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ELIMINATING THEM

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FOREWORD

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RESIDUES OF THE ISLAMIC RELIGION AND METHODS FOR  
ELIMINATING THEM.

Following is the translation of an article by S.M. Gadzhiyev and N.K. Kuliyeu in Voprosy Filosofii, No. 5, May 1961, pages 159-162. /

The All-Russia Scientific-Theoretical Conference, devoted to the problem of residues of the Islamic religion and to methods for eliminating them took place at the end of 1960 in Makhachkala. This conference was convened on the initiative of the Dagestan State University imeni V.I. Lenina and the Dagestan society for the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge. The conference included the participation of instructors from higher educational institutions, representatives from the society for the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge, party and soviet workers, production leaders, teachers, writers and workers from scientific institutions located in Moscow, Kiev, the Azerbaijan and Turkmen SSR, the Dagestan, Kabardinian-Balkar, Severo-Ossetian, Chechen-Ingush, and the Tatar ASSR, as well as from those in the Adygeyskaya and Karachevo-Cherkesskaya autonomous oblasts, and the Stavropol'skiy and Krasnodarskiy krays and the Ul'yanovskaya and Pensenskaya oblasts--a total of 450 persons.

The conference was opened by R.A.B. El'darova, secretary of the Dagestan oblast committee CPSU. In her introductory speech she stressed that the conference must extend considerable assistance to workers on the ideological front, that it must provide atheist-lecturers with specific material for conducting scientific-atheistic propaganda on the basis of the latest achievements of science, technology and of the natural sciences, and that it must generalize the experience that has been accumulated by the local organizations in the accomplishment of this work among the toilers.

The participants of the conference heard a number of reports. A.L. Letifov, candidate of historical sciences, chairman of the propaganda and agitation department of the Dagestan oblast committee CPSU, appeared at the conference with a report entitled: "Problems Pertaining to Scientific-Atheistic Propaganda in the Light of a Resolution by the Central Committee CPSU 'On the Problems of Party Propaganda Under Current Conditions.'" The speaker pointed out that the execution of religious rites in a number of cases is accompanied

by a violation of labor and state discipline, results in serious losses to the national economy and spiritually maims the people. The religious survivals are a hindrance to the further consolidation of friendship among the peoples, and tend to preserve bourgeois-nationalistic moods.

It is commonly known, the speaker pointed out, that now the clergy is attempting to present itself as a defender of the best interests of the Soviet government, of the kolkhoz system and so on. In order to be effective, scientific-atheistic propaganda must be conducted in a differentiated manner, with a consideration for the interests peculiar to various segments of the population (women, elderly people, youth, children, kolkhoz workers, various groups of workers, and the intelligentsia) and it must also be conducted in a systematic manner. All the available means for an ideological influence on the masses must be employed: the press, motion pictures, radio, television, cultural-educational institutions; it is necessary to constantly perfect the methods and forms of work. Doctor of historical sciences Kh. Khashayev, chairman of the Dagestan administration of the society for the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge, Yu. K. Namitokov, chairman of the scientific-atheistic section of the Adygeyskiy department of the society, and Candidate of Historical Sciences A.M. Chiperis, the senior instructor of the Department of Philosophy of the Turkmen State University imeni A.M. Gor'kogo all presented reports regarding the forms and methods of scientific-atheistic propaganda under the conditions existing at Dagestan, Adygey and Turkmenia.

A number of the reports and lectures presented important theoretical problems, the solution of which is of great significance in a successful struggle against the remnants of the Islamic religion. Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, S.M. Gadzhiyev, chairman of the Department of Philosophy of the Dagestan State University imeni V.I. Lenina, for instance, presented a report entitled "Tendencies Manifested by the Clergy in modernizing Islam Under the Current Conditions." Tendencies to modernize Islam, the speaker pointed out, are primarily contained in the attempts to "coordinate" the Islamic religion with communist ideology. The moslem clergy is even promoting such slogans as "Communism is a contemporary dogma," "Our psychology is belief in communism and love of god," "Communism is a conceivable essence of god," "The ideas and aspiration of Mohammed are now incarnated in live and practical communism," "Allah leads us along a path of peace, democracy and socialism," and so on.

Another important facet of the clergy's tendency to modernize Islam, the speaker pointed out, is a recent attempt of the servers of the cult to prove the compatibility of science with religion. According to the assertions made by moslem clergy, man will experience fear and maintain his faith in mysterious forces even when in cosmic space; therefore he will need god there as much as he does on earth. In addition to that S.M. Gadzhiyev stressed that almost

all the directors of religious administrations are now attempting to be well informed regarding the latest scientific developments. A large majority of the rank and file servers of the cult who are less educated or totally uneducated try to steer away from natural sciences entirely.

A tendency to modernize Islam, the speaker stressed, serves as evidence of the fact that the clergy is attempting to save Islam from the onslaught of scientific atheism and the present day achievements of science, to adapt it to the new requirements commensurate with public development.

