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**PEACEKEEPING ACTIVITIES OF MUSLIMS ORGANIZATIONS  
DURING THE PERESTROIKA IN THE USSR**

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**Abstract**

This work covers the interaction of SAMEUS (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia) with state authorities, as well as the peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS and its chairman, Mufti Talgat Tajuddin, during the perestroika. The work used archival materials of the current archive of the Council on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, authorized for the BASSR. The article provides an analysis of the complex international situation and the efforts of peacekeeping forces to maintain peace on earth. Regulations governing the relationship between the religion and the state have been used. State bodies were guided by the provisions of the Constitution on freedom of conscience. They implemented the decisions on strengthening atheistic education and countering foreign clerical propaganda. Moreover, there was the resolution on strengthening the struggle against the influence of Islam. The document stated that party organizations of the Union republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the autonomous republics of the North Caucasus do not conduct explanatory work among Muslims and atheist work. With the beginning of reconstruction, the mistakes of the previous policy on the religious issue began to be corrected. Equality of faiths had been proclaimed and state control and regulation of religious life had been abolished. The policy of atheism in the USSR was replaced by the freedom of worldviews and confessional self-determination. Religion is once again becoming an important factor in the social and political life of the country.

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*Keywords:* SAMEUS, reconstruction, Islam, cooperation, peacemaking, religion



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## 1. Introduction

As a result of the atheistic policy of the Soviet state, several generations of Soviet people had no idea of religion. In the late 70s of the XX century, there were 6-10% of believers of Christians in God, but they also had the vaguest ideas about faith and religion. The same situation was observed among the followers of Islam. The shortage of the personnel of professional clergy, the lack of continuity in religious education, the crisis in the spiritual life of believers were developing against the background of ideological pressure from the state authorities. With the beginning of perestroika, the mistakes of the previous policy on the religious issue began to be corrected. Equality of faiths had been proclaimed and State control and regulation of religious life had been abolished. The policy of atheism in the USSR was replaced by the freedom of worldview and confessional self-determination. Religion was once again becoming an important factor in the social and political life of the country. People hoped that religious associations would help to overcome the crisis in society, benefit the person and society, and counteract negative phenomena – such as drug addiction, prostitution, drunkenness. That is, they began to engage in their inherent social functions. Party-state bodies began to be more loyal to religion and clergy in the reports of the Commissioner for the BASSR Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. It was noted that foreign clerical centers and the media did not influence the clergy, and the greatest activity of clergy and religious organizations was noted in their charitable and merciful activities (Current archive ..., 1985). Tolerance began to grow. Good and tolerant relations were established between believers and unbelievers, religious organizations and local bodies of Soviet power, and confidence in the authorities on the part of believers in matters of freedom of conscience was increasing. The imams of mosques in each case thanked the Soviet authorities for a peaceful and well-off life. Each sermon ended with a call to prayer and a prayer for the health and well-being of Soviet leaders. All these processes were fully supported by believers, but many representatives of the clergy expressed concern about the delay in the adoption of the new Law on Freedom of Conscience. Special hope was placed on the possible authorization under the new law of organized education of children of religion. The clergy were engaged in the promotion of the Soviet way of life and the achievements of the country. Materials covering peacemaking began to appear in the media, especially with regard to Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia, the charitable activities of religious associations and the education of youth in the spirit of patriotism and service to the Motherland. The materials of republican newspapers, radio and television broadcasts became calm, objective; expressions that offend the feelings of believers completely disappeared in these materials – closer contacts were established with public groups – branches of the Foundations for Peace, Culture, Health and Mercy. The clergy began to actively participate in public life, began to speak more often on the pages of republican newspapers, on television and radio. Clergy meetings with labor collectives and students became frequent. They spoke mainly on issues of morality, moral education, humanitarian and material assistance to the elderly and the weak. In the newspaper *Leninets* (4 November 1989) dated November 4, 1989, a photograph of the bishop's meeting with convicts entitled "With the Word of God" was posted.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In the context of globalization, the unstable political, economic and environmental situation in the world, international cooperation in solving these problems are of particular relevance. International tensions are continuing to increase. Contradictions in the political, economic and military fields between different geopolitical forces are growing. Especially now we need mechanisms to resolve these conflicts. One such instrument of settlement is peacemaking, a social activity aimed at eliminating the threat of war or at ending it. The world community, including religious and political leaders, must take measures through cooperation and negotiations to preserve peace on Earth, taking into account the interests of various countries. Since the mid-1980s, great attention has been paid to conflict prevention and resolution in various parts of the world. It is becoming clear that only through peacekeeping and international cooperation can the global problems of the modern world be solved.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of this study is state-confessional relations in the USSR, the search for solutions to the settlement of international conflicts and the struggle for peace and cooperation of peoples. Peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS and its chairman Talgat Tajuddin in the 80s of the XX century have been considered.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the work is to study the peacekeeping activities of the Duma during the years of reconstruction in the USSR. The tasks of this work are to analyze the prerequisites for the religious revival and interaction of SAMEUS, to show the peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS and cooperation in solving international conflicts, and to consider the peacekeeping functions of Mufti Talgat Tajuddin and its impact on defusing tensions in the world.

