

THE BOOK SCENE

FIDEL CASTRO REFLECTS ON RELIGION

Fidel y la religion. Conversaciones con Frei Betto (Fidel and Religion. Conversations <sup>with</sup> Frei Betto), Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, Havana, 1985, 382 pp.

In Latin America, with nearly half of the world's Catholics living there, millions of believers have joined the liberation struggle in the past decades. Meanwhile, large-scale renovation processes are under way within the Church. A reader interested in the dialogue between Marxists and Christians need not be explained why precisely Comrade Fidel Castro has contributed a great deal to the study of the role the religious factor has to play in revolutionary theory and practice today.

Since the early 1970s the Cuban leader has been calling for closer cooperation of Communists with progressives among the believers and the clergy in many of his speeches (for instance, in 1971 in Chile, 1977 in Jamaica, 1980 in Nicaragua). The book Fidel and Religion, which appeared late in 1985 in the bookshops of Cuba and later in other countries of Latin America and Europe, summarised, at it were, Fidel Castro's reflections on these problems. The book was written by Frei (Brother) Betto, a well-known Brazilian specialist in the theology of liberation,<sup>1</sup> on the basis of four-day conversations with Fidel Castro.

Betto's book is devoted to one of the most important problems in Latin America and is meant primarily for Latin Americans. But its significance, as we see it, exceeds these



limits. In this troubled world of ours, in which the unity of many millions of atheists and believers working together to save mankind from a nuclear holocaust is far more important than their disputes over the existence of God, the utterances by the leader of the Cuban revolution recorded in the book are most timely and reflect new political thinking.

Fidel and Religion has become a bestseller in Latin America, even in such major publishing centres as Buenos Aires and Mexico City. In Brazil it ran into 19 editions, and the Brazilian Writers' Union praised Frei Betto as a most popular "intellectual of the year".

In the foreword to the mass edition put out in Havana Armando Hart, Political Bureau Member of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Cuba, and Minister of Culture, has this to say on the significance of the book: "Christianity and Marxism, the two major trends of human thought and sentiment in history, presented by the adversaries of the progress of mankind as two irreconcilable antipodes, find new and unanticipated ways to mutual understanding" (p. 12).

The book covers a broad range of issues. Its first part ("The Chronicle of the Visit") and most chapters in the second part ("Interviews") give the reader an idea of the historical paths traversed by Cuba and Latin America and of the present day of this fragile world, in which religion continues to influence the thinking of millions of people, especially in the developing countries. The analysis of the revolutionary process in Cuba, blended harmoniously with Fidel Castro's story



of his life and the shaping of his moral code; the assessment of the economic, political and social situation on the continent and of the class struggles there; the problem of foreign debt and the new international economic order; bourgeois democracy and the notorious "export of revolution"; the relationships of the Cuban state and the Church under socialism; the role of the "rebel" clergy and religious working people in the liberation struggle in Latin America; the theology of liberation and Christian grassroots communities--these and many other issues worrying atheists and believers alike are examined in the book in most expressive and clear terms.

It is not our intention to cover all the problems discussed in the book, so we shall confine ourselves to the main ideas concerning religion, above all the fresh elements introduced by Fidel Castro in the approach to their study. Some of the propositions formulated by him during the talks with Frei Betto sound non-traditional, because they are based on the specific Latin American experience and because the Cuban leader regards such a social phenomenon as religion with understanding, without a shade of dogmatism, and his attitude to believers is that of great respect. On the one hand, he is guided by Lenin's well-known observation that "political protests in religious guise are common to all nations at a certain stage of their development",<sup>2</sup> and on the other, he is faithful to the Marxist theoretical imperative that any social question be examined "within definite historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country..., account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch".<sup>3</sup>



Therefore the Church, religion and the revolutionary potential of believers are examined mainly within the span of the last few decades and in the Latin American context. Besides, Fidel Castro always draws on the well-known precept of Frederick Engels: "The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working class movement."<sup>4</sup> The book shows the similarity between the present-day struggle of the working people, led by the Communists, against capitalist exploiters and the struggle of early Christians against Roman oppressors. "The word 'Communist' is now most hated by the reactionaries," Fidel Castro observes, "whereas at that time the word 'Christian' was hated as much" (p. 329).

Fidel Castro elaborates on the thesis, which he formulated way back during his visit to Chile in 1971, that between revolutionary Marxists and the progressive segment of the believers and the clergy in Latin America not only tactical, but a consistent "strategic alliance for effecting social changes needed by our peoples" is possible and necessary (p. 274). As is known, in practical terms the policy of alliances, dialogues and cooperation between Marxists and Christians is pursued by the communist parties in Latin America on a fairly large scale in political and socio-economic spheres. In the former this is seen, for instance, from the fact that believers are admitted to Latin American communist parties, not to mention cooperation of communist and religious organisations in the struggle for peace, human rights and environmental protection, and against local dictatorial regimes (Chile, Paraguay and El Salvador). In the



socio-economic sphere, there operates, for instance, the movement of Christians for socialism; believers take part in building a new life in Cuba and Nicaragua; and there is the collectivist experience of Christian grassroots communities.

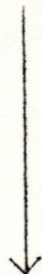
In a broader context, the strategic alliance between the revolutionary forces of Latin America and the progressive part of the clergy, including parishioners, the Catholic grassroots and some members of the episcopate, is most essential because the believers make up the overwhelming majority of the Latin American population, and there can be no radical changes at all without their participation. These changes are intended for the popular masses, and an attempt to artificially turn millions of believers into atheists within a brief span of time is impracticable and immoral, for it would mean coercion. Fidel Castro warns: "Under no circumstances should one think that deep-going social changes, socialism and communism, involve interference into the inner life of man and deny the right of any human being to independent thinking and religious beliefs" (p. 277).

