

Soviet Secular Ritual: Atheist Propaganda or Spiritual Consumerism?

CHRISTOPHER A. P. BINNS

The last twenty years have seen an extraordinary increase in the amount of attention paid to ceremony and ritual in the Soviet Union and a fundamental change in the official attitude towards them. At one time ritual was considered to be quintessentially religious and therefore fit only for abuse. But now there are regular discussions on the educative function of secular ritual and a whole system of life-cycle ceremonies has been developed, which from rather quaint, parochial beginnings has grown to a national scale and become a major consumer industry. This may be illustrated by some recent data from Ukraine (admittedly the "model" republic in this field, but all other republics exhibit broadly similar trends). In 1977 some three-quarters of marriages in Ukraine were solemnized according to the new ritual in Palaces of Weddings (of which there are over a hundred in the republic) or other specially prepared premises (of which there are some eleven thousand). In the same year 52% of newly-born infants underwent the secular name-giving ceremony in similar premises. Building the premises and providing the consumerist paraphernalia for all these ceremonies has become big business: in 1978 11.3 million roubles were spent in Ukraine alone on the provision of some 90 types of "ritual services" distributed through 534 "salons of ritual services"; some thousand factories are involved in producing this material and 22 factories specialize solely in it. The infrastructure is maintained by over eight thousand "ritual service workers" and thousands of people have been trained to conduct the ceremonies by special courses available at universities and colleges.¹

In a country which still has problems producing and distributing sufficient food for its population this sudden mania for ritual and ceremony clearly requires explanation. Are these new life-cycle ceremonies primarily a novel anti-religious measure, designed to provide a temporary substitute to wean people away from religious ritual? Or are they to be seen as the natural symbolic expressions of a secular faith with all the consumerist trappings typical of an advanced industrial society? To answer these questions we will look first at the stages by which this ceremonial system developed and then at the contemporary characteristics and impact of the main ceremonies. A word on terminology: in what follows I use the words "ritual" and "ceremony" fairly indiscriminately. I incline to use the word "ceremony" for secular

phenomena, but the Russian word *obryad* is used now for both secular and religious occasions, and the rather pejorative associations of the borrowed word *tseremoniya* may make "rite" or "ritual" the best translation for *obryad*.

The idea of providing some secular equivalent of religious life-cycle rituals and calendar festivals is not a new one in the Soviet Union. As far back as 1923 Trotsky strongly advocated the policy, maintaining that negative, rationalistic anti-religious propaganda would never be enough to "cure" people of religious leanings and that it was quite natural for people to feel the need for some spiritual uplift at crisis points in their lives.² There was much spontaneous experiment going on at that time in the area of secular life-cycle ceremonies amongst young party activists and this was given guarded official approval in a party circular.³ The idea was in fact regarded with great suspicion by most party members: it smacked too much of dangerous compromise with the class enemy, reminiscent of the ideas of the "God-builders" so vehemently attacked by Lenin.⁴ Bureaucratization and tedious propagandistic speeches soon deprived the "Red Weddings" and "Red Christenings" of their initial popularity, and with the increasing domination of Stalin the whole policy became discredited through its association with the arch-heretic, Trotsky. There was virtually no more discussion of the subject until the late 1950s, although there were sporadic attempts in the 1930s to hold propagandistic events for the Komsomol (Young Communist League) on the days of the major Christian festivals, Easter and Christmas.⁵

Why was it that the question of secular ritual resurfaced in the 1950s? One main reason was undoubtedly the general reassessment of anti-religious policy which followed Stalin's death. During and after the second world war there had been a substantial revival in the Soviet Union which, following Stalin's pact with the leaders of the Orthodox church in 1943 to secure their patriotic support, took place with a degree of official tolerance: the worst excesses of the atheistic campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s were avoided and propagandistic activity tended to become a superficial routine, though there were still occasional flare-ups in certain areas and against certain religious groups. In general the attitude seemed to be that a population thoroughly cowed by systematic police terror could be allowed the indulgence of a little religion without much danger to the régime. However, with the curtailment of police terror which followed Stalin's death, the new leaders were more concerned at the religious revival and the parlous state of anti-religious propaganda; they were no doubt worried that the churches, the only extra-state institutions, might become a focus for political disloyalty amongst disaffected elements returning from the labour camps. Khrushchev made a return to "Leninist norms" in atheistic propaganda a major feature of the programme by which he asserted his leadership claims and his advocacy resulted in the 1954 decree and the often virulent anti-religious campaigns of the 1950s and early 1960s.⁶

