
EVERYDAY RELIGIOUS LIFE OF GERMAN POPULATION IN NORTH KAZAKHSTAN REGION IN THE LATE 1950s

**Zhanna Sabitbekovna Mazhitova^{1*},
Kulpash Myrzamuratovna Ilyassova²,
Gaukhar Sagyndykovna Shamshiyeva³,
Ainur Talasbekovna Shukeyeva⁴, Altyn Tumenbaevna Yespenbetova⁵
and Marat Zennatovich Utegenov⁴**

¹ JSC 'Astana Medical University', Beybitshilik st. 49A, Nur-Sultan, 010000,
Republic of Kazakhstan

² L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Satpayev st. 2, Nur-Sultan, 01008,
Republic of Kazakhstan

³ Academy of Logistic and Transport, Shevchenko st. 97, Almaty, 050000, Republic of Kazakhstan

⁴ Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University, Abai st. 76, Kokshetau, 020000, Republic of Kazakhstan

⁵ Kyzylorda University Bolashak, Abai st. 31A, Kyzylorda, 120000, Republic of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The article examines the everyday religious life of the German population in the late 1950s. In these years Kazakhstan became a place of virgin and fallow lands development, there was also a tightening of anti-religious policy after the XX Congress of the CPSU and the intensification of anti-religious struggle. The harsh attitude of the Soviet state towards religion did not prevent the Germans from adhering to their religious principles and national cultural values. Since their arrival in Kazakhstan the German population managed to establish strong economic communities with their own culture, ethnic identity and religious traditions. The religious everyday life of the German population is analysed based on secret memorandums of the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs of the North Kazakhstan region Lyapunov, which allowed the authors to examine the variability of the everyday religious life of the German population and demonstrated the vitality of religious traditions and rituals. The authors focus on the religious practices of German communities, who made efforts to preserve their culture and identity amidst the anti-religious struggle. The conclusion is that despite the opposition of state and party organs, the proportion of believers and sympathisers of religion in this period in northern Kazakhstan was quite significant.

Keywords: history, virgin land, policy, religious, everyday life

*E-mail: zhanna013013@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The Germans of Kazakhstan are one of the numerous ethnic groups that first appeared at the end of the 18th century during the Russian colonization of the southeastern outskirts of the empire. Over time, the German population managed to create strong economic communities in Kazakhstan with their own traditional culture and strong ethnic identity. However, there were not only these institutions that distinguished the resettled German population. One should agree with the opinion of one of the leading researchers of the history of Germans in pre-Soviet Kazakhstan and in the USSR, V. Krieger. He noted that having arrived in the region, Germans, due to their extensive knowledge and ability to organise joint cultural and economic space of newcomers and locals, with time became authoritative administrators of the region (for example, ‘conqueror’ and first governor-general of Turkestan, General Konstantin von Kaufmann, governor-general of Western Siberia, Gustav Christian Gasforth and others). In addition, the role of German scientists, explorers and travellers in the study of the culture and history of the Kazakhs and other peoples of Asia is irreplaceable. The works of Peter Simon Pallas, Johann Gottlieb Georgi, Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, Gerhard Friedrich Müller and many others are still handbooks today for those engaged in the study of traditional Kazakh society [1]. In addition, the German population contributed greatly to the genesis and development of capitalist relations in Kazakhstan by investing in the creation of profitable companies in industry and agriculture.

In the pre-revolutionary Kazakh society, the resettled of Germans determined their dominant ideas about the norms/deviations and style of everyday behaviour according to traditional cultural values, including the postulates of various religious movements. According to the first general census of 1897 in Akmola region alone (the territory of northern Kazakhstan, where Petropavlovsk uyezd (or district) was located) there were 3,752 Germans, who adhered mainly to the following religious beliefs: Lutherans - 0.76%, Catholics - 0.29% of the total population. There were only 200 Mennonites of both sexes [2]. The majority of the population was Kazakhs and Russian peasants who moved to Kazakh lands in the 18th and 19th centuries. Therefore, the seemingly low percentage of religiosity among Germans should not be misleading. The level of religiosity among the German population was quite high and stable, since the performance of religious practices within the community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the norm of their everyday life.

Soviet power demonstrated its atheistic orientation from the first moments of its existence, which entailed a sharp reduction in the sphere of influence of religious institutions on the outlook and socio-cultural space of the population. Although religion was declared a private matter for every Soviet person, the Soviet regulations, which secularised acts of birth and death, marriage and divorce, openly invaded private life and pathologised the traditional forms of daily life associated with religion.

While religious practices were once the norm for the majority of the German population, controlling virtually all areas of human activity, the circle of influence of the Church (houses of worship) shrank considerably as the new regime of the Bolsheviks gained strength. Quantitative statistical data in official reports did not reflect an objective picture of the state of religiosity among Germans. The reports of the Council of Religious Affairs and other supervisory bodies are preserved in the archives, but they are still classified. However, according to the materials of Kazakh researchers, it can be concluded that in the first decades of Soviet power, visits to Catholic churches and houses of worship and the performance of religious rites were quite crowded and tended to increase [3-9].