## **5. Research Methods**

The main methods of research were the principle of historicism, systematicity, comparative analysis, objectivity and chronological consistency.

## **6. Findings**

The largest part of the country is administered by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia (On the way to freedom of conscience, 1989). Islam is one of the greatest teachings in human history. Guided by them, one can correctly solve the most burning problems put forward by life and find answers to its most difficult questions (On the way to freedom of conscience, 1989). The beginning of its spread on the territory of the Soviet Union is attributed to the period of the reign of the second righteous caliph, Omar ibn al-Khattab (Babakhan, 1980). SAMEUS fully supported the events of the party and the government to restructure the country and strengthened external relations and established new ties and contacts with foreign religious figures. The peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS

and its chairman Talgat Tajuddin have increased significantly. This was also facilitated by the personal qualities of the mufti. He was highly educated, fluent in foreign languages, had good memory, political flexibility, possessed oratory, diplomatic gift and the ability to convince. He was respected among believers in the Soviet Union and abroad. His main focus was on the protection of peace on Earth. Peacekeeping activities were also carried out in all parishes of the Spiritual Administration. On Fridays, there were prayers and sermons on the occasion of religious holidays, the imams and khatibs spoke to believers, supported the peace-loving policies of the Soviet state and governments called for the peoples of the world to live in friendship and harmony. Mufti Talgat Tajuddin actively participated in international conferences and symposia, spoke with explanations of the peace-loving policy of the Soviet Union. On October 17, 1986, on the recommendation of the Mufti, Friday sermons were delivered in support of M.S. Gorbachev at the negotiations in Reykjavik. From June 20 to 24, 1986, by invitation of the Islamic Appeal World Society, in the city of Tripoli, the capital of Libya, he was the chairman of the SAMEUS at the head of the delegation of Muslims of the USSR. The delegation met with the Secretary-General of the Islamic Appeal World Organization, as well as with the leader of the Libyan Revolution, Muammar Gaddafi (Current archive..., 1986). Issues of mutual interest, cooperation for peace and justice were discussed. A cooperation protocol was signed. In 1986, the World Islamic Conference "Muslims in the Struggle for Peace" was held in Baku, where Talgat Tajuddin made a report. After the conference, a group of delegations visited Ufa and Kazan. At the end of the conference, numerous responses were received by SAMEUS from Morocco, Japan, Turkey and the Republic of Guyana. The reviews expressed the hope that the people of the world and Muslims in particular would be able to save humanity from the danger that threatened it. Other clergy were involved in the peacekeeping of SAMEUS and visited countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Tunisia, etc. From February 15 to 26, 1986, the delegation of the World Islamic League from Saudi Arabia visited the USSR. On the trip around the country, they were accompanied by Mufti Talgat Tajuddin. Members of the delegation spoke positively about the life of Muslims of the Soviet Union. Members of the Tunisian delegation, also after a trip to the cities of the Soviet Union, expressed hope for the continuation of ties and contacts with Muslim organizations of the USSR and religious educational institutions. In early 1986, Mufti Talgat Tajuddin sent a letter "Appeal" to prominent religious, political and public figures in 15 countries. It said, "And it did not compel me to write these lines, anything but the brutal aggression, struggle and fruitless conflicts taking place in the world, such as in Lebanon and occupied Palestine, the war between Iraq and Iran, and this frenzied arms race that dissolves the fruits of civilization and culture in order to eliminate humanity and destroy life from the face of the earth". The worst thing is the plans of those who seek to take over the Domsday case and, play with the fate of humanity from space, imagine themselves as the "Supreme Judge". In addition, this was at the time when millions of people continue to die of hunger and drought (Current archive..., 1986). He urged not to be silent and neither to put up with it. Expressing support for the Soviet program of destruction of nuclear arsenals over 15 years, the Mufti expressed the hope that in the capabilities of people to add at least a drop of work in order to consolidate peace and friendship between the peoples of the planet. At the end of December of the same year, another appeal was sent by T. Tajuddin expressing concern about the continuation of nuclear tests by the United States and other nuclear powers. That, on behalf of the Soviet Union, called upon co-believers to take all necessary steps to explain to