The 1954 decree on scientific-atheist propaganda made no mention of the policy of devising secular substitutes for religious rituals and festivals, but merely recommended the energetic revival of the traditional anti-religious methods of lectures, propaganda literature, clubs and youth work, all spear-headed by the "Scientific Knowledge Society" (*Znaniye*). But it soon became clear that the old methods, even when vigorously pursued, were not working well. This had already been demonstrated in the newly acquired or reoccupied territories along the western edge of the Soviet Union: the Baltic republics, western Belorussia and Ukraine, and Moldavia. In these areas the Soviet authorities had to face strong and popular churches which soon acquired political importance as an expression of the independent national aspirations of their populations. Their position was weakened by the tried and tested methods, so familiar from the Russia of the 1920s, of persecution, purge, infiltration and promoted schism. But these were different times, different places — and indeed different churches. There were even signs of an increase in religious observance in some areas, probably in protest at these anti-religious methods. So local agitprop officials appear to have sanctioned the use of subtler means, and in particular experimentation with secular rituals. Thus we hear of secular weddings and "harvest festivals" in Ukraine and Moldavia even before 1953.⁷ But it was in the Baltic republics that the most systematic and successful application of the policy was made. Following a sharp rise in the numbers of Lutheran confirmees in the mid-1950s, a secular coming-of-age ceremony was introduced in 1957 which included many of the features of the Lutheran confirmation. Apparently as a result of this there was a sharp fall in the number of confirmees as the secular ceremony became established in the later 1950s.⁸ There was also success with secular weddings, name-givings and even funerals.⁹ What was distinctive about these Baltic experiments was their personalized approach and respect for the feelings of the people concerned, in marked contrast to the highly propagandistic and public multiple weddings and name-givings which had characterized previous Russian ventures in this field. Tasteful use was made in the ceremonies of national and local folk customs. New secular calendar festivals were also introduced to occur just before the main Christian festivals.¹⁰

These experiments in the Baltic republics seem to have made a big impression upon activists in the adjacent city of Leningrad, for it was here that the first major press "discussion" on the subject started in 1959, citing the Baltic experience.¹¹ This led in November 1959 to the opening of the first Soviet Palace of Weddings in a former stately home on the banks of the Neva. It was the success of this venture which led to further experimentation in Moscow and other Russian cities, culminating in the top-level party approval by the Ideological Commission in 1964 which led to a national campaign and the generalization and systemization of the policy throughout the country.¹²

However, with the spread of the “secular ritual” policy to Leningrad and later to the Russian heartland there came an important shift in emphasis and motivation. Whereas in the Baltic republics, so far as one can discern, the policy was initiated and implemented almost entirely by anti-religious activists, this was not true of the Leningrad venture or its subsequent extension. The primary concern of the local Komsomol group, which had suggested the Palace of Weddings idea, seems to have been with serious social problems among young people — cynicism, delinquency, alcoholism and a high divorce rate — rather than with the threat from religion as such. It is significant that it was in the context of a decree “On the Struggle against Infringements of Public Order” that the Komsomol Central Committee recommended in 1960 the introduction of colourful new ceremonies and festivals.¹³ It was clear that young people wanted more variety, colour and idealism in their lives. The need for more leisure facilities was recognized in the creation in 1960 of a special section of the All-Union Theatrical Society to promote “pageants and festivals”.¹⁴ It is in this context that we must view the approval by the Knowledge Society in 1960 of the Baltic secular ritual and the Leningrad wedding palace experiments.¹⁵ The anti-religionists were only one of the concerned parties, and probably not the main one. In the Russian heartland the religious revival, while certainly worrying to the authorities, was not as politically threatening as it was in the new territories, and was disturbing more as a symptom of serious malaise amongst the young.