The history of the deportation of peoples to the territory of Kazakhstan is of great interest to scholars. In the 1930s and 1950s the Kazakhstani land became a place of exile and deportation for many 'punished' peoples. The expulsion and physical extermination during the 'ethnic cleansing' also affected the German people. Many interesting archival documents have been published in recent years, making it possible to delve into this subject and uncover stories that had previously been hidden from the academic community. However, the process of x-raying the problem is long and painstaking, requiring careful, non-partisan study of the issue.

In the Soviet Union, Germanophobia led to a persistent negative image of Germans in society, moreover, the concept of 'German' was practically equated with 'fascist' [W. Krieger, *The autonomist movement of Russian Germans in the debates*, <http://www.viktorkrieger.homepage.t-online.de/html/interview.html>]. It is no coincidence that the fate of the Germans was most dramatic. The German population was forcibly deported both before the war (1936) and during the first years of the war (1941-1942). The eastward advance of the front led to the liquidation of the autonomous republic of the Volga Germans by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of 28 August 1941 and the deportation of the Volga Germans to the Kazakh Republic, Altai and Siberia. The deportations took place under extreme conditions and timing. So, already in a couple of days after the deportation started the Resolution of Akmola Regional Executive Committee and the Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Kazakhstan dated 30 August 1941 noted the arrival of 25 000 Germans from the autonomous republic. They had to be placed "by means of settling whole collective farms into existing collective farms <...> and also by means of settling into several collective farms" [Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Fund 708, Inventory 5/2, Case 68, Sheet 28]. The flow of arriving Germans in the first months of the war was of a permanent nature. According to the report of M. Yakovlev, deputy chief of the evacuation department of the Kazakh SSR, 50687 Germans were evacuated to the North Kazakhstan region by January 1942: 10,878 men, 16,799 women and 23,010 children.

In the report from the head of the NKVD department (or People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) of the Kazakh SSR Novik to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks (or the Central Committee

of the CP(b)) of Kazakhstan, 17,950 Germans lived in the territory of the North Kazakhstan region (hereinafter - NKR) prior to deportation. According to NKVD data, 62,473 Germans were registered in the territory of NKR in December, 1942 during later forcible deportation. There were several such waves of forced deportations to the region. At the end of 1942, several more echelons of people arrived in North Kazakhstan, who were mobilized into labour armies in various industries of Kazakhstan (Table 1).

Table 1. Information on resettlement and mobilization of Germans [10].

No.	Name of the regions	Number of Germans before the resettlement	Settled Germans	In total, Germans in Kazakhstan	Mobilized and sent Germans
1	Alma-Ata	3,000	8,840	11,840	1,339
2	Akmola	10,130	75,418	85,548	11,408
3	Aktobe	401	11,632	12,033	–
4	East-Kazakhstan	856	28,499	29,335	4,163
5	Dzhambul	1,150	10,480	11,630	1,500
6	Karaganda	10,000	20,639	30,639	3,739
7	Kyzyl-Orda	215	4,807	5,022	527
8	Kustanai	8,000	53,317	61,317	8,149
9	Pavlodar	4,900	51,317	56,217	6,940
10	North Kazakhstan	17,950	62,473	80,423	11,860
11	Semipalatinsk	2,500	41,913	44,413	4,597
12	South Kazakhstan	1,715	24,798	26,513	3,473
13	West Kazakhstan	500	-	500	-
14	Guryev	21	-	21	-
Total		61,338	394,133	455,531	57,695

As it can be seen from Table 1, the settlement of Germans was particularly compact on the territory of NKR. The Stalinist repressive machine during the Second World War deployed deported Germans in all sectors of heavy industry and agriculture in Kazakhstan. In addition, the tightening of surveillance led to the deployment of political campaigns to find ‘enemies of the people’; the authorities organised a widespread attack on any dissent and labelled entire peoples. The totalitarian regime remained distrustful of its people.

Thus, here is a short excerpt from numerous ‘notes’ of that time about the ‘counter-revolutionary’ activities of the German settlers: “The investigation established that Wunder Yakov Heinrichovich, being in close relations with anti-Soviet-minded people - Germans such as Scherf and Diehl, who systematically conducted anti-Soviet work among the population, Wunder, as a Party member, knowing about the provocative actions of Scherf and Diehl, instead of timely signalling, essentially concealed the anti-Soviet actions of the above persons” [10, p. 211]. In part, such ‘letters’, ‘references’ and ‘memoranda’ from state bodies ‘reprimanded’ non-Russian peoples, formed an artificial image of the

‘enemy’ in the public mind and explained the relentless control of the special power structures by ‘punished’ peoples.