It is easy to see that the call of the Cuban leader for a strategic alliance with believers on the basis of utmost respect for their religious views rests on Lenin's well-known proposition: "No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven."<sup>5</sup>



For all the importance of cooperation between Marxists and religious people in the political and economic fields, it is in the moral and ethical sphere, Fidel Castro says, that a strategic alliance with renovating religious movements would be most effective. Reviewing the original ideals of early Christianity and most general moral norms of Marxism and the socialist way of life, the Cuban leader arrives at the conclusion that they are close to each other, but are diametrically opposite to the false values of capitalist society: "Christianity coincides with communism <sup>thousand</sup> ten/thousand times as much as with capitalism" (pp. 17-18). Stressing repeatedly that Christianity at the outset appealed to the oppressed and disinherited, was directed against injustice and abuses, which is clearly obvious from the Sermon on the Mount, Fidel Castro remarks: "I think Karl Marx could well have subscribed to the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 326).

The approach of the Cuban leader to Marx's classic formula, "Religion is opium of <sup>the</sup> / people", is consonant with the idea of strategic alliance with progressive Christians. As is known, the true meaning of this formula was for a long time inaccurately translated into other languages, as "Religion is opium for the people". Luckily, this distortion has been corrected, but debates over this expressive phrase of Marx continues to this day.





In October 1980, the leadership of the Sandinist National Liberation Front of Nicaragua, drawing on the experience of the victorious revolution, said in a special document on religious matters that the formula should be viewed dialectically, with due regard for the conditions and needs of a concrete historical process: "Our experience proves that when Christians, guided by their religion, are capable of responding to the needs of the people and history, then religion itself leads them onto the path of revolutionary struggle" (p. 331).

Fidel Castro, for his part, remembering the lessons of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, as well as the developments in many other Latin American countries, says that, in his opinion "religion, from a political point of view, is in itself not an opium, nor can it work wonders. It can be made opium or work wonders, depending on how it is used: either for protecting the oppressors and exploiters or the oppressed and exploited, that is, depending on the approach to the solution of political, social or material problems of man who is born in this world and has to live in it, notwithstanding theology or his religious beliefs. In strictly political terms, and I believe I know something about politics," Fidel Castro goes on, "it even seems to me that one can be a Marxist while remaining a Christian and work together with Marxists who are Communists to transform the world" (p.333).

In view of the need to build up the strategic alliance between Marxists and revolutionary-minded parishioners and the grassroots clergy, the book examines from a new angle / <sup>the</sup> propa-



ganda of atheism and crude techniques which are sometimes used to this end and which provoke disunity among the working people. It is well known that from the beginning of the revolution in Cuba its leaders saw to it that the revolution should in no event be looked upon by the people as an enemy of religion. "If that had happened," Fidel Castro once remarked, "we would, indeed, have done a service to reaction, to the exploiters, and not only in Cuba but, above all, in Latin America."<sup>6</sup> This is why one should "avoid at any cost doctrinaire rhetoric which offends the religious feelings of the population including workers, peasants and the middle strata, which would only benefit the exploiter system. I should say," Fidel Castro remarks, "that in the face of the new realities the approach to this problem and its treatment by the Left should be changed" (p. 290).

The call of the Cuban leader for strategic alliance and mutual understanding among all who cherish the ideals of peace and humanism works for cooperation even now, wherever the questions of religion and the relations between the clergy and society produce social tensions. Thus, among the first European countries in which the book was published was Poland (July 1986), where its appearance, according to *Pax*, a progressive Christian association, was expected to promote dialogue between the Church and the state. Zenon Komender, Deputy Chairman of Poland's State Council and also president of *Pax*, who introduced the book to the Polish reader, emphasised that "unity which Fidel Castro calls for is very important not only today; it will be of decisive significance in the twenty-first century as well".<sup>7</sup>



These words are worth close attention for it is impossible to safeguard peace and build a more perfect world community unless all people of goodwill unite, no matter what is behind their striving for a life in peace and social justice--the Marxist understanding of history or unselfish and sincere religious belief.

Esteban Ona

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TÜSTAV  
TARİH ARAŞTIRMA



<sup>1</sup> For details on the theology of liberation see Alvaro Oviedo, Stepan Mamontov, "Theology of Liberation: A New Heresy?", WMR, No. 3, 1986. Frei Betto (b.1944) joined the left Catholic movement at an early age; he was arrested twice, organised grass-roots Christian communities in Brazil, has written 16 books and is a member of the International Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. He visited Cuba many times and has a good knowledge of the country's achievements.--Ed.

<sup>2</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 4, p. 243.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 20, pp. 400-401.

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, On Religion, Moscow, 1957, p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 10, pp. 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> "Fidel Castro y los cristianos revolucionarios. Folletos monográficos", Rutilio Grande, No. 6, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Granma, July 11, 1986.



1 non Todeh

"RELIGION IS FOR GOD, THE HOMELAND IS FOR ALL"

This slogan was repeatedly echoed at the round table  
attended in Nicosia by representatives of fraternal  
parties and Marxist scientists from 14 countries to con-

(Cyprus), <sup>Masud</sup> Masood Ali Khan (India), <sup>Han</sup> Sattajaya Sudiman (Indonesia), Falah Abdul Jabbar and Nasser El-Kadhemi (Iraq), Rauzbeh Navid (Iran), Said Salem (Jordan), Abdul Rahman Awadallah (Palestinian Communist Party), Hamad Mubarak (Saudi Arabia), Semou Pathe Gueye (Senegal), Ali Ahmed el-Tayeb (Sudan), <sup>Halit</sup> Zahir Abdul Samad, Khaled Hammami

and Jubran al-Jaber (Syria), Ali Ileri (Turkey), Ahmed Iskenderov, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and Fabri Karim, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Nahj.

Some of the fraternal parties invited to the symposium

were, unfortunately, not able to attend for various reasons. Their positions and experience will, therefore, not be reflected in this survey.