These social problems confronted, and still confront, the Party with a difficult dilemma. Young people wanted more freedom to express themselves and more facilities to enjoy themselves in a frivolous way. Yet how to grant such freedom without losing political control? And how to develop leisure facilities without diverting funds from armaments and industrial development? Expenditure could be justified only if there were some serious practical or ideological purpose behind it. From this viewpoint secular ritual offered a perfect formula, which has been the reason behind its continued success and development. Ceremonial activities had long had a prominent place in Soviet public life and were believed to have an educative moral-political function. These new ceremonies appeared to have a role in combating religion and perhaps in stabilizing family life by solemnizing the previously purely clerical procedures of registering marriages and births. So the authorities could satisfy their ideological consciences while shelving any fundamental action on the underlying social problems. At the same time the general public liked these events because they afforded otherwise unavailable opportunities for frivolous consumer enjoyment and “special occasion” uplift, for which they were prepared to make ideological obeisance as a nod towards political loyalty. The Weddings Palace idea was attractive because its ceremonies were not overtly and noisily propagandistic. For once ordinary people were treated with respect as human beings with individual

feelings in a simple private ceremony in impressive surroundings — a very different experience from signing the book and paying the money in a dingy, impersonal registry office.

Hence it is that since 1964 every conceivable life-cycle occasion has been rooted out for ceremonial elaboration: starting school (at the age of seven; cf. also the annual start of the school year on 1 September); finishing school; entering and graduating from university; leaving for national service and returning from it; starting work (“initiation into the working class”); entering and leaving the youth organizations such as the Pioneers and Komsomol; the issue of the first (internal) passport (“Entry into Citizenship”) at the age of 16; wedding anniversaries, especially silver and golden weddings; retirement and celebration of two or more decades of service; commemoration of the dead and funerals. This is not to mention the numerous and long-established “prize-giving” ceremonies when outstanding workers are awarded medals, banners and bonuses and take upon themselves “yet greater” responsibilities under the current five-year plan. In the same way every possible anniversary in the communist calendar, whether of national, republican or local significance, becomes an excuse for a *prazdnik* (festival). Over thirty professional groups now have their own special days when they have ceremonies and celebrations and a fuss is made of them in the mass media — Miners’ Day, Teachers’ Day, Tank-Drivers’ Day, etc. Many old folk festivals have been revived in a suitably sterilized form (minus their “religious accretions”), especially the seasonal ones connected with agricultural tasks. Then there are street festivals (anniversary of the eponymous hero or event); the anniversary of the founding of an enterprise or factory; anniversaries of victory in the second world war (or Great Patriotic War), and all the various dates of the expulsion of the fascist invader from particular areas, and so forth. The list is endless and still growing.

While it is clear that such life-cycle ceremonies as name-giving, marriage, funerals, commemoration and coming-of-age (to some extent the passport ceremony is an equivalent of the more explicit Baltic ceremony) are directly counterposed to their religious equivalents with the aim of displacing them, and the same is true of some secular festivals, particularly of the seasonal-agricultural type, it is equally clear that many, if not most, of these life-cycle occasions and calendar festivals have no such explicit anti-religious purpose. Secular ceremonial, having acquired the dimensions of a national institution, has taken on a momentum of its own. It could, of course, be argued (and has been by some Soviet writers) that nowadays it is not a question of the crude juxtaposition of a particular secular ceremony or festival with a religious equivalent, as when previously in certain areas Easter became the “Festival of Spring”, Palm Sunday the “Day of Mass Planting of Trees”, Trinity the “Day of our Green Friend”, etc.¹⁶ Rather now there are two whole systems of ritual which are competitively juxtaposed; ritual is now regarded as a perfectly legitimate form of symbolic communication and its

themes, aims and symbols must be derived from the communist way of life and not from religious analogies. The war with religion has shifted from major frontal assaults on strongly held positions to a drawn-out war of attrition on an extended front.