Guided by the principle ‘The Communist idea and religion are incompatible’, the ideological machine of Soviet power widely and decisively promoted the ‘sacrifice syndrome’ among the masses. However, the broad masses, sacrificing their lives in the name of a ‘bright future’, managed to preserve their spirituality, including their religious identity [11]. Thus, although the state was exerting force and ideological pressure on society to supplant the sphere of religious influence, religious institutions continued to operate among the German population, especially in rural areas.

The anti-religious policy of the state in the Khrushchev decade marked a frontal attack on religious institutions. In spite of this, religious values in the sphere of family relations of Germans, due to their survival instinct and the locality of the people on the Kazakhstan land, continued to be a significant part of everyday life. In almost all families, funeral and wedding ceremonies, the rites of baptism and the ‘harvest festival’ were widespread, and Christian holidays such as Christmas, Easter and other important dates were widely celebrated.

2. Method

Scientific religious studies widely apply a set of methods that allow to study religious systems in the process of their genesis and development, taking into account both general and special regularities of religious institutions involved in this process.

3. Discussion

3.1. Plots from the religious life of the German population in the late 1950s, or memoranda of the authorized Council for Religious Affairs

It should be emphasized that the historiography of the German population’s religious life includes a large number of works by both domestic and foreign researchers and scholars. These works raise a wide range of issues, from the history of the emergence, everyday life of religious German communities on the territory of Kazakhstan to issues of the preservation of religious, ethnic, and environmental identity during the years of the totalitarian regime and the struggle for German autonomy [12-24].

Religious scholars note that in the 1950s-1960s two groups of believing Germans formed in Kazakhstan [9]. The first included people of the older generation who were deeply religious; they were experts in the fundamentals of the dogma to which the members of the religious group belonged. The second united middle-aged people, although young people often met. This group did not adhere strictly to religious canons and often combined religious views with scientific knowledge.

Activity in this group occurred during important religious holidays. If the holidays fell on working days, there were mass absences from work, which led to conflicts with state and party authorities. Religion was thus gradually displaced into the sphere of influence of a small community group, but continued to be present in the life of a certain part of German society.

Working in the North Kazakhstan State Archives (NKSA) with secret files from Party Fund 1 (North Kazakhstan Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan), the authors studied Case No. 2542, begun in 1957, called 'Memorandums, briefing notes and correspondence on the work of Soviet bodies, ..., on the activities of religious groups and sects' [State Archive of Akmola Region (SAAO), Fund 1, Inventory 1, File 2542]. The documents of this folder, more precisely, 17 memorandums on 155 pages, were prepared by the commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs (hereinafter - the commissioner) of NKR under the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR Lyapunov and were of a secret nature, therefore it is only now that researchers have been allowed access to it. An analysis of the information reflected in these notes raises a number of questions to which there are yet no comprehensive answers. For example, what caused the total inspection of the activities of religious associations (Abrahamic, cults, 'sects') of Germans in the 1950s? After all, at that time, as noted above, religion had retreated to the domestic level and posed no threat to the Soviet state.

Who initiated the commissioner's frequent visits of Council for Religious Affairs specifically to places of settlement of the German population, as there is no information in this folder about the religious cults of, for example, the Russian, Ukrainian and other peoples? There are several memos concerning the activities of Muslim communities of the Kazakhs and Chechen-Ingush. However, there are only a few of them. A textbook answer to these questions can be found in many works on the history of the German people deported to the east of the Soviet country. We believe that a study of the material in this folder will make it possible to contribute to the further elucidation of this problem.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the material presented in the file, we would like to draw attention to the secret note-instruction of the deputy head of the Department of the State Security Committee under the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR for the Akmola region Zhalmagambetov from 1957 No. 5535 addressed to the secretary of the Akmola regional committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan G.A. Melnik. We believe that instructions of such content were also sent to other regional centres of the republic. It noted that "recently, the West German authorities and various reactionary organizations have been conducting a campaign to persuade Germans living in our country to leave the Soviet Union for the Federal Republic of Germany" [SAAO, Fund 1, Inventory 1, File 2542, Sheet 110]. According to the author of the note, the Federal Intelligence Service of Germany pursued the goal of obtaining in the person of these Germans sources valuable information and reliable personnel for subversive work against the USSR. To do this, some people, as noted in the instructions, were collecting the addresses of Germans wishing to travel to

Western Europe, compiled lists of these people, processed the relevant documents, and then forwarded these documents to the embassy through specially selected couriers. At the same time, there was an annual increase in the number of Germans wishing to leave for the FRG (for example, by the beginning of 1957, the number of Germans who visited the Embassy of the FRG in the Akmola region alone reached 105 people). Considering that “the emigrant moods of the Germans cause certain damage to the interests of our state, we (the National Security Council (NSC) - *authors*), for our part, are working to decompose their emigrant sentiments and prevent them from leaving for the Embassy of the FRG, using the available agents and other opportunities for this purpose” [SAAO, Fund 1, Inventory 1, File 2542, Sheet 112]. A very important point of this document is that it instructed local state and party bodies “to strengthen political mass work in places of concentration of Germans <...> to *immediately report on all changes in the mood and life of the German population* (italics ours - *authors*)”. In our opinion, this and other instructions gave ‘the start of a large-scale campaign’ to collect versatile information about the German population.

