

**PROTECTION OF THE MONUMENTS OF UKRAINE
IN THE STATE POLICY DURING THE 20-30th YEARS
OF THE XX CENTURY**

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-571-89-3_64

Nowadays, in Ukraine there is an increased interest in national traditions and cultural monuments, that is why the problem of lost cultural values in modern Ukrainian historiography appeared on a “new level”. With increasing interest in this topic, some aspects of the attitude of the Soviet regime towards Ukrainian history and culture and the destruction of its national monuments began to be explored. However, the analysis of literature suggests that the problem is under the study and has not sufficiently developed yet, and some of its aspects have not attracted the attention of historians at all.

So, after October 1917, while establishing the state protection of cultural heritage, the Soviet government proclaimed the preservation of the cultural and historical values of all nations that were part of the Russian Empire. Therefore, on November 24, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars (RNK) and the Russian Central Executive Committee (Central Executive Committee) adopted a decision “On the transfer of trophies to the Ukrainian people” [1, p. 3], which were taken away from Ukraine after Catherine II. The first security measures were implemented in Ukraine in January 1919, when two sections were created at the Kharkiv provincial department of public education: the museum and the monuments. To the districts of Poltava, Kiev, Chernihiv and Ekaterinoslav provinces, was made an application of the urgent measures to protect the historical and cultural values left by previous owners. Taking into account the conditions of the war, there was a need to create a state body that would manage and coordinate the preservation of cultural heritage on an all – Ukrainian scale. Therefore, in February 1919, the Ukrainian Committee for the Protection of Monuments of Art and Antiquity (VUCOPMIS) was established in Kharkiv. By the decree of the Soviet Government of Ukraine on April 1, 1919, all historical and artistic values on a territory of the republic were transferred to the

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charge of the People's Commissariat of Education. Throughout Ukraine, the nationalization of historical, cultural and artistic values began to take place. It was subjected, first of all, to museums, estates and farmsteads, historical and ethnographic and artistic institutions of the largest cities of Ukraine. Thus, in June 1919 a special decree on the basis of nationalized collections of Bogdan and Varvara Khanenko was created by the Museum of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences; from 1934 it was the Kyiv State Museum of Western and Oriental art. The same decree was the nationalization of a collection of works of art by an industrialist, collector and sponsor Oscar Hansen, on the basis of which the Third State Museum was created, as well as the Kiev Art – Industrial and Scientific Museum, which was named as the First State Museum. Since 1924 it was called as the Ukrainian Historical Museum named after T. Shevchenko, and since 1965 – the State Historical Museum of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In the same year, it was declared the property of the republic with the corresponding section of the Holosiivsky Forest, which belonged to the Kievo – Pechersk Lavra (the former Goloseevsky Desert). Its control was entrusted to the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and the Museum of Religious Worship was created on the territory of the Lavra itself [2, p. 107]. The decisions of the Soviet government and the activities of the Ukrainian Committee for the Protection of Sights of Art and Antiquities (VUKOPIS) created certain prerequisites for the deployment of museum building. If in 1910 in Ukraine there were 24 museums, and in 1917 – 36, then in 1922, on the basis of the requisitioned collections, there were organized 63 new museums [3, p. 188].

The mid-twenties was very promising for Ukraine. In June 1926, the Ukrainian Central Committee (VUTSVK) and the Council of People's Commissars (RNK) approved the “Regulations on Sights of Culture and Nature” [4, p. 27]. According to this document, the state registration and classification of immovable landmarks, its scientific research, creation of a network of historical –cultural and natural reserves, museums and other cultural establishments began. A promising plan for historical and archaeological research was developed, which in 1928 already had scientific expeditions in 30 (out of 40) districts of Ukraine. However, in the late 1920s, this movement was suspended and the protection of monuments began to decay sharply. Antiquities were considered as architectural and artistic works that reproduce the epic of feudalism and capitalism. According to the same scheme, the issues of protection, research, use and popularization of monuments were also considered. It was considered as unnecessary to preserve the fortifications of antiquity of the ruling classes. In practice, this led to the destruction of antiquities, especially of a cult character: monasteries, churches, and also estates of historical and cultural destination.