Nevertheless limited battles still go on and claims of limited victory are still made. Some of these secular ceremonies and festivals clearly are intended to “take out” the religious counterpart. What has been the general impact of the new ritual on the old? This is in fact an exceedingly difficult question to answer, because it is often impossible to establish any clear lines of cause and effect. Soviet data, as in so many other areas, tend to be infuriatingly incomplete and are only quoted at all if they appear impressive. Let us take weddings as our first example. One source declares that weddings in church (the word *venchaniya* — Orthodox weddings — is used) formed only 3% of marriages in 1961 and declined to less than 0.5% in 1972.¹⁷ But another source says that religious weddings (*brakosochetaniya* — joining-in-marriage) formed 2.8% of marriages in 1976.¹⁸ We seem here to be facing a problem of definition. It is possible that the number of church weddings has been on the increase, if from a very low level; however, it is more likely that the larger figure includes non-Orthodox Christians and non-Christian marriages. What is clear is that marriage was already highly secularized before the introduction of the new ritual. As in many cultures, in Russia the actual religious ceremony formed only a small part of a long and complex series of secularized folk traditions and customs, and this is equally true of the secular wedding ceremony in many parts of the Soviet Union today. So weddings were the best candidate for “substitution”. How then do we evaluate the success of the secular ceremony? From the figures quoted above for Ukraine it would appear that where the secular ceremony has attractive premises and is well conducted, it is generally accepted by the population. But a caveat is in order here. What is clearly happening in Ukraine is that all the old ZAGS (registry offices) are being transformed into Palaces of Weddings or being equipped with “ritual halls”, so that soon it will be the norm for registration, which is of course compulsory, to be ceremonial registration. Much also depends upon the availability of a local church. So often in Soviet accounts we read that in a certain village there have been no church weddings or christenings for many years, and this is held up as a triumph of the new ritual, whereas it generally reflects only the closure of the local church. Moreover, even Soviet authors admit that the low overall percentage of religious weddings conceals very wide variations, and that in certain areas, such as Catholic Lithuania or Islamic Central Asia, the proportion of religious weddings is still quite high.¹⁹ Then there is the problem of “duplication”, where a couple have both a secular and a religious ceremony: in Lithuania as many as 25% do this.²⁰ In addition there are all sorts of informal acts of benediction which do not constitute a full church wedding and are therefore not counted as such, but which add to the complexity of the picture.

In most cases the secular ceremony is little more than an attractively presented registration. It is the beauty and impressiveness of the "palace" and the bearing and costume of the "ritual elders" conducting the ceremony which provide the spiritual uplift. It is interesting that the exchange of rings, now argued by Soviet writers to be an essentially secular symbol "taken over" by Christianity, forms the central point of the ceremony. In Ukraine some spiritual uplift is provided by small choirs and instrumental ensembles performing traditional wedding songs. Often, especially in rural areas, local folk customs are incorporated into the ceremony. The Ukrainian Weddings Palaces attempt to give the proceedings greater spiritual solemnity by association with the patriotic sacrifice of the second world war. In an alcove before the entrance to the "ritual hall" there burns a torch lit from the "sacred flame" at the local war cemetery. The couple are first taken to this alcove, where they are told: "This flame is a symbol of our remembrance of those who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of our Soviet motherland, for communist ideals, for the clear sky above us, for our happiness and that of our children. May such a flame burn eternally in your hearts!"²¹ Then the bridegroom lights a torch from the flame and carries it with him into the "ritual hall", where it burns throughout the ceremony. My own impression of the wedding palaces I saw in Kiev was that the ceremonies were conducted effectively and sincerely and that the "sacred flame" feature was quite effective, though some people seemed rather embarrassed by this aspect and the more sophisticated couples I talked to felt that it was rather overdone and that there was too much emphasis on the war in all Soviet public life. The use of torches, of course, recalls the use of candles in the Orthodox rite.

