Archive of the Russian Federation

Abstract

The study addresses issues of church-state relations in the 1930s. The authors relate circumstances of the closing of churches in the Mari region. The object of research is a parish church in the village of Pektubaevo in the Novy Torkal district of the Mari Autonomous Oblast. The history of this parish church through the 1930s speaks of complex and intricate arrangements between the faithful and local authorities, showcases illegal schemes and methods for closure of churches, to which the parishioners responded with appeals to the central authorities. The conflict between the parish and the local authorities was well documented: there is a comprehensive collection of documents, letters, complaints, and resolutions stored mostly in the fonds of the State Archive of the Russian Federation, which are introduced into scientific use for the first time. The documents allow to determine true and alleged reasons for the closure of the church, examine how the Soviet legislation was breached, analyze the actions of local authorities, evaluate attitudes and responses of the parishioners to the attempts to close down the parish church. The authors describe the technique of closing churches and contend that the faithful actively defended their parishes. And yet the regime's efforts to eradicate religion stultified all attempts to defend churches.

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Keywords

Russian Orthodox Church, archival documents, closing of churches, anti-religious campaign, repression, Mari Autonomous Oblast.

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