Copy: Muslimah sodeer "ohir daryade bar carnate" Cernette - - -

The contemporary Moslem does not only think of "paradise  
in heaven" but also wants a happy life on the Earth as well.

The other world does not stand in the way of the Moslem loving the homeland so dear to him and fighting for its freedom and prosperity. These ideas are reflected in the slogan chosen for the heading. It was raised by enlightened Moslem clergymen at the dawn of the liberation struggle of the peoples of the East.

herles ovesen --- yikseltekti.



ve bugün hala geçerlidir. Bu nedenle de müslüman yığınlar arasında  
It is still valid today. That is why it has the support of  
communists and workers' parties working among the Moslem masses.

All participants in the Nicosia symposium are of the opinion that upholding this slogan is evidence of the Communists'

respect for the feelings of believers and of their striving

~~for the unity of all the popular forces, irrespective of~~

religious persuasion, for the sake of their countries' libera-

tion and social progress, and for peace on the Earth.

hantlemløst

Hegel was Wrong

19. geygdu bylarinda son Dehli darsinlar  
In the early nineteenth century, some Western thinkers  
Islamizasyon peccasim bir yekhe hamtipim seriyarlar. Hegel  
had assumed Islam to be a thing of the past. In his lectures  
Lash felsefesi derslerinde soye digudu ki Islamizet drige  
on the philosophy of history, Hegel said that "Islam has long  
dehik schreinden aydala et alden ve coloten aydala ve  
since left the world scene of history and has again returned to  
geyden aydala - e kerketmelik ham legne dende, dende  
its Oriental state of repose and immobility"<sup>2</sup>, a conclusion we  
bir banyomen an aydala - e - balyoruz.  
now find to be hasty, to say the least.

The development of the national liberation movement in the

countries of the East, which has been influenced by the Great  
October Socialist Revolution, the formation of the Soviet power  
in vast areas of the former Russian empire inhabited by Moslems  
and many subsequent events in the world, including Asia and  
Africa, have demonstrated the vitality of this faith in its  
spiritual, social and political manifestations.

In contrast to the West, where at the <sup>anti-feudal, revolutionary</sup> stage of struggle for the unity of the nation, the ideologists of the bourgeoisie had usually opposed religion, nationalism in the East marched hand in hand with religion. Indeed, religion in countries with a

Antifood, devarci mead Wlusan birligi iin, en d:-  
food devarci micede cimenidota batman darsine Daput  
olen ve bignee idalepten jerebtile dne koss siltikler  
Batman darsine daput mltlyetile dne lile vord. jerebtile



*Muslimen nufus eger bostige uñlelerde ve snaf yusun embriyer*  
predominantly Moslem population and an embryonic class struc-  
*duygunde oldigin uñlelerde, --- der toplum masel: yusun*  
ture has, more often than not, been the pivot of the society's  
*herkin olusturuyordu.*  
spiritual life.

*Suriyede kishil kishiler desrimin*  
Zahir Abdul Samad recalled that at the inception of the  
*beglenicinde Homs kishibundati El-Nuri camini*  
national liberation revolution the al-Nouri mosque in the  
*Fransuz sarmayecilere kish yiginsil potteri yeni otmasi*  
Syrian town of Homs was the site from which massive demonstra-  
*oldugun batiyette isgal pishleri asama potteri yaser*  
tions proceeded against French colonialism. When the occupation  
*opioneleri --- cem etrafinda siddetli bir*  
forces tracked down student protesters, fierce street fighting  
*sohuk etismesi oldu.*  
broke out around the mosque. Satiyajaya Sudiman said that when

*1920 de Indonezya K.P. kishidopinda partinin idareci ben lider -*  
the Communist Party of Indonesia was founded in 1920 several of  
*tergindiril chimen sol kenarindan gelenlerdi gelini oldigin*  
its leaders came from the left wing of the religious movement,

*söyledi. --- ise inçin inçitmeye began -*  
Sarekat Islam, Faleh Abdul Jabbar stated that it was the pro-  
*bilikler kishilimisi sishin istemini dle potteri ilk soperlerden birinin*  
minent clergyman al-Afghani who formulated one of the earliest  
*onde peler din edunlerinden Al-Afghani tarafindan ortaya chikyan söyledi*  
slogans demanding the liberation of Iraq from British dependence.

*Bu biylanda birach sishin cildir*  
Many similar examples were cited in this context.

*Sempoziumdahi en estersen sishina islami patteme --- e*  
The most interesting discussion at the symposium ensued  
*"Islami yashayish" oñe asher asher vande oldu.*  
over what is often called the "Islamic boom" and the "Moslem  
*Buñin, 20. yanyden sonunda birach muslimen uñle*  
renaissance". Today, at the end of the twentieth century, many  
*Islam huseletinde yeni bir canlanma sohre oluyor.*  
Moslem countries are the scene of a new resurgence in the  
*komunizm cöñu biron 1970 vande*  
Islamic movement. Most of the speakers affirmed that it first  
*soñledigin heliktiler.*  
started in the 1970s.

*Dile kishime chid chiner depizibhler oldu ki*  
The changes that have taken place were so swift and unpre-  
*birach depizib fohle ve biron da celistott depiler*  
dictable that they generated differing and sometimes contradic-  
*donelere yashayishlara vadin oldu. Basi arastirmalar Islamiyatin dopenin*  
tory assessments and evaluations. Some researchers have turned  
*ve sishine tashlar donerek depizib kishinlerin konumlarine ve ithelemin*  
to the genesis and history of Islam, comparing its tenets and  
*kushitindiler. Ahmed Iskenderov sishin söyledi.*  
the positions of various clerical quarters. Akhmed Iskenderov  
*Bu celimler konulari aschilip kishitunecchi yende*  
said that, paradoxically, these studies instead of clearing up



*çaprazlaşma çaprazlaşma çaprazlaşmaları* matters often lead researchers away from an understanding of *dopadın itibatı olan ve şimdi Moslem ülkelerinde* these processes and phenomena which are directly linked to the *politikelerde önemli bir etmen olan siyaset ve idarede* impact of the Islamic factor and which now constitute an important element of internal political developments in the predominantly Moslem countries.