Turning to the name-giving ceremony, we notice that the proportion of infants undergoing this ceremony is far lower than that for the wedding ceremony, 52% in the Ukraine being regarded as something of a triumph. One obvious reason for this is that infants, unlike a bride and groom, do not have to be present at their registration. Other factors cited are worries about exposing the child to infection in a public place and pressure in favour of christening by religious grandmothers who often have to look after the child when the mother goes back to work. Even so it is claimed that name-giving has caused a significant decline in christenings. Apparently christenings as a proportion of births declined from 40% in 1961 to 20% in 1972 in the USSR as a whole.²² We are told that they have declined "substantially" since then, but no figure is given.²³ (Although we are told of a steady increase in the number of christenings in the Baptist unions of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kirgizia²⁴ these refer only to adult baptisms, since Baptists do not practise infant baptism.) It is clear that there is considerable variation between republics. Thus in Lutheran Estonia the proportion of christenings declined from about 50% in 1958 to only 9.4% in 1977, a very marked drop (by comparison church weddings in the republic dropped from 28% to 2.5% in the

same period).²⁵ Here it would seem likely that the new ritual has had some effect, but again the argument is purely circumstantial and many other factors, such as closure of churches and urbanization, may be at work. In any case the Estonian experience is not entirely typical, and in many areas of the USSR, particularly those with Catholic populations, the proportion of christenings is still well over 30%.²⁶ Here, as with secular weddings, there must be considerable "duplication" between religious and secular ceremonies.

As to the conduct of the name-giving ceremony, it is sometimes held in special Palaces of the Newly-Born (following the lead of the Leningrad Baby Palace opened in 1965), but more often in Palaces of Weddings or in the multi-purpose Palaces of Happiness. Interesting features of the ceremony are the adaptation of the custom of godparents, now called "honorary parents", who act as witnesses and undertake to help in the moral upbringing of the child; the choral and/or instrumental accompaniment; the presentation to the child of a commemorative medal and an "injunction" (*nakaz*) from the local Soviet to be opened on reaching maturity; and, occasionally, the planting of a tree in an Avenue or Park of the Newly-Born.²⁷

Secular funerals are the least developed of the new ceremonies, though a great deal of work has been done to change this in recent years. For the USSR as a whole it is said that religious funerals as a proportion of deaths declined from 60% in 1961 to about 32% in 1972.²⁸ Estonia is here higher than the norm: the decline is from 66% in 1958 to 34% in 1977, though much lower rates occurred in the towns²⁹. No figures are quoted for secular funerals, and in many areas they are probably still quite uncommon. But in Ukraine a big effort has been made to develop the infrastructure of easily available funeral bureaux (there are now some 433 in the republic), special Houses of Mourning (of which there are 22) for the ceremonies, and also numerous "ritual platforms" for graveside ceremonies, which will, they hope, ensure greater success for the secular ceremony.³⁰ In its order and in many of its constituent actions the secular ceremony closely follows the traditional religious rite in its three stages of lying-in-state, funeral procession and graveside speeches and farewell gestures, all accompanied by appropriate music. But whatever the improvements in the infrastructure and in the conduct of the ceremonies, death will continue to pose problems for a communist ceremony which will make it hard to compete with the religious treatment. The borrowing of commemoration days, on the other hand, has been more successful, largely because of their deliberate association with the war deaths of the second world war, as with the eve of Victory Day (8 May).³¹ An enormous number of often extremely elaborate war memorials have been built, especially in the western part of the USSR, in recent years and these have become the foci for many ceremonies.³² As we saw with regard to the wedding ceremony in Ukraine, the theme of the sacrifice of the war dead has become one of the few persistent spiritual symbols used re-

ally effectively in Soviet ritual, far outshining the outworn symbols of revolution.