The deportation of the Germans led to the emergence of a small number of Catholic communities in the late 1950s, which tried unsuccessfully to legalise their religious activities. Already after the ‘thaw’ of 1956 against undesirable peoples, small communities of Lutherans, Adventists and Mennonites, often operating illegally, began to form in the NKR.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the commissioner’s tasks of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR included the identification of believers between the German nationality and familiarization with the religious activities of Mennonite groups, Pentecostals, Sabbatarians and Seventh Day Adventists (hereinafter - sda) [North Kazakhstan State Archives (NKSA), Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 78].

The solution of the tasks assigned to the commissioner assumed verbal reports to the secretary of the regional committee on agitation and propaganda Omarov, as well as written reports to the regional authorities. The leitmotif of all memos of the commissioner was the statement of the progressive growth of religiosity among the religious part of the population of the region, as well as the special development of religiosity among the German population and the increasing coverage of this population by the ‘sectarian’ movement. A separate report was devoted to the significant development of Lutheranism and Catholicism among the German population, the growth of the movement of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (hereinafter - ecb), Pentecostals and sda among this population in Konyukhovskiy, Poludinsky and, especially, in the Petropavlovsk districts of the NKR. Particular attention was paid to the influence of religion on the youth of the region.

The German population of the region was about 7,000. The Germans were settled in all 11 districts of the region. However, their main mass lived in the districts of Petropavlovsk, Poludinskiy, Konyukhovskiy, Bulaevskiy, Priishimskiy and Leninskiy. The percentage of believers among them was

significant and amounted to at least 60-65% of the total adult German population.

This percentage included both those of relatively small proportion of believers who did not conceal their religious beliefs and did not avoid participating in their open manifestations, and those of much larger proportion who did not emphasise their religious beliefs and exercised them sporadically or generally, for one reason or another, concealed their religious beliefs. However, they did not interrupt their connection with religion and resorted to it only on special or exceptional occasions in their lives.

The 'concealed' nature of German religiosity is connected, in our opinion, with serious violations of the law on cults, which were expressed in the illegal closure of churches and houses of worship, dispersal of prayer meetings, confiscation of religious literature from believers, gross interference in internal church life and numerous facts of infringement of the legitimate rights and interests of religious citizens. In a number of cases, believers were brought to court and imprisoned, essentially only for their faith in God [Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RSACH), Fund 3, Inventory 60, Case 3, Sheet 213].

Let us dwell on the main religious denominations, whose activities were covered in the Commissioner's notes of Council for Religious Affairs Lyapunov.

3.2. Lutherans and Catholics

Judging by the data presented, in the region in the 1950s there was an increase in the religiosity of believers of almost all religious movements. This growth of religiosity is noted, to one degree or another, among believers of all nationalities, but it is especially intense and especially manifested among the German population of the region. The dominant trend among the believing part of the German population of the region was Lutheranism, which embraced up to 65-70% of believing Germans. The remaining 30-35% were almost entirely Catholic believers. In this main body of believers, followers of the two main long-standing religions, in isolated cases, in some settlements, were families, predominantly Baptist, partly Mennonite and Adventist, which in the past had neither religious influence in the region, nor prospects for further development [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 34].

The remaining 30-35% were almost entirely Catholic believers. In this group of believers - followers of the two main religions that have long been professed, interspersed in isolated cases, in separate villages, families predominantly Baptist, partly Mennonite and Adventist, who in the past had neither religious influence in the region, nor prospects for further development [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 34].

The strongest and most authoritative group, whose voice was listened to by many Lutherans in the region, was active in the village of Peterfeld. The leaders of this group did not make repeated attempts to open a house of worship in Peterfeld in recent years (the first and at the same time the last rejected

request for this was submitted in 1946). No other unregistered Lutheran groups made similar requests.

This can be explained by the fact that in the pre-revolutionary and early Soviet times, the German Lutherans living in the NKR had never had permanent churches or houses of worship. They have satisfied their religious needs during occasional visits of pastors from Omsk or Akmolinsk. Therefore, the main aspiration of Lutherans was not to open a prayer house in their settlement, but to get permission for a registered pastor to come to them once or twice a year to perform a full liturgy and a number of full ceremonies [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 93].

It is worth noting here that in the Peterfeld group, only 28 Lutherans systematically attended weekly prayer meetings. In the lists of this group, however, there were 90 confirmed Lutherans who had asked Lyapunov for permission to invite Pastor Bachmann to join them for a few days to perform rituals. According to Lyapunov, an equal number of unconfirmed Lutherans could join this application, if it were needed.