*Sovyet bilimcisi* The Soviet scientist said that the answer would not be found in Islamic dogma. In most cases, Islam is not merely a religion but rather an ideological and political trend with far-reaching and quite secular goals. *Semou Pathe Gueye* generally agreed with this point of a view and drew attention to the fact that the revival of religious, particularly Islamic, consciousness also results from a failure to meet the spiritual requirements of people who, in the face of "the world of things" and the surfeit of information, seek an idea, even utopian, like the one for which many had given their lives in the past.

*Boyle olsa bile* Be that as it may, there is evidence of an increase in the number of believers. According to the data cited at the symposium, *Senaryoda verilen veriler* there are now some 800-850 million Moslems in the world. The political and ideological influence of the Moslem clergy has, at the same time, been growing. They are in full control of state power in Iran; they are represented on the government in the Sudan; they run state institutions in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states; they have been expanding the old religious organisations and setting up new ones.

Although the law in many countries bans religion-based political parties, Islamic groups have been successfully seeking



phenomena of politics and exerting an influence on the economic and social sphere and even on external relations. The Organisation of Islamic Conference, comprising tens of countries with a predominantly Moslem population, has been active on the international scene.

The intensification of the Islamic factor occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s against the background of growing crisis developments and trends which covered the political, economic and social spheres where the ruling circles failed to consolidate national independence or to ensure social progress. The failure of the bourgeoisie alienated the urban petty-bourgeois strata and the peasantry. The situation was further aggravated by widespread corruption, bureaucratisation of the state apparatus, parasitism and embezzlement of state funds. This opportunity was seized by the religious forces, which acted as the political leader of the broad popular masses.

These forces were able to use the tenacity of archaic social and spiritual structures characteristic of the countries of the East. The desire to speed up the social restructuring of former colonies and semi-colonies aggravated the confrontation between those who posed as advocates of modernisation and the fundamentalists, all the more so as this desire did not materialise in actual measures aimed at economic, cultural and social development but was confined merely to borrowing and implanting bourgeois development models and the worst aspects of Western civilisation.



Lenin sən beləlmisti: "dini pərvanədəki politiki protestolar

Lenin once remarked that "political protests in religious  
tüm v. helerde politiki protestolar beləli bir vaxtda oluytur."

guise are common to all nations at a certain stage of their  
development".<sup>3</sup> Thus, Moslem clergymen happened to be in some  
countries at the head of most revolutionary upheavals in re-

cent years, as it was strikingly manifested by the overthrow

of the Shah monarchy in Iran. Rouzbeh Navid pointed out that

in the past period, religion was virtually the only possible  
form of protest and struggle.

İranda 1979 Səbat dövrüni əldə - cənabları

The February 1979 revolution in Iran had a national-demo-  
cratic character, with a popular, anti-monarchic and anti-im-  
perialist content. A large section of the Shiite clergy, led by

Khomeini, supported the people's revolutionary demands under  
the Shah regime and promised freedom and justice within the

framework of Islamic rule. This extended the clergy's social  
base and assured it of the support of millions of working

people. During that period, the clergy was the main opposition  
force which was able to establish direct contact with the mas-  
ses and spread its ideas through the mosques. The other organi-  
sations, especially the People's Party of Iran, did not have

such an opportunity.

İranda Səbat dövrüni Səh ilə Səh rejimni

The February revolution in Iran overthrew the Shah regime,  
but failed to fulfil its main tasks: economic and social trans-  
formations and a consistently anti-imperialist course. Abdul Rah-

man Awadallah explained the Iranian revolution's quick re-  
versal precisely by the fact that it did not take a clear-cut  
stand on progress and did not apply the slogan, "Religion is  
for God, the Homeland is for All".



Based  
Çıktı İslamî politikâ hareketleri in  
pörs ve konuları

The ideas and positions of many contemporary Islamic political movements are similar to the way of thinking and work adopted by revolutionary Christians in Medieval Europe. These movements also advocate a return to the "golden age", to the social system that existed at the time of the Prophet Mohammed. Hence the narrow-mindedness and dogmatism of their ideology, and the poor results of their programmes when put into practice.

16. yüzyıl Avrupasında köylü hareketleri sadece zayıf ve parçala parçala dini gruplar oluşturdular, ancak feodal despotizmin pekişmesi için olumsuz bir ortam yarattılar. Engels Almanya'da köylüsüzün konumunda şunları yazdı: "The most magnificent revolutionary effort of the German people ended in ignominious defeat and, for the time being, in redoubled oppression." The participants in the symposium were of the opinion that this characterisation also applies to the outcome of the Islamic revolution in Iran, which was led to a "defeat" at the hands of the reactionary religious leaders, who took over power after the popular insurrection.

The Iranian revolution has, at the same time, left a considerable and patchy impact on the ideology and practice of popular movements in the Moslem countries. It has served as an incentive for the creation of Islamic-oriented organisations.

In Iraq, for instance, many religious groups became more active in advocating the establishment of a religious state. Similar currents have sprung up or are active in other Arab countries and also in Turkey, Indonesia and Senegal. The present Tehran regime has made no secret of its intention to export the

Fateh Abdul Cabbar, hareketleri hem bu konuları  
görüyor.



mythology, portents, portendings, prophecies.  
 "Islamic Revolution", something the Communists resolutely  
 oppose, Faleh Abdul Jabbar emphasised.