At the end of the 20's most of the monuments of historical and architectural value appeared to be cathedrals, churches and synagogues. In June 1929, the second congress of the Union of militant unbelievers proclaimed the struggle against religion as one of the most important areas of the class struggle and one of the main conditions of the socialist offense. Following the ideological aggression, the campaign for the destruction of ancient collections and monasteries began in the

policy order. According to the NKVD (NKVD) of the USSR in 1917 there were 106,356 existing houses of worship of all faiths, and in 1928 – 38,194, including Orthodox decreased respectively from 77,767 to 32,995 [1, p. 11]. Monasteries, churches, churches, synagogues were closed and disassembled on the decision of citizens for a building material. On the one half of Ukraine in the 1927–1932 almost all wooden churches that were achievements of Ukrainian architecture, were destroyed, except churches in Novgorod – Seversky, Lebedin, Novomoskovsk and several other cities [1, p. 15]. In Ukraine at that time not only the pictures and photos of ancient churches, crosses and bells, but also embroidered crosses were destroyed.

Not only religious buildings, but also buildings of civil architecture were destroyed under the pretext of obstacles to new construction or street traffic. For example, due to the order of the local authorities, under the pretext of acute shortage of bricks and stones, the remains of the castle of Bogdan Khmelnytsky disappeared in Chyhyryn. In general, the attitude towards the Cossacks was “special”: the burial places of all hetmans of Ukraine, Cossack leaders and Cossack cemeteries were destroyed. Survivors of the mutilated graves of the atamans of Ivan Sirka and Kostya Gordienka survived.

Institution of the protection of monuments, having no opportunity to prevent the demolition of religious and civil structures, were limited to measures to partially preserve the property that remained of them. For evaluation of religious property, special commissions were formed consisted of representatives of the local council and a representative of the Department of Public Education. The last one was given the right to withdraw things of historical, artistic or archeological significance.

In October 1931, in order to slow down the process of damage and destruction of monuments, a decree “On the State and Tasks for the Protection of Monuments of Culture and Nature” was adopted, which noted the unsatisfactory state of storage and use of cultural property. The resolution stated that on the contrary to the current protective law in recent years, state and public organizations and individuals have illegally destroyed many cultural and natural monuments [1, p. 16]. It was proposed to strengthen the general concern for the preservation of all recorded cultural monuments from destruction, and also to approve registers of newly discovered monuments, and to expand the network of historical, cultural and natural reserves. In addition, the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and other scientific and educational institutions were invited to combine their research work with the protection, study and propaganda of cultural and natural monuments. Unfortunately, despite all these proposals, all these measures which was developed have remained only at the level of declarative plans. In fact, the monuments of archeology, history, architecture and nature were beyond state security. They were scattered across different departments and business organizations. Its fate, as a rule, was solved by officials who had nothing to do with the problems of preserving and studying cultural values.

Along with the destruction and rebuilding of architectural monuments, huge losses were in historical, cultural and artistic values too. At the end of the 1920's, a sale at the western auctions of works and art and antiques, organized by the Union association “Antiques” began, and in the 1930's it had been growing in acquire scale.

The Soviet government referred to cultural values as a commodity, a source of foreign currency. Almost priceless old treasures were sold. The civilized world did not know such a sale of national historical and cultural values. Ukraine received only 18 million rubles from this “cultural export”, which amounted to more than 6,000 tons of different values, accounting for a small proportion of the total import volume in the USSR (about 3.5 billion rubles) [1, p. 30]. In addition to the patches of history and artistic works of museums, libraries, archives, the Soviet government generously embittered, for political reasons, foreign diplomats and businessmen. This was especially noticeable when Western countries began to cut trade relations with the USSR. Isolated values that fell into the State Museum fund repositories were also not insured against destruction: they were drowned due to the lack of proper storage and non-tacit tensions by employees of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the Antiquarian Association, the United State Political Office – the People's Commissariat of Internal cases (ODPU – NKVD), foreign and their own collectors.

At the end of the 1930s a wave of destruction of monuments began to fall. What reasons have led to this, even now it is hard to say clearly. Probably the administrative-command system, which was so intensely planted in society, got a certain stability. In the protection of cultural monuments, the republican administration in their own negative experience came to the understanding that the total destruction of cultural property did not add authority to the state. The uncontrolled mass sale of works of art and antiquities abroad was stopped, attention was paid to the preservation of monuments of military valor and its use in patriotic education. The government once again managed to radically reorganize public administration in this area.

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