themselves and to Muslims of other countries all the pernicious situation, emerging in the world as a result of the policies pursued by the United States and other nuclear powers of the West. The letter was sent to 17 religious figures from 15 countries (Current archive..., 1986). The leadership of SAMEUS and personally Mufti Talgat Tajuddin took an active part in the speedy solution of the problem of Afghanistan on the principles of harmony, reconciliation and cooperation, to ensure the peaceful life of the Afghan people. The spiritual administration also appealed to the Secretary-General of the World Islamic Congress, Imanullah Khan, to assist in alleviating the situation of Soviet troops captured during the fighting in Afghanistan and help them return to their homeland. In March 1987, Talgat Tajuddin took part in the first international meeting of ulema preachers in Morocco. In his speech, he raised the problems of modern times: the struggle for peace, the struggle against the threat of nuclear war, and the strengthening of friendship and trust between peoples. Thanks to the efforts and authority of the mufti, paragraphs accusing the USSR of "occupation of Afghanistan" and the policy of rejecting Muslims from Islam were excluded from the decisions of the conferences. In October 1987, a delegation of representatives of Soviet Muslims led by T. Tajuddin and Chairman of SAMCAK Mufti Babakhanov visited Saudi Arabia, where they took part in the celebrations on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the World Islamic League. At a joint meeting, some members of the Soviets, immigrants from Afghanistan, sought a decision to create an Afghan government in exile and break diplomatic relations between the USSR and Muslim countries (Current archive..., 1987). The Soviet delegation opposed these proposals, building reasoned arguments. The position of the Soviet delegation was supported by the representatives of Lebanon, Egypt and the UAE. As a result, these proposals were not reflected in the conference documents. Mufti was also a member of the board of the Soviet Peace Fund, a member of the board of the Foundation for Mercy and Health. Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia also provided material assistance to preserve peace on Earth. In total, since 1985–1989, 820 thousand rubles have been transferred to the Peace Fund. Moreover, in the subsequent years, SAMEUS had always supported the charitable and merciful actions of Muslim organizations in the region. However, due to a decrease in income, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and due to increased costs in religious organizations themselves (for the construction of mosques and payment of clergy), transfers to various funds slightly decreased. In 1990, there were no more transfers to the Peace Fund. Yunusova (1999), describing the peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS, notes, all peacekeeping activities, of course, necessary and useful, began to turn into an abstracted form of the existence of clergy and religious institutions. The daily needs of ordinary believers and the pressing problems of communities have disappeared from their attention. SAMEUS and its leadership turned into "wedding generals" wandering from one international meeting to another (Yunusova, 1999, p. 271). Refuting the above, the Supreme Mufti Talgat Tajuddin in his speech at the Moscow Interfaith Peacekeeping Forum in December 2000 said, "Probably, young representatives of the clergy think that in Soviet times we gathered at peacekeeping forums simply to put a tick. No. Then a lot has been said about the preservation of world peace, there are huge stocks of nuclear weapons of mass destruction now. This threat has not passed; it is like a "Damocles sword"; it hangs over our heads today. But today there is already a question of what will happen in our house, how we will live" (*Risalat Newspaper*).

By summarizing and studying the materials on peacekeeping activities of SAMEUS and its chairman Talgat Tajuddin, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Despite 70 years of atheism and the pressure of state power on society and believers, persecution of religion, Islam has survived in the minds of the people. This was not prevented by the lack of continuity in religious education and the lack of Muslim clergy.

1. The policy of perestroika put into effect mechanisms that restored and revived the religious life of Soviet people. The social functions of religious organizations played a role in the moral education of society.

2. Since the end of World War II and the beginning of the cold war, the number of military conflicts, the arms race, and the development of nuclear capabilities around the world steadily increased. The threat of nuclear war was growing, in which there will be no more winners. As a result of military conflicts, the human right to life has been directly threatened. Innocent people become victims.

3. In these conditions of tension in international relations, due to the threat of the destruction of humanity in the nuclear war, SAMEUS and its chairman Talgat Tajuddin had to fight for peace and justice. Thanks to his authority and his gift of persuasion, he has had a great influence on the cause of international cooperation for peace on Earth. He was a member of the organizing committee of important international conferences and their honorary chairman. He contributed to the resumption of diplomatic relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia. The Supreme Mufti is a member of the Council for Interaction with Religious Associations under the President of the Russian Federation and a member of the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia, a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Military Fund of the Russian Federation. Sheikh-ul-Islam Talgat Hazrat Tajuddin is nominated as "Man of the Year 2001" by the Russian Biographical Institute for strengthening interreligious ties and peacekeeping in the nomination "Religion" (Rakhimkulov, 2010).

## 7. Conclusion

As a result of the work done, the following conclusions can be drawn. 1. State-confessional relations in connection with the beginning of restructuring in the country have become more democratic. Equality of faiths has been proclaimed and State control over religious organizations has been abolished. 2. Religion begins to perform its inherent social functions. 3. SAMEUS and its chairman Talgat Tajuddin begin to engage in peacekeeping, participate in the settlement of international conflicts and actively fight for world peace.

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