

Documents

1. *New Soviet Rituals*

The following article describes some rituals (see also the Editorial) introduced in a district of Tadzhikistan by the combined efforts of the Party, government, Komsomol (the communist youth organization) and the *Znanie* society (for disseminating atheist propaganda).

New Traditions are Born by R. Sadykov
(*Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, 16 Jan., 1973, p. 3. Complete text)

When the teacher, Bozor Davlyatov from the school in the village of Khalkaer was seen off on the day his well-earned retirement began, his colleagues, past pupils, members of the Party, of the district soviet and Komsomol got together. All greeted the old teacher warmly, thanked him for all he had done for people, wished him good health and happiness for many years. The teacher, deeply moved, could only say: - "Thank you, dear friends . . ." The solemn celebration of someone's retirement or entry into the army, of Komsomol weddings, the congratulating of parents on the birth of their first child, and many other new ceremonies and rituals, are becoming rooted in the life of the inhabitants of this Soviet district and are becoming good traditions. Only last year, more than 20 Komsomol weddings took place here. It should be noted that the special Commission for new ceremonies and rituals, attached to the district soviet's executive committee and the Komsomol district committee, took part in the preparation for them. This Commission has won great respect. Parents and the young are themselves seeking the advice of this Commission's members.

It should be said, that previously the expense of a wedding was too onerous a sum for parents and for the young couple. Thanks to the work of the Commission for introducing new ceremonies and rituals, already the first, yet confident and effective steps have been taken to sharply reduce this expenditure.

The spring festival of *Navruz* has become traditional. The district's inhabitants observe it with ceremony and gaiety. Already for the second year, young people on this festival line up in formation with flags and slogans and move off into the fields.

An old peasant with oxen harnessed to a plough makes the first furrow. One of the inscriptions reads "Thus it was". Then a tractor appears, lifting up large layers of earth behind it. Nothing unusual it would appear has happened. But in the souls of youths and young girls this spectacle leaves its mark. They, as it were, are carried back into the past and compare it with the present.

Initiation into the Soviet Army has become a memorable occasion. Not only close friends and relatives accompany future soldiers, but also representatives of social organizations, war and labour veterans, important people in the district. Girls present the future soldiers with presents as a souvenir. Parents, veterans and leaders of district organizations wish them well as they see them off.

To come of age is an important event in a person's life. Now this is also observed in a new way. Warm greetings and the good wishes of older comrades gives a young person a sense of pride when he receives a passport because he is now a citizen of the USSR.

Not long ago another pleasant event took place at the district centre: in festive surroundings five young families were given the keys to new flats.

A good deal has been done. But ahead lies yet more work. So that the new ceremonies and rituals become mass phenomena, they must still be widely propagandized. A series of measures is now being worked out for widely introducing and propagandizing the new Soviet ceremonies and rituals by the district committee of the Party, the district organization of the *Znanie* society, by the Komsomol district committee, and by the cultural section.

2. *Children are Baptised*

Yevgraf Duluman, a former priest, now working in the Philosophy Institute of the Academy of Sciences, is offended as an atheist at the number of children baptised without their parents' consent, for very few people of child-bearing age are believers, he claims. The involvement of parents (see *Veche* No. 4) was, however, admitted in the Irkutsk region: parents were asked to fill in a questionnaire containing questions under three headings: (1) "What made you participate in the baptism?" (2) "Who organized the baptism?" (3) "Attitude to religion". Perhaps more parents are believers than Duluman thinks.

A Violation of Law and Order and a Sacrilege by Ye. Duluman
(*Pravda Ukrainy*, 11 March 1973, p. 3. Extract)

We are atheists. We are fully aware that God does not exist and that religion is the opium of the people. But we are atheists and humanists. We demand a respectful approach to believers and we strictly punish those who permit themselves to injure religious feelings.

I think that, to be logical, we must also declare openly that actions which injure atheist feelings, which deride the person of the atheist, must not remain unpunished either.

Take for example the ritual of baptism. Specialist investigations show that in some districts this is carried out on up to half of all new-born babies, and even more. This is a cause for our indignation. After all the average level of religiosity in our country does not exceed 12-15 per cent and only exceptionally in some places does it rise to 25-30 per cent. Also, believers are usually elderly people. Among adults up to 35-40 (i.e. the majority of probable fathers and mothers) there are no more than 1.5-2 per cent believers.

What is the origin of this high level of baptisms among new-born babies, how does it happen?

It appears that in the great majority of cases children are baptised without regard to the convictions, desires or situation of the parents. And this immoral activity has been going on for years.