*Bu bağlamda Lefkore'deki toplantıda da bu soru ortaya  
 çıktı. 250'ye yakın olan İslamcılar, Ortodokslar, Katolikler ve diğer  
 din adamlarıyla bir toplantı yapıldı. Bu toplantıda*  
 In this context, this question was raised at the Nicosia  
 symposium: are there any grounds for Western media allegations  
 that "the Islamic boom" has affected the population of regions  
 in the Soviet Union traditionally influenced by Islam?

*Ahmet İskenderov bu konuda şunları söyledi: 'Sosyalist  
 ülkelerin içinde de dinler vardır. Dinin toplumun bir parçasıdır. Onu  
 ortadan kaldırmak mümkün değildir. Ancak, toplumun gelişmesiyle  
 birlikte dinin etkisi azalır. Bu, doğal bir süreçtir.'*  
 The experience of the socialist countries, including the  
 Soviet Union, has shown, Akhmed Iskenderov said, that the ques-  
 tion of religion is one of the most intricate problems. Marxism-  
 Leninism links the weakening influence of religion and its  
 gradual disappearance to the restructuring of the society.

*Eğer sosyalizmin maddi ve teknik temellerini sağlamaya çalışırsanız  
 dinin etkisi azalır. Ancak, bu süreç zaman alır. Dinin toplumun bir parçasıdır.  
 Onu ortadan kaldırmak mümkün değildir. Ancak, toplumun gelişmesiyle  
 birlikte dinin etkisi azalır. Bu, doğal bir süreçtir.'*  
 If there are no easy ways to building the material and technical  
 basis of socialism, it is even harder to reshape human conscious-  
 ness, especially religious consciousness. It calls for unflinching  
 attention, painstaking work and much time.

*Maddi ve manevi ihtiyaçların karşılanması, bireylerin  
 yeterli dikkatle yetiştirilmesi, ve her bir bireyin haklarını  
 koruması için toplumun çok çalışması gerekir. Dinin etkisi azalır.  
 Ancak, bu süreç zaman alır. Dinin toplumun bir parçasıdır.  
 Onu ortadan kaldırmak mümkün değildir. Ancak, toplumun gelişmesiyle  
 birlikte dinin etkisi azalır. Bu, doğal bir süreçtir.'*  
 Failure to meet material and spiritual requirements, in-  
 sufficient attention to the individual, and bewilderment in the  
 face of the extremely complex and diversified problems of our  
 day, such as the threat of thermonuclear catastrophe, the con-  
 tradictory consequences of the scientific and technical revolu-  
 tion, and the environment degradation--all of these can promote  
 a yearning for religion as a compensation for what man is denied  
 by the society.

*Sosyalist ülkelerin her zaman dinin toplumsal rolünü değerlendirmişlerdir.  
 ve bu gün de dinin toplumun hayatındaki rolünü değerlendirmişlerdir. Yine de  
 dinin toplumun hayatındaki rolünü değerlendirmek, toplumun hayatını  
 değiştirmek için bir araçtır. Ancak, bu süreç zaman alır. Dinin toplumun  
 bir parçasıdır. Onu ortadan kaldırmak mümkün değildir. Ancak, toplumun  
 gelişmesiyle birlikte dinin etkisi azalır. Bu, doğal bir süreçtir.'*  
 The CPSU has always taken the creative Marxist approach in  
 assessing the social role of religion and the durability of  
 religious mass consciousness. The Soviet state has never waged  
 a struggle against believers or belief in God, but it has always



her samen sommarin system dandelen die dappelen  
been resolutely opposed to attempts by the exploiter classes  
kontrollen en <sup>die</sup> system dandelen en schelen  
to use the religious sentiments of believers, and against the  
idealen die personen for ideologi sloch kontrollen hen her  
manipulation of religion to shape an ideology expressing the  
keuze sichte. SSCB Anyson

class interests of the enemies of socialism. Article 52 of the Constitution of the USSR states: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion." Incitement of hostility or

or not to profess any religion: involvement or noninvolvement in  
even *bozashkamen yasa ile yezesh kemaytor.* Azerbaijan 34,  
hatred on religious grounds is prohibited by law. Article 34  
*meddair xale diyar: "SSCB yar Hestari, --- sayd yede*  
of the Constitution states: "Citizens of the USSR are equal  
*mitih dorumlar, ink yede utotom miltiget, cinsiyet, xitim, d,*  
before the law, without distinction of origin, social or pro-  
*ve dya komunistiki sistemlar fexlome behlomchisom yashlar omide*  
perty status, race or nationality, sex, education, language  
*va eshter...* *SSCB yar Hestariom xit behlom chonom, p. 172*  
and attitude to religion... The equal rights of citizens of the  
*sayd e kultural yashom tura chomlarda xit behlom chomshor.*  
USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social

and cultural life."

The CPSU's policy with respect to religion and believers  
is now based on the truth and realism, as it is in every other

date duration periodic bar Parti be leader V.R. Lopez her color m

sphere of social life. The Party has made a realistic assess-  
ment of the state of things in this sphere and, in the light  
of the decisions of its 27th Congress, demands scrupulous ob-

servance of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of con-  
science. That is not a policy of expedients, but the Commun-  
ists' strategic line based on principle and on Marx's idea that  
"to practise his own particular religion is expressly included

Bourgeois propagandists suggest that the democratic capitalist  
Bourgeois propaganda has made futile allegations that be-  
lievers in the socialist countries are persecuted for their



*S B'nin isleniyete kere bosporinin oldugu*  
 religious faith, that the Soviet Union is intolerant of Islam,  
*ve hatta S B'nde isleniyete kere bosporinin oldugu*  
 and that it is even taking steps to banish it from the life of  
*isteh için adanlar etmekte oldugu yolda da culara iddialarda bulunuyor.*  
 the Moslem population of the USSR. It was said at the symposium  
*Sesaryunda, S B'nde kupa 1300'den fazla cami*  
 that there are now more than 1,300 mosques operating in the  
*bulunduguna son yillarda yeni camilerin inşaatı da sürmektedir*  
 Soviet Union, and that scores of new mosques have been opened  
*belirtildi.*  
 in recent years. Moslem clergymen are trained in a theological  
*ve redrese de eğitim programları - Sesaryunda haneler*  
 academy and medrese, which operate legally. The participants in  
*sinif düşmanının S B'ne aslında istih için ve "istem sorun"*  
 the symposium pointed out that the class enemy has maliciously  
*"istem sorunu" dandalar yada insan haklarını dışlamak için değil.*  
 slandered the Soviet Union and inflated the "Islamic problem"  
*tim*  
 out of all proportion not out of any concern for believers or  
*soydaş perspektif karşısında hakikatlar hatta düşmanlık*  
 human rights, but in order to incite discontent in the liberated  
*yeretmek için standıyın belirttiler.*  
 countries and even hostility to the socialist perspective.