Thus, the religious group in Peterfeld had not 28, but about 200 believers, but these believers admitted their connection with religion only on special occasions. In other districts of the region there were few Lutheran groups, from 2 to 3 or 4 per district, but judging by the example of the Peterfeld group, their small number was only apparent. This fact prompted the author of the notes to conclude that 'sudden' religious activity may arise among Lutherans, if necessary.

In our opinion, the growth of possible religiosity among Lutherans, judging from the statistical data presented in the notes, is exaggerated. Let us try to understand the reasons for this situation.

Working with the aforementioned case from the NKSA, the authors of this article drew attention to the fact that the given ratio of the number of followers of different faiths among the believing Germans, inevitably, with a general increase in religiosity, should lead to a particular activation of both major religions professed by them and in the first place to an increase in the Lutheran Church cult [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 92]. In fact, this did not happen.

Moreover, there were several reasons for this. First, the 'growth' of religiosity among the Lutheran believers did not cause them to violate the dogmatic stipulation that all 'sacraments' with them could only be performed by a church minister, and by no means a layperson. Since there were no pastors in the NKR at the time, even in the largest unregistered congregation in the village of Peterfeld, the German Lutherans were deprived of the opportunity to perform their most important religious rites, which was not at all optimistic about the general religious state of mind of the believers.

Lyapunov cites a single case in which a layperson, the leader of a small group of up to 30 Lutherans in the village of Shiferskoye, Petropavlovsk District, D. Kuntzman, yielding to the requests of believers, began performing marriage ceremonies, baptizing children and unbaptized adults in early 1957,

thereby ‘committing a blasphemous deed’. We emphasise that this act was an exception to the general rule. Interestingly enough, other Lutherans did not approve the initiative of this group. Therefore, all efforts of the Lutherans were directed towards obtaining permission for the necessary rites to be performed by Pastor Bachman of Akmolinsk.

Unfortunately for the believers, he turned out to be an unregistered minister of the church, and the question of his invitation disappeared of its own, which in turn affected the mood of the Lutherans. Secondly, the size and activity of a religious group depended on its registration with the authorized body, where this procedure lasted 2-3 years from the date of application. In addition, in this matter, according to Lyapunov, there was no need to rush, moreover, “now I (Lyapunov – *authors*) have learned that in Kazakhstan there are such regions as, for example, Karaganda, in which the German population is ten times outnumbers the same population in our area. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be more appropriate to register a Lutheran community, not in our region, but in the Karaganda region, so that the pastor registered with it would be given the right once or twice a year to serve the believing part of the German population in other regions.” [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 93] Thus, Lyapunov proposed to shift the centre of the Lutheran church from the region to other districts of the republic, which made it impossible for local Lutherans to intensify and promote the activities of their religious community.

The third, but not less important reason was that the number of young people following the church was inexorably declining. The absence from prayer meetings of a large proportion of the group’s members came at the expense of non-attendance or non-regular attendance by the youth. Commissioner Lyapunov put the following explanation of this trend into the mouth of the leader of the Kara Guga village church, Janke Ewalada: “Many young men have already been observed drinking, smoking, courting the girls, who accept their advances, and they are all more interested in entertainment and pleasure than in prayers in the prayer meetings. The connection between the church and the youth remained purely formal; in fact, in their hearts, most of the youth had already departed from the doctrine. The inconstancy of the youth, characteristic of their age, only compromises the group.” [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 152] To prove his concern about the situation, the second leader of the group, Zilke, cited the following case: “During a water baptism, in June 1957, three young men were baptised. All of them seemed to have spoken with great feeling and sincerity about their wish to serve the Lord and follow the precepts of the Church before they were baptised. Meanwhile one of them got drunk in the first evening after baptism, the second was noticed in drunkenness and dissolute life in some weeks, the third stands on the verge of this dissolute life.” [NKSA, Fund 22P, An inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 152]

It is interesting to mention the insufficiently reasoned and clearly declarative reasoning of the leader of the religious community Zilke with reference to the current situation, proving his dependence on the checking official and the established patterns in society, which do not reflect his true

position. For example, he attributed the withdrawal of young people from the church to the fact that they did not and could not have any particularly firm religious convictions and therefore most young people went to church out of curiosity, following the example of their peers and fearing to fall behind them.

With the passage of time, as young people became accustomed to a monotonous religious life, which gave them nothing new and prohibited the impulses typical of youth, they began to grow weary of their stay and now their connection with the church has weakened [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 152].

The memorandums, which covered in detail the celebration of certain holidays by believers, are especially interesting, since the author dwells in detail on the quantitative, gender and age composition of believers, changes in ritual practices, if any. The volume of work and the format of the conclusions of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs especially increased on the days of major religious holidays. In his memorandum No. 0-23/s dated May 24, 1957, Lyapunov noted that it was new in his practice, in connection with the celebration of Easter, to get a preliminary appeal to him by representatives of unregistered groups of Lutherans and Catholics, Germans by nationality, with a request to extradite them permission to invite clergymen from other regions of Kazakhstan to hold prayer meetings at 'Easter'.

