

songbooks with music, manuscripts, journals, brochures—all with a religious content. 9 July 1972

Today—Monday—10 July, 1972 at 2 p.m., Vasya Kapeti was arrested. 36 signatures, [including: 1. K. I. Shchegelska 2. M. Maslenko 3. L. Domashenko 4. Ye. Bapugak 5. Ch. Keda]

Note: This translation was made from an original carbon copy. The section between the signs ([. . . .]) is added by a single hand. The GSRC possesses many "first copies" of such documents, containing the actual signatures.

6. *Secret Instructions on the Supervision of Parish Life*

The following document contains instructions, addressed to local government authorities, about the study and supervision of religious life. Despite the 1918 Decree, which separated the Church from the State, in practice, as this document shows, government organs are not averse to interfering in the organizational life of religious groups.

Basic Questions on the Activity of Commissions¹⁵

*For Assisting District Soviets and their Executive Committees,
In Supervising the Observance of Legislation on Cults
(Vestnik RSKhD, Paris—New York, No. 83, 1967, pp. 3-6)*

1. The Social Commissions for assisting in supervising the observance of legislation on cults are set up alongside the executive committees of city and district *soviets*.

2. The Commissions are guided in their work by the laws, resolutions, instructions on religious cults issued by the highest legislative and executive organs of the Soviet State, and also by the interpretations issued by the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church¹⁶, attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR, on questions related to the application of legislation on cults.

3. People should be selected as members of the Commissions who are politically educated and who, with knowledge of the subject, are able to supervise and observe the fulfilling of Soviet legislation on religious cults by religious societies.

Deputies of the local *soviets* should be drawn in as members of the Commissions, as well as workers in cultural and educational institutions, in financial bodies, organs of popular education, propagandists, pensioners, workers in village *soviets* and other people from amongst the local activist groups.

¹⁵ These commissions were set up after the plenum of the Party's ideological commission in November 1963. See *Partiinaya Zhizn'*, No. 2, 1964, pp. 22-26.

¹⁶ This Council was amalgamated in 1966 with the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults to form the now functioning Council for Religious Affairs.

The size of the Commissions is determined by the need to study and supervise the activity of religious societies existing within a district's territory, and also by the need to expose and suppress the illegal activity of non-registered religious groups.¹⁷

The Commissions are approved by the executive committees of city and district *soviets*. The deputy Chairman or secretary of the executive committee of the city *soviet* should be selected for the commission.

4. The Commissions' duties include

(a) the systematic study of the religious situation in populated areas (regardless of the presence or absence of officially functioning religious societies), the collection and analysis of facts about believers' attendance at prayer meetings. They should study the contingent of people who go to church and perform religious rituals (baptisms, funerals, weddings, confessions), they should study the degree of influence exerted by religious societies and servants of the cult¹⁸ in attracting young people and children to religion and rituals; they must check whether religious rituals have been correctly registered,¹⁹ and while checking they should prevent the baptism of children if both parents have not consented;

(b) they must continually study the ideological work of the church: preaching, adaptation to new conditions, the methods and devices used by servants of the cult for widening or reducing their influence on some section of the population, particularly on children and the young. They should discover those from amongst the young whom servants of the cult are attempting to prepare and draw into religious work;

(c) they should consider and study the celebration of so called patron saints' days and other religious festivals in populated areas; they should analyse their negative influence on labour processes, discipline; they should work out and make suggestions for liquidating these negative phenomena;

(d) they should study the composition of religious societies (church executive committees) and disclose their most active members;

(e) they should watch strictly the observance of Soviet legislation by servants of the cult and religious societies, expose attempts by servants of the cult to break Soviet laws and they should inform the executive committee of the *soviet* about this in good time;

¹⁷ All religious groups, according to the 1929 *Laws on Religious Associations*, must be registered with their local *soviet*. Frequently, groups have been refused registration, despite repeated efforts to establish themselves legally.

¹⁸ This is a Soviet euphemism for priests, pastors and other religious leaders.

¹⁹ Weddings, baptisms and funerals, in practice, have to be registered with the parish's three-man executive committee.