### *Yeni bir spektrumün problemi için spektrum* Wide Spectrum of Forces under the Green Banner

*Sesaryunda haneler*  
*Birlik istinir*  
*thede*  
 Among the factors promoting the spread of religious ide-  
*Yol açan etmenler arasında hükümetlerin hant e işi problemleri*  
 ology and Islamic political movements in many Moslem countries  
*ve politika sürer ve laik ilerin pıçbe sürer ve bu ilerin vıyın*  
 the participants in the symposium mentioned the repression con-  
*lamasına da değindiler.*  
 stantly conducted by the governments against communist and

*Bahar*  
 workers' parties and the secular progressive forces. Here are  
*Bu konuda bazı örnekler verelim: Sesaryunda kışkırtıcı sesaryunda*  
 some of the facts. Among the 13 parties from the non-socialist  
*değil adılar ve sesaryunda olmağında 13 ilerin partilerden 8'i*  
 world represented at Nicosia eight are banned. The Sudanese  
*yeni cılındılar. Sudan KP henüz yekunlarda, kapalı oldu*  
 Communist Party has only recently come out of the underground,  
*1985'te Nimeiri diktatörlüğünün yıkılmasından sonra yeni oldu.*  
 following the overthrow of the Nimeiri dictatorship in 1985.

*Aslında Lübnan KP. bu sesaryunda MK için, Ferde doktoru*  
 The Lebanese Communist Party, which is operating in the open,  
*Husein Mrone'yi edeği olarak pıçbe istiyordu ama*  
 had the intention of delegating to the symposium its CC member  
 a doctor of philosophical sciences,

← Hussein Mrone, but he was assassinated on February 17, 1987.

*H. Mrone 17 Şubat 1987'de öldürüldü*



al dcha priba don



It is out to extend its influence among students, employees and intellectuals, but it is essentially active through mosques. Said Salem stressed that the "Moslem Brothers" in Jordan makes no secret of its goal to wipe out the Communists as its main enemy.

main enemy. In the Arab territories occupied by Israel, the "Moslem Brothers" acts as a Trojan horse propagating the idea that the occupation has come as a punishment to Moslems for departing from the tenets of Islam. That is why the occupation can only be eliminated by a stronger faith in Allah. The "Moslem Brothers" has virtually renounced every form of struggle against the occupiers and has declared, instead, a war against the "godless" Palestinian Communists. The Israeli authorities have, characteristically, not banned the organisation but have, on the contrary, given it certain privileges, specifically freedom of movement in the occupied territories.

in the occupied territories.

The participants in the symposium pointed out that, despite this complex and alarming situation, one should also look at the other side of the question, namely, the emergence of a growing number of Islamic organisations and trends actively fighting against imperialist influence, dictatorial regimes and inhuman repression that run counter to any religious thinking.

Deep-going differentiation in the religious quarters is characteristic of virtually all the countries represented at the symposium. Thus, the demands of the working masses in Iran, irrespective of their subjective understanding, have largely determined the scope of the February revolution and limited the urge of the Shiite orthodox clergy to reduce the tasks of



the revolution solely to restoring "the laws and rules of the Shariat". According to the representative of the People's Party of Iran, this contradiction between the people's interests and the government's actions underlies the growing dissatisfaction of the masses and the alienation from the reactionary regime of growing strata of believers, including some religious quarters.

In Saudi Arabia, opposition has become more active among the Shiites in the eastern part of the country particularly after the events in Iran. Another movement representing the Sunni majority of nine million is against the corruption and bribery in the state apparatus, and <sup>against</sup> the US presence, under the religious slogan of "liberation from the infidels". In 1979, its supporters took over the mosque at Mecca. In Bahrain, the government has made unsuccessful attempts through its loyal clergy to control the patriotic and democratic-minded religious forces.

Religion is becoming one of the most important channels for the opposition to establish contacts with the masses in Indonesia and Turkey. Islamic trends are developing with explicitly anti-imperialist and humanitarian tendencies. Haydar Kutlu, CC General Secretary of the Communist Party of Turkey, has said that growing political activity by religious trends was one of the important factors that frustrated the US attempts to depoliticise Turkey, that is, to <sup>wean</sup> / the people away from thinking about their future. In Indonesia, differentiation has sharpened between opposition Islamic groups advocating a religious state



of religion,  
and those demanding real democracy and freedom/ like the  
"Abangan Moslems".

In the Sudan, the "Moslem Brothers" is demanding an Islamic constitution, while another organisation, the "Republican Brothers", is opposed to this demand as running counter to the spirit of Islam and the realities of the time, which call for realism in attending to celestial and secular affairs. The population in the south of the Sudan has also resisted the Islamic constitution.<sup>6</sup> The country's Communist Party believes that the confrontation between the revolutionary-democratic and the right-wing forces does not spring from the antithesis of Islamic ideas and atheism, but from the antagonism between democracy and dictatorship, between justice and social oppression. These<sup>e</sup> are the lines on which the battle over the nature of the future constitution is being fought: it will either entrench the people's gains, the country's sovereignty, and the basic rights and democratic freedoms, or it will legalise the dictatorship of the ruling class and deprive the people of the fruits of their struggle. [In India, the most reactionary religious party, Jamaat-e-Islami, advocates "pure Islam", but its policy makes it evident that much of its inspiration comes from fascist dictatorships. On the other hand, the ideas of early Islam provide a basis for progressive scholars advocating the principles of equality, brotherhood and mutual help.