Thus, representatives of the Lutherans G.K. Schwartz and G.H. Shik turned to Lyapunov with this request on behalf of the Peterfeld group of the Petropavlovsk region, the largest unregistered Lutheran group in the region. They presented him with a list of names signed by 90 Lutherans (22 men and 68 women), who asked to invite pastor Bakhman from Akmolinsk to Peterfeld for Easter. The list included people at least 35 years old, that is, those believers who had once undergone 'confirmation'. The number of younger Lutheran believers who had not undergone 'confirmation' to join this request was, as Schwarz and Schick stated, approximately 75-100 [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 48].

Doubting the loyalty of the Lutherans to the Soviet authorities, at the same time, Lyapunov believed that the activities of Lutheran groups were a serious obstacle to the development of the sectarian movement among the German population of the region. Therefore, he believed that "the registration of the Peterfeld group, in the event of such a need, would be very appropriate as a measure to counteract the spread of sectarianism. I proceeded from the significance of the German population in the NKR." [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 94]

A different situation developed with adherents of the Catholic faith. If the activity/passivity of the Lutherans did not cause alarm among the state authorities, then the activity of the German Catholics, who were two times less in the region than the Lutherans, was the subject of numerous checks and notes of the authorized bodies. Unlike the Lutherans, Catholics have repeatedly made attempts to register their community. For this purpose, a group from Asanovo village of the Petropavlovsk district sent ordinary members to the Council for

Religious Cults three times with a request to be allowed to register the community and invite a pater (ksendz) from Karaganda or Sukhotino to them for a short time. The attempts turned out to be fruitless, but, as the author of the notes wrote: "In this matter, it is important to note not only the revealed desire of the Catholic group in Asanovo and its registration to open a prayer house, but also the fact that the number of this group, determined by attending prayer meetings, which was supposed to be a maximum of 35-40 people, turned out to be 6-7 times more than expected when it came to one of the most significant events in the life of the group" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 95]. Not even this circumstance excited Lyapunov, but the fact that shortly after the appeal of the Asanov Catholics, he received a written application from German Catholics from the Vozvyshensky state farm in the Bulaevsky district in the amount of one hundred Catholic families with a request to allow them to build a prayer house at the state farm to meet religious needs. "The statement, signed by only 10 believers, was left without consequences, but there is no doubt that, if necessary, this statement could have had not 10, but not less than 200 signatures" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 95].

Furthermore, contradictions between official rhetoric and discriminatory practices, as well as fears of possible religious assimilation, served as an impetus for a revival in the activities of even those groups that did not include male believers. The information contained in the secret notes shows the increased activity of women among believers. Women took on the role of community leader and with their sermons aroused great religious activity among the little believers and believing parishioners. Here we are dealing with a religious precedent, when the community entrusted a woman with the duty to 'teach, sanctify and govern the faithful', to preach the canons of religion. According to Lyapunov, the desire to involve women in this active religious life arose "as a result of a well-thought-out decision of the spiritual centre in order to replenish the ranks of believers, and it must be admitted that this decision has already borne fruit" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 10].

For example, in Skvortsovka village there was a Catholic group of believers, the biggest Catholic group in Poludinskiy district of North Ossetia, with a core group of 15 people: 14 women and one man. They were all elderly people. The role of the leader was played by M. Lukanovskaya, 52 years old. She held prayer meetings from time to time, no more than once a week - on Sundays at home [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 142].

A similar situation developed in the village of Furmanovka, where the Lutheran group consisted of six people. They were all women. With the exception of Maida Sommer, born in 1921, all the other women were elderly and senior. Prayer meetings were held once a week, on Sundays, but not regularly. During the winter, prayer meetings were held at the home of Sommer's mother, Lang Paulina, 70 years old. On the days of major holidays, these meetings were attended by all six members of the activists and 3-4 of four women who did not go to regular Sunday meetings. Groups led by their female leaders conducted baptisms and funerals of the dead, as well as other ceremonies [NKSA, Fund

22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 144]. There were several such examples in Lyapunov's note.