The report entitled "A Critique of the Sociological Dogmas of the Koran" was presented by Assistant Professor and a Candidate of Philosophical Sciences M.A. Abdulayev of the Dagestan State University imeni V.I. Lenina. All the dogmas of the moslem religious teachings are permeated with a spirit of subservience, said the speaker; the very word "Islam" means "obedience". A division of the society into opposing classes, the domination of one class over another, and the cruel exploitation and slavery are explained by the Koran as natural phenomena emanating from Allah. In asserting that "all power comes from god" and demanding submission to the authorities, the Koran weaves a myth about the "divine" nature of the oppressors around those who are being exploited by faith.

The lecturer also pointed out that the Koran teaches that "everything is within god's power," that all living things, including man, act, live and die "according to god's will," "in accordance with a book which determines his fate." The Koran therefore negates the significance of man's will power and transforms it into a blind toy in the hands of an "almighty." At the same time, in contradiction to that basic contention, all the negative deeds of man (from the religious point of view) the Koran attributes to man's "evil will."

From the above it is evident that the sociological dogmas of the Koran bear a reactionary character. Therefore the knowledge and an exposure of these dogmas is of a great theoretical and practical significance.

"A critique of religious understanding of justice, duty, conscience and honor"--that was the theme of a report given by A.A. Katayev, a post-graduate student at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences USSR. A favorite argument, constantly used by the servers of the cult in order to justify religion and its foundations, is a reference to the fact that without religion people will perish in vice, that only the fear of god's wrath keeps man within the bounds of morality. Just as any other religion Islam declares its teachings as unchanging in time and applicable to all, since they allegedly emanate from god and therefore a violation of those rules is tantamount to the commission of evil, of a sin. But life contradicts that.

The current interpretation of moral behavior and morals in general is most vividly stressed by the historical evolution of moral

categories. Being heirs of everything progressive that was evolved by man over the preceding period, the Soviet people have given new meaning to the moral categories: justice, duty, honor, conscience, and so on. The communist understanding of duty and honor has nothing in common with the mystical interpretation of religious duty and honor, just as there is nothing in common between the "god's way," leading to the world beyond, and the communist way, which leads to a happy future on earth.

Many speakers dwelled on the theoretical and practical problems associated with the influence of the Islamic religion on the daily life of the people. A.V. Avksent'yev, senior instructor of the Department of Philosophy of the Stavropol' Pedagogical Institute, and a Candidate of Philosophical Sciences made a report on the theme "The Islamic Religion and Daily Life." The lecturer stressed that a major portion of the population of Northern Caucasus manifests not orthodox moslem but religious remnants of daily life associated with Islam. The koran and the sunna regulate the behavior of a moslem in society, in the family, determine his moral principles and convictions. Islam created many rites and festivals which became firmly entrenched in the daily life of the moslems due to the traditions which are many centuries old.

The speaker pointed out that in the past, the adats were quite widespread (the common right of the mountain people to regulate the family relationships, marriage rites and so on along with the shariat). Certain adats and remnants of the shariat are still widespread among a portion of the population. They are dangerous because people who are not fully cognizant unconsciously (and the elements animose to Soviet society--consciously) attempt to present these remnants as national characteristics and traditions.

"The Danger From Islamic Rites and Festivals Under Conditions of Building a Communist Society"--that was the title of a lecture delivered by Candidate of Philosophical Sciences N.K. Kuliyeu, chairman of the Department of Philosophy and Law of the Academy of Sciences Turkmen SSR. According to the shariat, said the lecturer, the faithful must observe various religious rites and festivals without fail regardless of how burdensome they are. Basically these rites consist of a recognition that there is no god except Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah; in observing a fast during the month; in the recitation of prayers (namaz) five times daily; in the religious gifts (zyakat); in the compulsory, even though once in a lifetime, pilgrimage to Mecca for the fulfillment of a religious rite of sacrifice (kurban-bayram).

Further on the basis of convincing examples the lecturer pointed out the harm which is caused by these rites to the health of the workers and to their daily life, how they dim the consciousness of the faithful, hinder their further cultural development and thereby interfere with the matter of building communism.

One of the barbaric rituals prescribed by Islam, stated the

lecturer, is circumcision (sunnet). There are a number of viewpoints regarding its origin. There is reason to suppose that during the lowest stage of man's development circumcision served as a sign indicating his membership in the various segments of a tribe. This ritual acquired religious significance after that. This wild, shameful custom is observed at the present time by certain backward people in the Central Asian republics and in the Caucasus. The circumcision is performed by ignorant quacks (tabirs), who strive for easy profit. Not infrequently such "operations" lead to loss of blood and a general infection as well as to other dangerous diseases. Later N.K. Kuliyev dwelled on the content, forms and methods of the struggle against dangerous religious rites and traditions.

D.I. Karly, the senior instructor of the Turkmen State University imeni A.M. Gor'kiy presented a report entitled "Islam--an Instrument for Enslaving the Woman." In stressing the successes of the economic and cultural life of the Soviet national republics he at the same time pointed out that ... residues of a feudal attitude towards woman still remain in certain areas. They are first of all manifested in a limitation of the woman's participation in public-political life, in the limitation of possibilities for obtaining an education and in a generally scornful attitude towards the woman's role in life.

