

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.