Lyapunov devoted a separate part of his observations to Kellert, a sixty-year-old old man, a former German priest, who expressed a desire to return to priestly activity in his declining years. In a conversation with Lyapunov, Kellert noted that the state authorities were not sufficiently familiar with the development of the religious movement among the German population in the east of the country and therefore underestimated it. Moreover, the state did not see the real picture of the everyday life of the Germans, from which the inequality of believers of German nationality arose. Perhaps it is worth agreeing with Kellert's opinion that parity relations between Kazakhs and Russians did not extend to ethnic minorities living in the republic. The Germans were given only the possibility of assimilation or self-isolation in closed communities. Therefore, the Germans painfully endured their inequality with other national minorities and sometimes openly expressed their dissatisfaction. It was expressed, in particular, in the fact that a significant part of the Germans living in Kazakhstan and Siberia tried to return to their historical homeland. Most likely, knowing the note-instruction of the deputy head of the NSC Directorate Zhalmagambetov, Lyapunov reported: "That is why many of them turn to the representative of the German embassy in Moscow with a request to facilitate their return to West Germany" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 95]. It was most likely that Kellert was no exception, since he intended to go to Moscow in the near future to clarify all religious issues important to him in the Council. As a result of a conversation with Kellert, Lyapunov concludes that, to a certain extent, will negatively affect the further work of Catholics in the region in registering their communities and will lead to increased tacit supervision over the activities of the communities. Here are some fragments of Lyapunov's speculations: "The striking change in Kellert's views, who traded his position as a well-established Soviet worker for the cloak of the priest and, most importantly, the emergence of significant, in our area, unregistered Catholic groups, is certainly not an accidental phenomenon. They are the result of the growing influence of the cult of the Catholic Church on the initial until recently groups of German Catholics and the coverage of this influence by numerous tribal members of these groups, who until then had hardly shown their religiosity in anything. The almost simultaneous occurrence of all the above events suggests that they arose *as a result of some extraneous influence* (our italics - *the authors*), but I have no sufficient grounds to assert this." [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 95]

The content of Lyapunov's notes evokes an unequivocal reaction, but the essence is not only in the emotional assessment of these documents. They played an unsightly role in the history of the religious life of the German population during these years. As a result of them, in 1957, not a single application filed by Catholics for the registration of religious groups and for the opening of prayer houses in the places of residence of these groups was satisfied [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 96].

3.3. Mennonite Germans

Lyapunov's notes paid considerable attention to the denominations active in the region (Adventists, Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Pentecostals), which had contacts with the outside world and therefore, according to Lyapunov, posed a 'threat' to Soviet society. In this section, we consider the activities and doctrinal features of the adherents of a small but influential group, the Mennonites.

According to Lyapunov's reports, the ratio of the two dominant religious forces, Lutheranism and Catholicism, which covered almost the entire German believing population in the region, was substantially altered, as was the significant regional development among the believing Germans of the Mennonite, Baptist, Adventist, and Pentecostal faiths. It is no coincidence that, by Lyapunov's definition, the study of 'the life of the German population of the region' was still one of the top priorities of the state authorities.

On the territory of the NKR, within the boundaries that existed at that time, neither in pre-revolutionary times, nor in the first years after the revolution, any Mennonite religious movement was ever born that would lead to the creation of organized religious Mennonite groups [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 35]. This does not mean, however, that there were no Mennonites among the German population of the region. There were individual Mennonite families in German villages in some districts of the region. Most of them were found in the Petropavlovsk, Konyukhovsk and Poludinsk districts, but even here, their numbers were small.

Interesting observations are recorded in the note concerning the activities of the Mennonites in the village of Skvortsovka, Poludinsky district. The author of the notes found in it 'the germ' of a possible religious Mennonite group in the future, and therefore, the author wrote, "religious life in this village will be the subject of my special attention" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 36].

In the 1930s a Mennonite group first emerged in the area, which after some time disintegrated. In 1950 four members of the group were arrested and convicted under Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the Kazakh SSR. (Under 58 of the Criminal Code of the Kazakh SSR, they were prosecuted for organizational activities aimed at committing especially dangerous state crimes, as well as participation in an anti-Soviet organization.) Despite this, just a year later, the group was replaced by a new one, whose members called themselves Lutherans and, in their rare and small prayer meetings, observed the ritual characteristic of the prayer meetings of unregistered Lutheran groups. Fulfilling his official duty to collect reliable information about religious cults, Lyapunov went to the village and, through direct conversations with believers, tried to establish their real religious affiliation. Surveys showed that the group of believers consisted of 25 people, but there were only six were Lutherans. The remaining 19 were Mennonites, of whom 17 were Mennonite Churches and two were Mennonite Brethren. Thus, the presence in the group of the majority of

Mennonite-Churchmen, close to the Lutherans, and the participation of several Lutherans in the prayer meetings of the group, gave it a basis to call itself a Lutheran religious group. Moreover, the order of prayer meetings in the group was no different from the order of prayer meetings in Lutheran unregistered groups, and the distinctive Mennonite rite of foot washing was never observed, even on 'Holy Thursday'. However, members of this group made no secret of the fact that it was Mennonite and that they steadfastly adhered to the requirement of this doctrine that only adults be baptized, ages 16-18 and older. Water baptism itself, according to them, had not been performed with them for several years, since their group, having no authoritative leader, was not active, and even prayer meetings were not held systematically, but from case to case, and then only in the winter period of time.