As for other ceremonies with an apparently anti-religious purpose, we have already noted the “coming-of-age” ceremony developed to compete with Lutheran confirmation in Estonia and Latvia. This ceremony was one of the great success stories of the early years of the new ritual. In 1976 about ten thousand young people took part in the Estonian “Summer’s Days of Youth” festival but only 566 in Lutheran confirmation, an almost exact reversal of the 1957 figures.³³ I have been told that more recently the number of confirmees has started to rise again and that the secular ceremony is not as popular as it was. It must be said that Lutheran confirmation had become very secularized as a community social event; the secular ceremony took over many of the features of confirmation, including the preliminary period of instruction (in morals and citizenship), and so could “take over” quite painlessly and convincingly. Another reason for its success is that it has merged with school-leaving ceremonies, which are very important all over the Soviet Union. Most other areas of the country lack a tradition of teenage confirmation, but since the later 1960s the authorities have been introducing ceremonies for similar ages of young people — the passport ceremony and “initiation into the working class”, taking the view that such an opportunity for influencing the youth is too good to miss. These ceremonies are virtually compulsory and so it is hard to judge their real success. Just as ceremonial marriage registration is fast becoming the norm, so too is ceremonial issuing of passports (identity cards) at the age of sixteen. Nevertheless my impression is that these ceremonies are enjoyed as colourful social events.³⁴

So, to sum up, the direct impact of particular secular ceremonies on their religious counterparts is mixed and not decisive. It would seem *prima facie* that where a religious ritual has been extensively secularized the secular ceremony which takes over many of its features can have an effect on the celebration of the religious rite provided that there is also an element of compulsion (necessity of registration, social pressure, etc.) and also that the secular facilities are as easily available and attractive as their religious equivalents. The most marked cases here are weddings and the ceremonies for youth. Nevertheless the phenomenon of “duplication” of religious and secular ceremonies is very strong in many areas and it is very doubtful whether the new ceremonies have had any effect on the hard core of sincerely committed believers, though they may have had some on the “waverers”. But in most cases it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of secular ceremonies and the general processes of secularization familiar from other industrialized countries. (These, even with a nominal state commitment to religion, are often more secularized than the Soviet Union: atheist propaganda may make more people into believers.)

So are we witnessing the development of a parallel ritual system derived from the secular faith of Marxism-Leninism? Certainly the parallels between

Soviet Bolshevism and religious movements are striking and well-known: the use of “holy” texts; the “cults” of Lenin and Stalin; the teleological and messianic character of the doctrine. The development of a festal and ritual system of the kind we have been discussing is less well-known but in its processes even more reminiscent of medieval Christianity: the absorption of previous religious concepts, themes and folk customs into a new system of symbolic expression. Bolshevism, like Christianity, moved from anti-ritualistic ascetic commitment to a highly formalized and almost histrionic system of doctrine and ritual, accompanied by the processes of entrenchment in monopolistic state power and bureaucratic “routinization”.* Both systems involved considerable compromise in the original purity of their beliefs in the interests of securing universal, if often minimal, loyalty and acceptance. Yet the differences between the systems are also striking. It is certainly true that for most of Stalin’s reign many communists were deeply imbued with an intense personal faith in communism and in the divine qualities of their leaders which gave their behaviour the purposefulness of religious devotion. But nowadays any visitor to the Soviet Union knows how rare it is to come across anyone who sincerely and deeply believes in the principles, doctrines and practice of communism. The idealism and commitment have gone: cynicism, careerism and indifference prevail. Soviet communism can no longer be appropriately described as a secular faith. Yet it retains the dynamics of development derived from the days when it was such a faith. The burgeoning of new ceremonies and festivals since the 1960s developed from a background of ingrained habits of ceremonial commitment which, under the exigencies of the reign of terror, pervaded all Soviet public life in the Stalin period. Initially the authorities turned to an extension of these ceremonial traditions to provide a more effective instrument to deal with a religious revival which carried with it risks of political destabilization at a time of cautious liberalization. But very soon these aims were overtaken by the need to satisfy quite different demands from the population which had very unwelcome implications: the demands for greater colour, variety and freedom in people’s lives, more enjoyment, more consumer goods, more respect for individual feelings and tastes. Rituals and festivals seemed to provide a controlled outlet for some of these demands while preserving a veneer of ideological commitment and serious moral education. The secular ceremonies may have had some marginal effect on their religious counterparts. But undoubtedly it is the often philistine consumerism of these ceremonies which is their most notable feature today, although it is a more “spiritual” consumerism than its Western counterpart, since its forms focus around the need for some transcendence of everyday political shibboleths and drab, impersonal bureaucracy. The more they recognize and give expression to

*“Routinization” is the concept of the process by which “charismatic” authority is transformed over the years into everyday routine, formulated by Max Weber in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* — Ed.

this underlying transcendental motivation, as in Ukraine, the more successful, within their limited scope, these new ceremonies and festivals will be.

