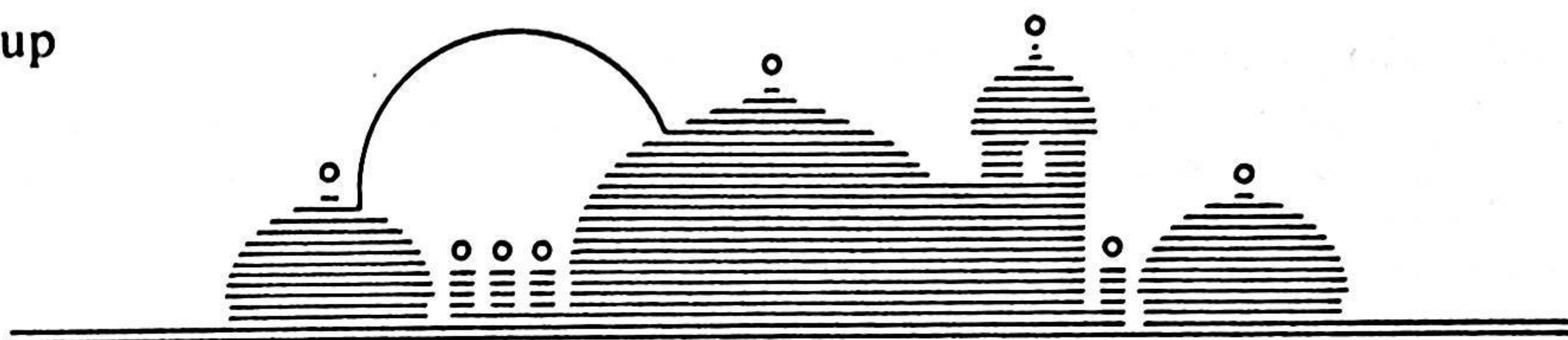


# THE CENTRAL ASIAN NEWSLETTER

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## RECENT SOVIET PUBLICATIONS

"Islam: Proizkhozhdenie, Istoriia i Sovremennost'" (Islam, Origins, History and the Present), Nauchnyi Ateizm, Moscow, Znanie, 1984, No 11, 62 p.

The booklet is divided into three chapters:

- 1) G.M. Kerimov, "Proizkhozhdenie i Sotsial'naia Sushchnost' Islama i Shariata" (Origins and Social Essence of Islam and Shariat), pp 3-30.
- 2) V.N. Basilov, "Doislamskie Verovaniia - v Soznanii i Povedenii Sovremennykh Veruiushchikh" (Pre-Islamic Beliefs in the Consciousness and Behaviour of Contemporary Believers), pp 30-47. Scholarly article by an ethnographer. Pp 32-36 describes pre-Islamic spirits, gods or Christian saints who have assumed an Islamic character.
- 3) A.I. Artem'ev and K.Sh. Shulembaev, "Partiinoe Rukovodstvo Ateisticheskim Vospitaniem" (Party Leadership Through Atheistic Education), pp 47-61. This article is reproduced from Voprosy Nauchnogo Ateizma, vol 31, where it appeared under the original title of: "Sovremennyi Islam i Problemy Ateisticheskogo Vospitaniia" (Contemporary Islam and Problems of Atheistic Education).

This article deals mainly with Kazakhstan but many of its statements can also apply to the other republics of Central Asia. The article is particularly interesting for three reasons:

- 1- It confirms indirectly the

impression gained by some Western observers that Islam as a formal religion is proving to be increasingly attractive to the Muslim intelligentsia of the USSR;

- 2- it makes it quite clear that religious and national identities are intertwined;

- 3- it gives new insight on the activity of the Soviet muftis.

"Nowadays in Kazakhstan those dealing with atheistic work have more or less complete information on the religions, religious societies and groups at the district (raion), town and region (oblast') level. Unfortunately, information about the true situation in the microrayons is far from complete." p 52-53.