In winter, the activity of the group is somewhat more active. This is explained by the cessation of fieldwork, in which the majority of believers were employed, and the visits to them during this period of Mennonite preachers from other places. So, in the winter of 1956-1957. Mennonites I. Wagner from Isil-Kul, Omsk region, as well as Philipsen from Asanov of North Kazakhstan region [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 141] came to Skvortsovka.

Again, we see a situation where a woman becomes the head of an influential religious community. So, in this village (the centre of the Mennonites), the leader of the group was the fraternal Mennonite Eva Garder, an old, but still quite vigorous woman of 77 years old. The second fraternal Mennonite was her daughter M. Fresen, 50 years old. Most Mennonites are middle-aged and elderly people. The five youngest are 25-30 years old. Mennonite prayer meetings were held at the home of E. Garder. They were held no more than once a week, on Sundays. The religious activity of the Mennonites arose under the influence of the propaganda of visiting preachers, and therefore "The Skvortsovskaya group, the only Mennonite group in the region, deserves special attention both from the Authorized Council and from local governing bodies" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 37].

The Mennonite families in the area belonged to two streams of this doctrine, namely, the followers of the so-called Mennonite Brethren Community and the followers of the Mennonite Brethren Community. The difference between them was that in the Mennonite congregation water baptism was performed by sprinkling the baptized with water, while in the Mennonite Brethren congregation it was performed by immersing the baptized person completely in water. For both Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren, water baptism was administered only to adults. The distinctive outward attribute of foot washing was no longer observed.

Remaining deeply religious people, the Mennonites, due to their small number and disunity from each other, could not organize their religious groups and hold prayer meetings. Meanwhile, their desire to satisfy their religious needs, according to them, was so great that they did not stop before switching to the Baptists, in whose teaching they did not find significant differences from their religion. This transition gave them the opportunity to meet their religious

needs in the Petropavlovsk registered community of ecb. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Mennonites were members of the Baptist church [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, File 306, Sheet 37]. However, in their hearts they still remained devoted to their old teachings, the teachings of their fathers and grandfathers. In a frank conversation with Lyapunov, the Mennonites stated that, at the first opportunity of religious communication with the Mennonite group, they would again leave for this group, since they were still associated with their religion.

The visiting Mennonite preachers were the subject of Lyapunov's speech at the narrow meetings of the CPC Regional Committee Secretary, Comrade Omarov. Lyapunov reported his suspicions about this issue as follows: "I have reported on the ongoing visits to unregistered religious groups of Lutherans, Catholics and, mainly, sectarians among the German population of the region, visiting preachers and unregistered clergy, including clergy released from Correctional labour camp" [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 48]. As a result of both meetings, appropriate measures were taken to counteract the development of the 'sectarian' movement among the German population of the region and to stop the active work of clergy and religious activists released from places of detention.

Mennonites were reluctant to send their children to Soviet schools, strongly and systematically forbade their children from going to the cinema, clubs, amateur performances, participating in sports performances and other entertainments and games typical of youth. Lyapunov gives a list of children who had only primary education. However, it is worth noting here that this issue is hardly the fault of German parents. The thing is that since 1940, the Soviet government deliberately limited the receipt of secondary, secondary specialized and higher education, introducing tuition fees. The country needed workers.

Although the Germans had gained access to higher pedagogical education since the 1950s, the indicators of the Germans were several times lower than the level of education of the 'chosen' titular peoples of the republic. The Mennonites themselves explained the short duration of their children's stay in schools by the desire of the teenagers themselves to finish their studies as soon as possible and go to work in order to have an independent income. Working professions helped the Mennonites, drafted into the Soviet army, to serve in the economic units of military units: carpenters, blacksmiths, masons. It is worth agreeing with Lyapunov that it was precisely for the sake of being able to comply with this law 'Thou shalt not kill' parents accustomed their sons from childhood to those specialties that, if they were drafted into the army, could provide them not with service in the ranks, but in the economic units of military units. The Germans, due to various unspoken restrictions, mainly mastered working professions, which later greatly facilitated their integration in Germany [NKSA, Fund 22P, Inventory 5, Case 306, Sheet 152].

4. Conclusions

According to Lyapunov, the reasons for this increase in the religiosity of the believing mass of the population lay primarily in the increasing activity of religious propagandists and the lack of counteraction by cultural and educational and other bodies whose direct task it was to counter this activity.

The Khrushchev decade was a setback from the Stalinist regime. The Soviet authorities pursued a policy of total control and restraint over the activities of German believers with regard to religious institutions. The few communities that were active in the region met with formal resistance from the state authorities to naturally satisfy their spiritual needs. Interesting precedents and features revealed during the checks of the Commissioner for Cult Affairs by Lyapunov proved the variability of the everyday religious life of the German population, demonstrated the vitality of religious traditions and rites, allowing German women to work in religious communities. Despite the existing obstacles, the religious communities of the German population continued their activities, making every effort to preserve their culture and identity.

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