In the Central Asian republics, which still contain residues of Islam, there have been cases where the parents tear the young women away from their studies and give them away in marriage while they are still underage. The young women and girls, who do not wish to submit to the degrading religious customs and traditions, are subjected to persecution by some parents. Polygamy and kalym form a part of the feudal attitude towards woman, which contradict our socialist ideology and soviet legality. It is therefore necessary to conduct the most merciless and unremitting struggle against all instances where this type of residues are manifested, not only punishing the guilty in accordance with the laws, but evoking an angry public opinion around each such instance, which condemns the bearers of such harmful customs and traditions of the past. It is necessary not only to improve the scientific-atheistic propaganda by every possible means, but to seriously undertake the matter of training the women's cadres, and to promote the women for leading work in party, soviet, economic and public organizations, in kolkhoz production, to manifest true concern over an improvement in living standards and the cultural level of the women.

M.R. Radzhabov, the senior scientific collaborator at the school scientific research institute of the Ministry of Education Dagestan ASSR presented a report entitled "The Scientific-Atheistic Education of Children in School and in the Family." Yu. G. Petrashch (atheistic sector of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences USSR) devoted his report to the theme--"The Holy Cult in Islam."

In addition to the above cited scientific reports, the participants of the conference had the occasion to also become acquainted with the contents of reports made by professor A.M. Arsharuni (Moscow) --"K. Marx and F. Engels on Islam," L.I. Klimovich (Moscow) --"The Holy Cult in Islam," Doctors of Historical Sciences D. Ye. Khaytun (Stalinabad) --"V.I. Lenin on Relationship With Religion and Church," A.G. Mansimov (Baku) --"Remnants of the Islamic Religion as One of the Factors Hindering the Consolidation of the Socialist Family," I. Makatova (Makhachkala) --"Certain Problems Pertaining to the Essence of the 'Holy' Cult in Dagestan," M. Vagabova (Makhachkala) --"The Attitude of the Moslem Religion to Woman," and P. Makhmudova (Baku) --"Shkhsey-Vakhsey and the Harm it Causes."

The reports brought animated response from the delegates at the conference. The majority of the delegates approved both the general trend of the conference and its specific thematic content, which was proposed for discussion. A number of valuable remarks and suggestions were expressed, which would be conducive to an improvement in the work concerning the atheistic education of the workers.

In his report Z. Kh. Khaliulin (Tatar ASSR) shared the experience acquired by lecturing atheists in their work with the faithful in the city of Zelenodel'sk.

B. Kh. Tsavkilov (Nal'chik), Deputy Director of the Kabardinian-Balkaria Scientific Research Institute told about how in Kabardinian-Balkaria most of the women, even though they clearly do not manifest their religiousness, still remain religious. A servile position of the mountain country woman is noted in certain families; she does not eat her meals at the same table with the men, she cannot eat meat from any animal slaughtered by someone of another faith, and so on. All this is not insignificant; serious and extensive work must be done with those people. B. Kh. Tsavkilov pointed out the necessity of publishing a popular scientific-atheistic magazine in North Caucasus.

V.V. Kolobkov (Kiev State University) discussed the reasons for the viability of the religious residues. What makes man believe in god? Usually it is some misfortune, sickness or loneliness. Personal tragedy is always accompanied by nervous disorders, he pointed out. This is exploited by the clergy. Another reason, according to him, is a person's detachment from the collective.

V.P. Dzagurova (Dagestan State University) criticized those who mix national traditions with residues of Islamism. She stated that it is necessary to distinguish good traditions from harmful and reactionary ones.

G. Mamedly, S. Imam-zade, Efendiyev (Baku), F. Urasmanov (Ul'yanskaya oblast), and N. Shakhbanov (Dagestan ASSR) shared their experience in the atheistic education of the population with the delegates. In their reports they talked of the inadequacies characterizing literature on the scientific criticism of Islamic ideology and suggested the publication of a separate book on the



material yielded by the conference. A. Slamanov, Director of the Chechen-Igush Scientific Research Institute on the History of Language and Literature pointed out the existence of various sects and trends in Islamism, which complicates the struggle against religious ideology; he told about how the atheists of the republic are conducting a struggle against the religious tenets of the existing reactionary sects of nakshibenda and kadirist.

A report delivered by K. Ikramov was heard with great interest; his report dealt with the work of the editorial board of the magazine "Science and Religion."

The conference adopted the proposed recommendations, designed to intensify the work of eliminating the residues of Islamism.

An exhibit of scientific and artistic literature criticizing Islam, as well as photographic exhibits on such themes as "The Class Essence of Islam" and "Science and Religion" was organized at the Dagestan State University site of the All-Russia Scientific-Theoretical Conference devoted to the problem of residues of the Islamic religion and to methods of eliminating them. Four of the display stands showed the work being accomplished by the oblast newspapers in scientific-atheistic propaganda, colorfully executed billboards were displayed condemning the remnants of Islam, shariat and the harmful adats.