"The influence of Islam in Kazakhstan is not as deep as in other regions of its traditional distribution. Observations have shown that the number of believers is fairly unstable: on ordinary days only a very small group of elderly people visit the mosques. Only the religious feasts attract the majority of the believers and some of the hesitant. The young, for the most part, do not visit the mosques. Because of this, certain members of the intelligentsia sometimes do not appreciate the importance of atheistic education. Such an attitude causes great harm to atheistic work. Just as mistaken and harmful are the attempts to interpret many religious rituals as national ones. There is also a certain

idealisation of old customs, of the way of life of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh aul. This proves once again the need to differentiate among various layers of the population when pursuing atheistic work, including the intelligentsia. The report of the 15th Congress of the Central Committee of the C.P. of Kazakhstan draws attention to the deficiencies of the fight against Islam: 'In a series of districts of the southern region wandering mullahs feel themselves free. The level of observance of religious survivals does not diminish. And what is totally unacceptable, members of the Party at times take part in them.'" p 53.

The report goes on, mentioning that other survivals of the past degrade the dignity of human beings without telling which ones they are.

Contrary to the opinion sometimes held outside the USSR, the authors do not view the activity of the official Muslim Religious Boards as entirely harmless:

"It is very important when working among believers to study the preaching of the servants of the cult...It is natural that the Muslim clergy should try to throw as much light as possible on a variety of questions - from the purely personal, everyday life to social, political and international ones. One must also take into account that the contemporary believer is impressed by the new interpretations of many canonical dogmas." p 53.

Saken Hazrat Gilmanov is criticised for praising God for gradually allowing humanity to improve itself (at a Muslim conference in Tashkent in 1970):

"As we see, theologians still widely advertise divine Providence, thus contradicting Marxist scientific theories on the role of the masses in the historical process. The modern Muslim clergy is increasingly using in sermons notions which do not have anything to do with Islam. The lecture of the theologian mentioned

above was entitled 'The Humanism of Islam and the Harmonious Relations of Nations.' He was trying to prove that Islam was the religion of humanism and internationalism: 'Our prophet, Muhammad, has repeatedly indicated that people differ from each other not by their national or racial characteristics, but by their attitude to the principles of humanism which was bestowed by the Almighty to His Prophet.'" p53-54.

Statements such as the following by the imam-khatib of the mosque of Chimkent, M. Muhametjanov, are considered dangerous: "One must be bolder in changing those regulations of Islam which do not correspond to modern conditions, then religion, Islam, will exist even under communism." p54.

"Modern theologian searching for ways of strengthening their influence on believers, increasingly stress the exceptional role which Islam is supposed to play in promoting a healthy moral atmosphere in society. They claim that morality is impossible without a belief in Allah." p 55.

"It is well known that the Muslim clergy attributes special value to religious rituals and customs. The apologists of Islam try to interpret any ritual which does not clash with people's present level of education. For instance, theologians try to give a 'scientific basis' to the custom of circumcision (sunnet). At the same time one must bear in mind that religious rituals have changed. The clergy has started to give 'indulgences' for some compulsory rituals. Many rituals have been given a modern treatment. The number of preachers fanatically demanding the performance of all religious rituals is decreasing. Modern servants of the cult talk about Islam as being a democratic religion which is constantly able to adapt to specific circumstances. From such a position the non-performance of namaz 5 times a day and the monthly fast is tolerated for workers. As dispensation

from observing these rituals may not be understood by the believers themselves, they explain how one can make up for not performing them. This is what the former qadi of Kazakhstan, Zhakia Beisembaev said at Friday prayers the day before Ramadan: 'We only ask you because we have to; after that it is up to you, the will is yours.' This innovation brought into practice by the contemporary Muslim clergy corresponds to the performance of a ritual in one's absence...The revision and modernisation of Islamic rites is due to the aspiration of the religious preachers not to lose their flock and to keep their influence on the believers." p 58-59.