¹ *Izvestiya*, 9 August 1981, p. 3; M. A. Orlik, "Opyt razrabotki i vnedreniya v zhizn sovetskoi obryadnosti v Ukrainской SSR" in *Sotsialisticheskaya obryadnost i formirovaniye novogo cheloveka*, Kiev 1979, pp. 15-29; S. E. Stetsenko, "Obryady nashoi dobi", *Lyudina i sviat*, No. 9, 1978, pp. 2-7; V. T. Skurativsky, "Pitannya rozvitku novikh svyat i obryadiv", *Narodna tvorchist ta etnohrafyia* No. 1, 1979, pp. 37-49.

² L. D. Trotsky, "Problemy byta" in *Sochineniya* Vol. 21, Moscow 1927, pp. 22-6, 39-43.

³ See V. I. Brudny, *Obryady vchera i segodnya*, Moscow 1968, pp. 66-7.

⁴ "God-builders" was the nickname given to a group of Markists led by Gorky and Lunacharsky who, in the period 1905-13, advocated the use by Markist propagandists of the best moral ideas of world religion, believing that there were many common elements. For Lenin's attacks, see, e.g. *Polnoe sobraniye sochinenii*, 5th ed., Moscow 1960, Vol. 48, pp. 226-7.

⁵ The original idea of "Komsomol Christmas" was put forward by Skvortsov-Stepanov in *Pravda* 15.11.1922 and 13.12.1922, but was dropped in 1923 after insulting and violent behaviour towards believers. When revived in the 1930s these were purely indoor events held in "clubs".

⁶ For a discussion of Khrushchev's role see J. D. Grossman, "Khrushchev's anti-religious policy and the campaign of 1954", *Soviet Studies*, xxv, 1973, pp. 374-86.

⁷ Ukraine: G. Yu. Stelmakh, "Formuvannya novikh zvichaiiv v ukrainskomu kolhospnomu seli", *Narodna tvorchist ta etnohrafyia*, No. 1 1957, pp. 90-7; Moldavia: L. D. Loskutova, "O razvitii svadebnoi obryadnosti v sovetskoi Moldavii", *Izvestiya Akademii Nauk Moldavskoi SSR* (seriya obshchestvennykh nauk), No. 1 1977, pp. 84-5.

⁸ In Estonia the number of confirmees rose from 3,500 in 1950 to over ten thousand in 1957; see I. Baturin, "Vospitatelnaya rol sovetskikh obryadov", *Kommunist Estonii*, No. 8 1977, pp. 52-8.

⁹ See P. Pechura and A. Serdant, *Novaya zhizn, novye traditsii*, Moscow, 1960.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; G. Gerodnik, *Dorogami novykh traditsii*, Moscow 1964, *passim*.

¹¹ *Smena* (paper of the Leningrad Komsomol) from 13.8.1959 following the pioneering article "Pogovorim o prazdnikakh" in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 2.2.1958, p. 3.

¹² See *Partiinaya zhizn*, No. 2 1964, esp. p. 25. For the story of the Leningrad Palace see K. L. Emelyanova (the first director), *Pervyy v strane*, Leningrad 1964.

¹³ *Komsomolskaya Pravda* 5.2.1960, p. 2.

¹⁴ See B. Glan (ed./comp.), *Massovyye prazdniki i zrelischa*, Moscow 1961 (Introduction).

¹⁵ I. A. Kryvelev, *O bezreligioznykh prazdnikakh i obryadakh*, Moscow 1960, Znaniye.