A paper presented by Al-Nahj makes an attempt to sum up the ideological trends of the religious political forces active in the Arab countries. Most of them make ethical and moral criticisms of the evils<sup>of</sup> the ugly development of dependent capitalism. Apart from a few exceptions, however, they do not question



the "sacred" right of private property. Some, like the "Al-Madrasi" group in Iraq, have proposed a "middle-of-the-road" Islamic solution through the creation of a wide network of co-operatives.

In the political sphere many, including those opposed to the existing dictatorships and suppression of democracy, reject the idea of a modern secular state and call for a return to the past when religious and secular powers were in the same hands. Thus we have here a wide spectrum of views, ranging from direct defence of the feudal-capitalist social system to various forms of petty-bourgeois reformism. The latter trend has, as the authors of the paper say, the potential for developing towards what is now known as "liberation theology", especially in view of the anti-imperialist tendencies predominant in it: resistance to US domination, against Israel's expansionism, and against the plunder of the region's natural resources.

The development of dependent capitalism in the Arab countries and the intensifying struggle over national and social issues create an objective basis for growing anti-imperialist, patriotic tendencies.

A major role in this struggle belongs to the peasantry and the middle strata of town and country which are most susceptible to Islam and consequently tend to protest in religious forms. A correct assessment by Communists of the existing potentialities and the spread of their parties' influence among the masses will make it possible to channel this protest into liberation theology and so prevent reaction from using it against the forces of progress.



### Alliance Policy, a Line of the Masses

The Communists regard cooperation and interaction with progressive Islamic organisations and a section of the Moslem clergy as a strategic line of their alliance policy in countries where believers form a majority of the population. The fraternal parties are guided by Lenin's idea that "unity in this really revolutionary struggle by the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important ... than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven".<sup>7</sup>

Many speakers at the symposium stressed that Communists have no right, consciously or accidentally, to play up to Islamic reaction, which lays emphasis on the tenets of faith and rejects any ties with atheists. Religious credo is the personal affair of every individual, while political and social forces should proceed from existing realities and the requirements of the struggle at each concrete stage. Ideological differences should be moved into the background when it comes to solving common and vital problems, for that is the only way to success in developing alliances.

These problems range over a wide area, including the struggle for national interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and against imperialist and Zionist aggression. They involve a host of economic and social problems relating to underdevelopment and neocolonial exploitation, to the establishment of political democracy and defence of human rights under dictatorial regimes of various stripes. They also include international solidarity/<sup>in</sup>solving global problems of today, above all, in averting a world nuclear war.



The imperialist "divide and rule" policy has left a deep scar on the life of the less developed countries, although colonialism has long since been eliminated. Following the establishment of Pakistan and Bangladesh, India has been left with a 100-million Moslem "minority". Turkish occupation and NATO schemes have led to the partition of Cyprus and the establishment of a secessionist state inhabited by Turks on 37 per cent of its territory. Peace in the Sudan has for several years been disrupted because the non-Moslem minority in the south has been denied legitimate rights.

Of especial importance to the Communists of these countries is the slogan: "Religion is for God, the Homeland is for ALL", together with the principles of freedom and equality of all the religious persuasion and struggle to safeguard the nation and its cohesion. That is the basis on which the Sudanese Communist Party is cooperating with the forces advocating a secular constitution, and it believes that Shariat can be no more than a component element of the fundamental law of the state. The Communist Party of India has been fighting against Hindu chauvinism and for the protection of Moslem lives and property, and for the official recognition of the Urdu language, which many of them speak. At the same time, the CPI has strongly condemned the separatist tendencies, fuelled, in particular, from Pakistan. The party has campaigned for the unity of the labour movement against reactionary attempts to split the unions and isolate the Moslem working people.

Agamemnon Stavrou said that AKEL, among whose co-founders were also people from the Turkish community, has for over



six decades been defending the principle of equality and brotherhood of all Cypriots regardless of origin and religious persuasion. Today, with the island partitioned and occupied, the party cannot openly reach out to the Moslem masses in the north. The majority of those are Cypriots who have for centuries lived in peace and security with their compatriots from the Greek community. There are, however, religious fanatics who have mostly come from Turkey in recent years. In this difficult situation, AKEL has done everything it can to support the progressive, anti-separatist forces and to promote a spirit of national unity and solidarity among Cypriot emigres. In London, for instance, where there are now more Greek and Turkish Cypriots than there are in Nicosia, the two communities work together to restore their common homeland's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The specific aims of the Communists and of the progressive Moslem movements in the struggle against despotic regimes are ever more frequently identical. In Turkey, for instance, there is the demand for a repeal of Articles 141 and 142 of the Criminal Code, which effectively outlaw the Communists, and Article 163, which bans political activity by religious forces. The latter article is by no means designed to safeguard the secular character of the state, but to suppress any opposition taking a religious form. The Communist Party of Turkey, Ali Ileri said, is fighting for the repeal of the three anti-democratic articles.



In the struggles against dictatorship under the banners of democracy for the people and respect for their elementary political and social rights, Communists and Moslems sometimes find themselves not only on the same side of the barricades, but also fighting shoulder to shoulder. That is what happened during the November 1979 uprising in Saudi Arabia, which swept through 60 towns and villages. When the religious leaders saw that the Communists were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the common cause

and that they were being imprisoned and tortured in the same way as Moslems were, a realistic basis was created for militant cooperation.