According to the authors "one of the reasons for the survival and revival in Kazakhstan of some negative customs and rituals sanctified by religion is a spirit of rivalry." This "social disease" is such that in order not to lose face" people have to comply with these practices: "the performance of prayers, ritual circumcision, 13 days fasting (Uraza), sacrifices, the buying of one's bride (kalym), the patriarchal custom of kiyt (presents of clothes given at the time of the engagement to the parents of the future bride by the parents of the groom), owe their tenacity to a conservative public opinion." The fact that in the last few years not a single case of kalym has been registered does great harm to the fight against survivals write the authors. "Outwardly it may indeed be so", nobody would openly value a daughter for a specific sum of money or for so many heads of cattle, "However, as a rule both sides agree on the necessary sum which must be passed to the parents of the bride over and above the cost of the wedding." p 59-60. The authors complain that anti-religious work is sometimes entrusted to badly qualified people (p 55). They suggest the involvement of the medical corps in atheistic work (p 57)

and have hopes in the "new rites" as a means of eradicating religious customs, such as the feasts of the winter, or the spring, of the harvest, the feast of the hammer and sickle and so on (p 60). To conclude they write: "One must not reconcile oneself with the idealisation of religious customs under the pretext of a 'respectful' attitude to national customs. In this there must be no compromise."

#### FROM THE SOVIET PRESS

##### TURKMENSKAIA ISKRA

4 January 1985, "Slavnaia Data" (A Glorious Date), to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Afghan Communist Party. The article claims that:

- o more than 300,000 peasant families have received land confiscated from "feudals" and landlords;
- o nearly 2 million have learned to read and write;
- o health care has improved "substantially";
- o the Communist Party numbers 130,000 members of which more than 60% defend the revolution "with weapons in their hands."

The article notes that revolutionary Afghanistan would have achieved more were it not for the undeclared war waged against it. The cost of the war to the Afghan economy is estimated at 35 milliards Afghanis.

8 January 1985, "Uspekhi Afganskoi Ekonomiki" (Successes of Afghan Economy), report quoting Hakikat-i Inqilab-i Saur on new commercial enterprises in the cities whose population notes Turkmenskaia Iskra has "increased noticeably" in recent times. The number of families having received land is quoted, this time, as 700,000.

11 January 1985, O. Musaev, "Sovet Aksakalov" (Councils of Aqsagals). The article praises the usefulness of the councils of elders: they are said to play an important role in the moral

upbringing of the young and in fighting religious survivals. In the kolkhoz "Communism" of Khalach raion new rituals have been introduced recently in the burial ceremony on the aqsaqals initiative which, it is hoped, will eventually "squeeze out" the religious ritual: the funeral meeting instead of "incomprehensible prayers" now features speeches by colleagues of the deceased, funeral musique, wreaths and so on, all aimed at creating a suitable emotional climate in the assistance. In Murgab raion which counts over 100 aqsaqals in its council, the elders have helped to liquidate pilgrimage to the holy place of Odzharly.

12 January 1985, "Torzhestvo v Kabule" (Celebrations in Kabul). Long article from TASS. Celebration for the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Afghan Communist Party. The Soviet delegation to Kabul was led by I.B. Usmankhojaev, first secretary of the C.C. of the C.P. of Uzbekistan. At the time of the Saur revolution according to TASS, membership of the Communist Party numbered 18.000, in 1985 120.000. Quoting Babrak Karmal the article states: "The world does not yet know the toll of the undeclared war against Afghanistan. Here are some examples: the counter-revolutionaries have destroyed 1814 school buildings, 31 hospitals, 11 health centres, 906 peasants cooperatives, hundreds of lorries, 14,000 kilometres of telephone lines and so on...The general cost of the crimes of the counter-revolutionaries is estimated at over 35 milliards Afghanis." This article also appeared on the same day in Kazakhstanskaia Pravda, Pravda Vostoka (on the front page, 13 Jan 1985), Kommunist Tadzhikistana and Bakinskii Rabochii.