(f) they should help the financial organs to expose servants of the cult, who illegally carry out religious rituals in the homes and flats of believers,²⁰ receiving payment without a receipt and hiding their gains from taxation;

(g) they should expose those (unregistered servants of the cult²¹) who appear illegally in populated areas and carry out religious rituals, and they should inform the executive committee of the *soviet* about them.

One of the main tasks of a Commission is to discover methods and make concrete suggestions for limiting and weakening the activity of religious societies and servants of the cult (within the framework of the law).

Members of a Commission systematically inform the Commission's chairman about their work and accurately carry out his instructions.

*On concluding an agreement with a "dvadtsatka"*²²

They (i.e. the *dvadtsatka's* members) should send you the text of the agreement made between your *soviet's* executive committee and the believers' parish on the question of leasing them rent-free a church building, the property of the State.

The agreement should be concluded not with the Executive committee of the parish,²³ but with the whole parish, i.e. with the *dvadtsatka*, and this agreement is signed on the one hand by the Council's chairman (in this case the person who is in charge of the religious cult) and by all members of the *dvadtsatka*.

It should be noted that existing *dvadtsatki* in all believers' parishes do not inspire great confidence. Almost all of them are composed of elderly people, illiterate fanatics to whom we cannot entrust State property.

Recommend that they form new *dvadtsatki* of literate people, who can administer the parish (not fanatics), and who will honestly observe Soviet laws and your suggestions and orders.²⁴

When such a *dvadtsatka* has been formed and is to your satisfaction, then sign an agreement with it.

There should be twenty people, no more,²⁵ in a *dvadtsatka*. It is com-

²⁰ Permission for a priest to visit a sick person in his home and administer the sacrament must be obtained, in practice, from the executive committee of the parish. Unregistered ECB groups frequently hold meetings in private flats.

²¹ "Servants of the cult", like religious groups, must also obtain registration.

²² The *dvadtsatka* (from *dvadtsat' = twenty*) stands for the parish in law. It is composed of a minimum of twenty parishioners according to the 1929 *Laws on Religious Associations*. The running of the parish is in the hands of the three-man executive committee.

²³ The executive committee should be elected by the *dvadtsatka*.

²⁴ The selection of a *dvadtsatka's* members is legally the task of the parishioners. According to the 1918 Decree on the separation of Church and State, parish affairs should be free from state interference.

²⁵ See footnote 22.

posed of citizens who have applied to the parish expressing a wish to be members of the *dvadtsatka* and bear material responsibility for the property handed over to the parish, informing the said body also of their date of birth, education, place of work and home address.

In some parishes, agreements were made on the opening of a church : annul these.

Three copies of the agreement should be signed and an inventory of the cult's property, also in three copies, should be attached. The inventory should include all the contents of the church, apart from objects for sale.

Buildings standing within the church's enclosure—inhabited buildings, garages, sheds and others (except watchmen's huts and offices) also inhabited buildings with outhouses standing within the church's enclosure, are leased to the parish. The collective farm should conclude an agreement for leasing them to the parish and should exact rent according to the article as stipulated by the resolution of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars, dated 26 March, 1926, point "D" (see Housing Legislation, 1957 edition, p. 542 on religious buildings). This also applies to prayer houses.

The leasing of prayer houses and habitable buildings does not free the parish from paying taxes (insurance, ground-rent, building tax). The agreement on the leases is concluded and signed by the council of a collective farm.

After the agreement has been signed and concluded, the parish (i.e. *dvadtsatka*) may elect an executive body (chairman, assistant and treasurer) and three people for the Auditing Commission.

It is desirable that you should participate in the selection of the executive organ's members, and choose people *who carry out our line*.²⁶

To complete everything, you should send the official at the *soviet's* executive committee a copy of the agreement for registration, with an inventory of the cult's property appended, a copy of the lease agreement, a list of the *dvadtsatka's* members and a list of the members of the parish's executive body and Auditing Commission.

I recommend that you do not include amongst the members of the *dvadtsatka* employees of the church, priests, precentors, watchmen, cleaners, grooms, stokers, drivers, those who make the communion bread, bell-ringers.

The following may be elected to the *dvadtsatka* by the parish from the church's employees : the chairman, assistant, treasurer and no-one else.

signed by: the Official of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church in region.

²⁶ Italics in the Russian text. See footnote 23.