

believers. The dialogue must serve to mislead world public opinion and to spread the notion that freedom of religion exists in Lithuania.

The Soviet authorities have made determined efforts to stop the Chronicle appearing. In issue No. 9 the editors boldly state:

Dear readers: Despite the government's repressions, the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* will be published in the future as well. It will stop appearing only when the government will grant to the Church and to the believers at least as much freedom as is guaranteed by the USSR Constitution. We ask our readers to continue with their assistance in collecting material for the *Chronicle*. It has, however, no use for unreliable information and inaccurate facts. Such material will not be published. Each piece of news, fact or event, relating to the situation of the Catholic Church, the present state of the nation, the arbitrary actions, repressions and other discriminations by the government organs, must be thoroughly checked, clear and accurate. Numbers, dates, names, places and other data must be especially clear, correctly recorded and authenticated. We await your information.

Soviet Propaganda against Islam

The following extract from "Twilight in the 'Taza Pir' Mosque" by L. Ashkerov, published in the Trade Union newspaper Trud (15 August, 1971) claims that Islam and Marxism-Leninism are ideologically opposed and that improved propaganda against Islam is necessary.

The reverend Mullah ceased talking. His black robe and the semi-darkness of the sacred chapel emphasized the whiteness of his carefully tended beard, and his brown eyes seemed to emit a ray of gentle, benevolent wisdom. The echo of his tuneful voice still sounded in the ears of his congregation. It seemed to touch something within them, melting the ice of distrust, dissipating the tensions which they had suffered up to now, and inspiring a childlike desire to move into a fairy tale world.

This is where religion originates. This is its cunning simplicity and its great weakness. It paralyzes the will, transports people out of life with all its complications, induces them to abandon the fight and replaces reality with a glittering mirage. I said as much to the reverend Mullah. He waved it away. "All words! All just words, my son." He paused for a moment, and then went on more loudly and firmly. "Tell me how you expect to convince me? We know all about your policy and your theory. But you have no knowledge of the Koran. You hold your intellect and your mind under control. We have all the dreams and the inexplicable that exists in people – feelings, the human soul. How can you hope to argue with me?" His bony fingers closed on the gold embossed cover of the Koran.

It struck me that, whether we liked it or not, there was a grain of truth in what the old man said. How many of us, atheists, know the sacred books well

enough to be able to floor our opponent? To expose his philosophy? Do we have such an ample supply of convincing popular literature or films dealing with anti-religious subjects?

A learned individual arrived in Baku. He had come to give a lecture to the Caspian Sea oilwell workers on an anti-religious subject. The club was crowded, and silence reigned. Quarter of an hour later, nobody was listening to the lecturer. From the rostrum there poured a flood of abstruse words, difficult to understand "agnostic attitudes", "monistic teachings", "dualism". A middle-aged, sturdily built worker turned to his younger next door neighbour and asked "What is dualism?" The young man did not know.

Miscalculations of this kind have recently aroused the close attention of the Baku propagandists, the Party and trade union activists. It is becoming more and more clearly understood that anti-religious propaganda must no longer bear a purely academic character. It must be militant. It must make a convincing exposure of all the falsity, hypocrisy and deceit of the religious contentions. You will never succeed in bringing a believer over onto your side by arguments of the type: "There is no God, because no God exists". The believer must be given convincing, indisputable evidence. And that evidence must be available to those who carry on anti-religious propaganda. Train propagandists. That is the task set for themselves in Baku by about 200 Atheistic Corners in factories, lecture halls, a special Faculty at the University and the Azerbaidzhan Trade Union Council.

A Muslim's Identity

To be a Muslim in the USSR does not necessarily involve belief in Islam. But many who are Muslim by nationality also observe religious rites. The following extract is taken from an article entitled "What is a Muslim?" by S. Dorzhenov (Nauka i Religia No.4, 1967, pp. 50-52).

Recently, the sociological research laboratory at Kirgiz University carried out an enquiry amongst students concerning their attitudes towards religion. Out of 102 interviewed, 52 called themselves Muslims. On what grounds? They all answered in the same way: "Because my parents are Muslims", "Because I am Kirgizian", "Because I have been circumcised", and so on.

In our literature we often come across the expression "the Muslim section of the population". However, this often refers to both the believing and the non-believing members of a nationality which formerly professed the Islamic religion. This presents a curious picture: a mass of non-believers are linked with the Muslims. Atheists working amongst followers of Islam began to use the paradoxical term "non-believing Muslims". This bizarre combination of words was heard even in certain speeches at an academic conference in Moscow last year on the criticism of the ideology of Islam today.

But is there really such a thing as a non-believing Muslim? After all, "Muslim" has a purely religious meaning – one who professes Islam.

In the past the word "Muslim" was in fact used to designate nothing other than national identity – in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Tataria, Bashkiria and in certain regions in the Caucasus the majority followed Islam. Then, even those