16 January 1985, "Dostoino Vseobshchego Osuzhdenia" (Deserving Universal Condemnation). Follow-up of "Tovar s Gnilym Dushkom" (CAS Newsletter March 1985) which reported on the recording and distribution of

illegal cassettes. Punishments and disciplinary measures have been meted to the heads of the public services ministry of Mary, Tashaouz, Chardzhou and Ashkhabad oblasts, to directors and employees of the recording studios, and to various people responsible for distributing the tapes (all are listed in the article). In order to facilitate control in the future, a number of studios have been closed, the remaining ones having received strict guidelines on the services they are allowed to provide, and individuals and small organisations are not permitted to have tapes recorded without official permission.

18 January 1985, L. V'iugova, "Uchatsia Propaganisty" (Propagandists are Studying) reports on the creation of a new information centre in Ashkhabad to help agitators, political workers and propagandists. The centre has a subject index to facilitate work - religion, atheism, soviet way of life, archives and bibliographies are all indexed separately. A new group has also been formed to deal specifically with counter-propaganda. This group includes the most experienced political reporters and propagandists and is divided in sub-groups. One of these sub-groups - "research and information" studies public opinion, and "the sources and forms of the infiltration of hostile information and the attitude of individuals to such information."

#### KAZAKHSTANSKAIA PRAVDA

20 January 1985, "Po Ateisticheskoi Propagande" (On Atheistic Propaganda). Seminar in Chimkent organised by Znanie Society on 17-18 January 1985 on: "Contemporary Islam and Problems of Perfecting Atheist Propaganda in Kazakhstan."

#### KOMMUNIST TADZHIKISTANA

5 January 1985, "Chto my Delaem v Afganistane?" (What are we Doing in Afghanistan?). TASS from Washington quoting the Washington Post and Selig

Harrison of the Carnegie Foundation who question, according to Kommunist Tadzhikistana, the White House help to the Afghan resistance "which has not the slightest chance of victory." On the strength of the Washington Post article and Mr Selig Harrison's assertions, Kommunist Tadzhikistana claims that even Republican circles in Congress are disenchanted and show no interest when the question of Afghanistan is raised.

9 January 1985, N. Baimuradov, "V Dukhe Ateizma" (In the Spirit of Atheism). The author is the director of the museum of local history "A. Rudaki." "Despite notable success in developing a scientific Weltanschauung there is no ground to claim that all is finished with religion. Religious delusions and dispositions are lively, and even nowadays, they hinder to a certain extent the spiritual developments of the believers. This results in problems for the cultural institutions, including the museums of local history, which are called upon to spread scientific atheism and assist the Party organisations in developing scientific-materialistic conceptions among the toilers." The author then enumerates the educational activities of the museum:

- o A third of the lectures given by the museum in the last two years - ie 150 - were given on atheistic themes: "Qoran and Reality", "How to Understand Freedom of conscience", "Islam and its Reactionary Essence", and so on.
- o During excursions organised by the museum, attention will automatically be drawn to points which may confirm a materialistic concept of life.
- o The archeological department of the museum stresses the helplessness and vulnerability of ancient man in order to show that he had little opportunity but to believe in God and miracles.
- o Nowruz is promoted as a socialist feast - museum exhibits show that it was already celebrated by Sogdians and thus has nothing to do with Islam.

o The pre-Revolution section of the museum promotes the idea of "religion - opium of the people" and calls on the help of aqsaqals remembering the pre-1917 period.

o A "university" of scientific atheism operates within the museum. Despite this concludes the author we realise the need to intensify our propaganda activity.

10 January 1985, "Protest MID Afghanistan" (Protest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan). Protest to Pakistan, alleging that a group of 250 people of whom 50 were Pakistani border troops, crossed into Afghanistan on 28 December 1984 to attack Chamkani in Paktya and various Afghan border posts in the province.