¹⁶ These examples come from the Voronezh area. See I. S. Remezov, "Sotsialistichaskiye traditsii i bezreligioznye prazdniki (obryady) kak sredstvo ateisticheskogo vospitaniya", in *Voprosy kommunistskogo vospitaniya*, Voronezh 1965; for other examples see Pechura and Serdant 1960, *op. cit.* (note 9).

¹⁷ V. A. Rudnev, *Preodoleniye religioznykh traditsii*, Leningrad 1974, p. 8.

¹⁸ P. K. Kurochkin, "Sotsialisticheskaya obryadnost i formirovaniye nauchno-materialisticheskogo mirovozzreniya", in *Sotsialisticheskaya obryadnost . . .* (1979), *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 67.

¹⁹ As admitted for Central Asia by Kurochkin in the chapter of *Sotsialisticheskaya obryadnost . . .* cited in note 18; for some figures from Lithuania and elsewhere for the 1960s see D. E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, London 1975, ch. 4, esp. pp. 80-82.

²⁰ P. Mišutis, "Traditsii i obryady", *Kommunist (Vilnius)*, No. 12 1977, p. 89.

²¹ See *Nashi prazdniki*, Moscow 1977, p. 140.

²² See Rudnev, *op. cit.* (note 17), *ibid.*

²³ Kurochkin in *Sotsialisticheskaya obryadnost . . . op. cit.* (note 19), *ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See I. Baturin, "K voprosu ob ideologicheskoi effektivnosti novoi obryadnosti (na materialakh Estonskoi SSR)" in *Traditsionnye i novyye obryady v bytu narodov SSR*, Moscow, Nauka, 1981, p. 67.

²⁶ See Powell, *op. cit.* (note 19), *ibid.*

²⁷For these customs see *Nashi prazdniki*, *op. cit.* (note 21), pp. 132-7 and V. A. Rudnev, *Sovetskiye prazdniki, obryady, ritualy*, Leningrad 1979, pp. 119-30.

²⁸Rudnev, *op. cit.*, *ibid.*

²⁹Baturin, *op. cit.*, *ibid.* He mentions 16.6% in Kokhtla-Yarve and 20.7% in Tallin.

³⁰Orlik, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 20-21. There are 622 such "ritual platforms" in cemeteries. This means that soon it will probably become difficult to have someone buried without such a grave-side ceremony where the cemetery has such "ritual platforms", which recalls the latent pressure behind wedding ceremonies.

³¹For commemoration days and funerals see Rudnev, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-82; *Nashi prazdniki*, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-7.

³²See V. I. Baldin, "Voploshchennoe bessmertie", *Nauka i religiya*, No. 5 1976, pp. 7-12 (Belorussia) and B. V. Popov, "Svyata i obryady v sistemi radyanskoho sposobu zhittya", *Narodna tvorchist ta etnografiya*, No. 5, 1978, pp. 3-12 esp. p. 7 (Ukraine).

³³Baturin, *op. cit.* (note 8), p. 53.

³⁴For these youth ceremonies see *Nashi prazdniki*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-9 (passport), 91-128 (others). For a fuller account in English of these ceremonies and their significance see C. A. P. Binns, "The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System", *Man* (N.S.), Vol. 14, Dec. 1979, pp. 585-606 (Part 1) and 15, Mar. 1981, pp. 170-87 (Part 2).

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ERRATA

in RCL Vol. 10, No. 2

p. 147, para. 4, line 5

"atheistic" should read "aesthetic" (. . . from an aesthetic point of view)

ditto, lines 7-8

"more a" should read "not merely" (But for others it is not merely a problem of aesthetics.)

p. 152, para. 5, line 2

‡ Vadim Klozhinov should be Vadim Kozhinov

ditto, bottom line

Vikharov should be Vikhrov (as above)

p. 154, note 20

Y. Turin should be Y. Tuirin

p. 191, para. headed *Progress of Atheist Education*

There is a line missing following line 7, which should read:
 "(exami-)nations with clothes worn at the time. The . . ."

p. 226

The document should be dated 22 March 1982 (not 1981)