

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

peoples who were not true adherents of Islam, even when it was at its most widespread, were also called Muslims. But after the Great October Revolution, as a result of socialist transformations, the masses broke away from religion and the former application to them of the word "Muslim" lost its meaning.

Our concern here is the persistent confusion of ideas: a word signifying religious adherence is used to delineate a group of nationalities amongst which the religion had previously been widespread.

But if it were simply a case of incorrect word usage much of this discussion would be unwarranted. Unfortunately, the situation is much more complicated.

Most non-believers are still deeply convinced that their nationality obliges them to perform certain rites and to keep customs which, on closer inspection, are not national but religious. Hence, in Kirgizia and Kazakhstan, people rigorously observe the traditional rites which, incidentally, are financially ruinous for a bereaved family. A Muslim funeral, with all its rituals and customs fully observed, costs two or three thousand roubles.

In Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, the rites of circumcision and religious weddings are common practice. In 1964 I took part in the work of a team of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, checking up on atheist work in the Tadjikistan Young Communist organizations. In the Kurgan-Tyube region I had to talk to many young communists. It was clear that the great majority of young people register their marriages according to Muslim custom and that even certain communists do so.

Evidently, many of these religious rituals affect one's way of life and family relationships. Their observance is always linked with national traditions.

The suggestion that the confusion of religious and national identity is not altogether innocent or free from danger is borne out by numerous facts. If today's young person considers himself to be a Muslim, then to some extent he connects himself by this to religion and imperceptibly falls under the influence of believers. From here it is only a short step to the sort of reasoning adduced by I. Irbutayev in his article "In the *makhalla* of Yangi-Hayat" (*Nauka i Religia* No. 12, 1965). A 38-year old lady confessed to him "I believe in God because I can do no other . . . If you say there is no God, everyone ridicules you and says she's not a Muslim". This is how things are - she believes in Allah so that nobody should doubt her national identity.

Sociologist Studies Islam

Sociological surveys in the Soviet press have become an important source of information on religion in the USSR. The following extracts are taken from "Particular Manifestations of Religious Survivals Among the Urban Population" by S. Begmedov (News from the Academy of Science of the Turkmen Republic, Series: Social Sciences No. 3, 1968, pp. 34-40). A glossary of some terms used in this article is given at the end of the document.

(pp. 34-35)

. . . This article reviews some questions regarding particular manifestations of the most thriving religious survivals among the population of the town of Tashauz, on the basis of materials gathered by means of concrete sociological investigations. This includes a questionnaire, individual talks with believers and