

Documents

1. *Atheist Education* (complete text) (*Prauda* 15 September, 1972, p.1)

The formation of a scientific, Marxist-Leninist world-view amongst the broad masses of workers is at the heart of all our Party's work. Such education, emphasized at the 24th Congress of the CPSU¹ is inseparably linked with the decisive defeat of survivals of the past in men's consciousness and behaviour, with the banishment of all that is outdated, all that contradicts the morality and views of socialist society. Amongst the most tenacious survivals of the past are religious prejudices.

For religious prejudices to be completely eradicated the spiritual culture and education of all strata of the population must be raised, and educational work among the masses must be patient and extensive. Many Party, *soviet*,² trade-union and other social organizations have amassed valuable experience of this kind of work. With ever better results, various forms of verbal propaganda on scientific atheism are being used—from lectures and talks to evenings of questions and answers. The network of buildings and rooms devoted to atheist propaganda is growing in towns and district centres, exhibitions of atheist literature are being organized in local libraries. In Belorussia, for example, about a thousand schools for learning basic knowledge about nature and society have been created with believers in mind. An important role in the formation of a scientific world-view is played by the people's universities devoted to atheism, the network of which has almost doubled in size recently.

Nevertheless, by no means everywhere does the scale and level of scientific-atheist propaganda comply with the Party's demands. This work is being slowly developed in the Kurgan, northern Kazakhstan and some other regions. In some places not enough concern is shown for systematic lecturing on anti-religious themes. Let us take Uzbekistan: in some districts the number of lectures for last year not only failed to increase, but actually decreased. Workers in a number of cultural and educational institutions stand back from the struggle against religious prejudices.

Of course, the results and effectiveness of the measures undertaken, and not their quantity, are the most important aspect of atheist education. Little good will come of lectures if they are of a generalized, abstract kind

¹ Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This congress took place on 31 March-9 April, 1971. (NB: all footnotes by the Editor).

² The noun, *soviet*, means a council. These elected bodies exist at all administrative levels, in villages, towns, districts, regions and republics, with at the head the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—the highest organ of State power.

and disregard the fundamental changes which have taken place in men's consciousness under the influence of scientific and social progress and also under the influence of the refined activity of contemporary religious organizations. The propagating of scientific atheism cannot tolerate clichés and primitiveness, nor, in this case particularly, can the smallest theoretical and factual mistakes be permitted—a failing from which some lectures and talks suffer. Criticism of religious survivals is sometimes limited to debunking certain forms of religious ritual or to unmasking the work of sectarian preachers and believing fanatics. The reactionary essence of such survivals, organically alien and opposed to the conscious builders of the new society, must be exposed. In order to increase the effectiveness of atheist education, Party organizations are called to pay greater attention to analysing scientifically the degree of and causes for the tenacity of religious prejudices amongst certain strata of the population.

In contemporary conditions it is very important to expose the link between religion and nationalistic survivals. In a number of cases, churches and sects are known to claim the role of preserving national values.³ We still come across attempts to present religion as a characteristic of a particular national way of life, and the non-observance of religious festivals as almost a form of apostasy from “the laws of our fathers”. Such attempts are supported and built up in every possible way from outside by bourgeois propaganda, aimed at reviving religious and national prejudices. All methods of ideological struggle must therefore be used in order to repulse decisively the intrigues of bourgeois ideologists, who aim at distorting the process of mutual enrichment of spiritual culture among Soviet nations, and at presenting religion as an essential attribute in the development of their social and cultural life. Now during the days of preparation for the 50th anniversary of the USSR's formation such a struggle acquires particular significance.

Party organizations are bound to be concerned that our scientific atheist propaganda be not only systematic and organized on a mass scale, but also militant and on the offensive. This depends to a great extent on drawing into the ranks of active fighters against survivals of the past the mass of the public, of production collectives and all conscious workers. And above all every communist must be a militant atheist. Instances such as occurred in a number of districts in the Kemerovo, Orlov and Nikolaev regions, when individual Party members and members of the Komsomol themselves enacted religious rituals, must not be allowed.

The training of atheist propagandists is of paramount importance in perfecting forms and methods of atheist education. A good deal has been

³ This appears to be happening in Lithuania. See pp. 9-11.

done and is being done by us as far as this is concerned. In Moscow, in the Leningrad, Lipetsk and Gorky regions, in the Tartar Autonomous Republic, faculties and departments for training atheist lecturers have been created in evening universities of Marxism-Leninism; in the Ukraine, in Moldavia and Lithuania seminars, run on a permanent basis, have been widely held for such lecturers. But, as a whole, the preparation of propagandist cadres for the anti-religious front needs to be expanded and improved significantly. An important role belongs here to the All-Union "Znanie" (Knowledge) society, which has great possibilities for drawing academics, specialists, writers and artists into such work.

To form a scientific outlook and overcome religious prejudices is one of the tasks of all ideological workers, of organs for mass information and propaganda. However, the press, particularly that aimed at the young, does not always contain the required systematic discussion of atheist education for the rising generation. Material on these themes published in newspapers and journals is sometimes superficial. Films are not sufficiently used for atheist education. Our press, television and radio should be efficient propagandists of atheist ideas.

To educate the workers in a spirit of scientific communism and decisively to overcome religious survivals involves raising yet higher the activity of the masses in the construction of the new society, in the struggle for the victory of communist ideals.

2. *Notes by a Russian Christian* (abbreviated text) (*Veche*⁴ No. 1)

They say it is winter now . . . "Winter wants to be". But I think that spring is on the way. Torrents of spring. Floods. An inundation if you like.

Winter being over, spring thoughts have awakened in everyone. A torrent of thoughts. They're difficult to hold back.

After the events we have experienced, everyone has become a philosopher. And I'm a philosopher of a kind. I cannot hold back the torrent of my thoughts.

That is, perhaps it is winter at the moment. The winter of a World Catastrophe. But this is one side, as seen from the valley. But I want to look from the other side, from the heights. From the heights one can see spring coming. Exactly that, spring coming. Flowers and all the rest are ahead.

The snow has now melted and water has poured forth. Water has poured forth over the Russian land. I went out onto the bank. I remember how, as a child, I used to love watching the water pouring forth, flooding

⁴ *Veche* is a new neo-Slavophile samizdat journal.