#### SOVETSKAIA KIRGIZIIA

13 January 1985, A. Orusbaev, "O Chem Umalchivaiut Sovetologi" (What the Sovietologists Hush Up). Defense of the Soviet languages policy and bilingualism in Central Asia. Professor Yaroslav Bilinsky and Allen Hetmanek are attacked for writing that many Central Asian intellectuals resent the intrusion of Russian vocabulary in their native languages. References are also made to Professor Michael Rywkin.

30 January 1985, A. Rudov, "Russkii Iazyk v Natsional'nom Vuze" (Russian Language in National Institutions of Higher Education). On the question of teaching Russian language and literature in native language schools. A new pedagogical institute has been created within the university of Frunze in 1979 to train teachers. There are similar training colleges in Osh, Przhval'sk, in the Kirghiz Female Pedagogical Institute and in five other institutes in the Republic. The author claims that practically all the population of Kirghizia is able (vladeet) to speak Russian.

NEW RESEARCH MATERIAL

Afghanistan - a Spirit of Resistance, No 1 is available from the Afghanistan Support Committee, 18 Charing Cross Road, London WC2N 0HR. This issue contains: two articles by Olivier Roy, "A Five Year Assessment: 1979-1984" and "Islam in the Afghan Resistance"; a report on "Food Aid to Afghanistan" by Dr Frances D'Souza; an article on Babur-nameh by Anthony Freemantle; a report on fund raising activity of Afghanaid; article by Julian Gearing on "Brits in Afghanistan", newsflash and descriptions of recent military offensives. The journal contains maps and photographs.

The Federation for American Afghan Action has published, since March 1985, Afghan Update. Afghan Update will reprint articles covering recent developments on the Afghan issue and will include reports on congressional and administration actions affecting United States support of the Afghan resistance. Available from: Federation for American Afghan Action, 236 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Suite 603 Washington DC 20003, USA.

"WEEK OF ATHEISM" AT TURKMEN STATE UNIVERSITY

From Keston News Service, No 219, 21 February 1985.

A "Week of Atheism" opened at the Turkmen State University on 24 December 1984. The week had been organised by the republican House of Scientific Atheism and the university's own department of atheism. Students were able to familiarise themselves with social atheistic education and films were shown about the harm that surviving religious practices can cause. Similar educational establishments were planning to hold such "weeks" around the republic.

In the capital city of Turkmenia, Ashkhabad, several new schools have

opened for lectures in atheism, agitators and organisers of anti-f religious propaganda. The first lessons have already taken place in Geok-Tepe, Tedzhen and in some of the districts of Ashkhabad. The atheists attend courses on "The truth about holy places" and "Topical problems of atheism" amongst others.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY, Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies, Goodbody Hall, Bloomington, Indiana 47405, USA The intensive summer course in Uzbek originally scheduled for the second semester of Indiana University's 1985 summer session has now been expanded to cover TWO semesters. As now scheduled, Introductory Uzbek I-II will meet during both the first and the second summer sessions. First session from 4 March to 12 June and Second session from 6 June to 9 August.

CENTRAL ASIAN SURVEY Vol 3 No 4, contains the following articles:  
Geng Shimin: "On the Fusion of Nationalities in the Tarim Basin and the Formation of the Modern Uighur Nationality."  
Mehmet Saray: "Russo-Turkmen Relations up to 1874."  
Audrey Shalinsky: "Ethnic Reactions to the Current Regime in Afghanistan - A Case Study."  
Baymirza Hayit: "Some Reflections on the Subject of Annexation of Turkestani Kazakhstan by Russia."  
Edward J Lazzerini: "From Bakhchisarai to Bukhara in 1893: Islamil Bey Gasprinskii's Journey to Central Asia."  
Rachel Lehr and Kim Meuser: "The Celebration, After the Celebration and the Halva-maker, from the Memoirs of Sadriddin Aini, Stalinabad 1954."

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