Dictators and imperialism backing them are worried by the merging of the Moslem movement and the general democratic movement. Those who were but recently encouraging the "Islamic boom" to wipe out progressive ideas and their advocates with the aid of religion are now having second thoughts for they regard the "fanatics" as a threat. Indonesia's President Suharto bluntly named the three enemies of his regime: the Communist underground, Islamic fanaticism, and Western-oriented liberalism. The reactionary Turkish paper, Tercüman, has accused the "radical currents" cooperating with "goodless Communists" of betraying the faith. The Islamic scholar Abdurrahman Dilipak replied by saying that he saw the hand of the United States behind these accusations, who would like to play off the Moslems and the left against each other and so to get a free hand for its dirty business.



The participants in the round table pointed out that Communist awareness of the importance of a policy of alliances with the organised religious forces and the desire to establish and develop cooperation on the basis of equal rights have so far, regrettably, seldom yielded any tangible results. The reason is not only repression by the authorities. The influence of anti-communism is still prevalent in Moslem movements of all orientations. Finally, the relative weakness of the communist parties in the social life of their countries tend considerably to impede the policy of alliances.

It is the task of the fraternal parties to overcome these difficulties. They attach great importance to it in their mass agitation and political and party work. Lenin showed one way of solving the problem in his remarks on the report delivered by A. Sultan-Zade at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. Lenin felt that it was necessary to adapt the Communist Party--its membership and special tasks--to the level of the peasant countries of the colonial East.<sup>8</sup>

The grassroots membership of most of the parties represented at the round table consists of people brought up on the principles of religious faith or of believers. Many of them had their first schooling in political struggle in progressive-oriented religious movements. The party rules do not require of members to be atheists, but to fight for political goals. Nor is atheism a stipulation for joining the party or serving on its governing bodies. The head of the Auditing Commission of the Senegal Party of Independence and Labour is a sheikh who comes from a well-known Moslem family.



In contrast to many other religions, Islam is not only a faith but also an integral part of the way of life of the Moslem faithful and their behaviour and daily routine. Communists have to take this fact into consideration in their activity. That is why it is customary in Senegal, for instance, to interrupt rallies, meetings and other political activities, including CC sessions, at the time of prayer prescribed by the Koran. A document of the Sudanese Communist Party, "On Correcting Mistakes in the Work Among the Masses", requires of all party members, irrespective of their attitude to God, to conduct themselves with respect for the traditions and feelings of Moslems, so as to deprive reaction of any pretexts for anti-communist attacks on this issue.

Communists in the Moslem countries, even if they are confirmed materialists, do not find it necessary to carry on wide-scale atheistic propaganda among the masses or to criticise this or that religious trend. They believe that their mission of enlightenment is to help eliminate illiteracy, and to set up various cultural and sports clubs. What is more, in some cases they succeed in spreading the ideas of humanism and socialism through sermons in mosques by progressive clergymen. Communists make it a point, at the same time, to unmask the actions and religious attitudes of forces serving reaction and imperialism against the national and people's interests.

The fraternal parties believe that their main task is not to conflict with the faithful but to work tirelessly so as to explain and implement the political aims meeting the class



and national interests of the working people and the majority of the nation.

The discussion and exchange of experience were held at the Nicosia round table in an atmosphere of frankness and self-criticism that has been growing in the communist movement. If the Senegal Party of Independence and Labour has not developed into the kind of party its members want it to be, Semou Pathé Gueye said, it is not the fault of the religious forces but the result of shortcomings in <sup>the</sup> party's analysis and mistakes in its practical activity. Satiajaya Sudiman pointed out that despite all the attention paid by the Communist Party of Indonesia to believers before it was banned, this had been done at the time by trial and error, without due scientific analysis. Besides, many Communists had taken a prejudiced attitude towards believers, and reaction was quick to capitalise on that.

Rouzbeh Navid recalled that the People's Party of Iran had made mistakes in the period after the February 1979 revolution. Loyal to their duty, the Communists fought alongside the people against the despotism of the Shah and then supported the early steps taken by the Islamic Republic and took part in various referenda. However, at one point they agreed to relegate the issue of the people's democratic rights into the background, and that should not have been done. The party failed to see in due time the sharp turn to the right by the Islamic leadership, and so to switch from the policy of "critical support" for Khomeini to all-out opposition, in anticipation of the repression that later claimed the lives of hundreds of Iranian Communists and patriots.



It was stressed at the symposium that international co-operation between the Communists of various countries is of great importance in charting a correct course towards Moslems and their organisations. It is also necessary, when organising joint practical actions in response to attempts by reaction and imperialism to use the Islamic factor for their own purposes on an international scale. The progressive forces in the Moslem countries need to coordinate actions and exchange information to strengthen mutual solidarity in the struggle against the Zionist aggression and Pakistan's chauvinist line towards India, for a halt to the imperialist interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, for a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus problem, and for an end to the destructive Iran-Iraq war.

The paper presented by Al-Nahj says that, despite all their activity, Moslem organisations and movements <sup>in the Arab countries</sup> do not give enough attention to the paramount issue of our day: that of removing the threat of thermonuclear war. At the same time, many speakers gave examples to show the growing concern of the masses and political forces over this issue, and told of the contribution made by religious figures, including Moslems, to the worldwide movement for mankind's survival.

Indeed, the question of peace in the Moslem countries has become a matter of constant concern not only for the fraternal parties; it is being increasingly echoed in the mosques and discussed in religious publications. The ideas of Islamic humanism, as Masood Ali Khan rightly said, can today become our natural ally in the antiwar struggle. The new thinking, which



can help to save civilisation, demands of the Communists flexibility and an ability to widen the spectrum of the peace-loving forces by involving large masses of believers.

The participants in the Nicosia round table stressed that the consistent application of a long-term strategy towards religion and its votaries, and the fraternal parties' discovery of the right tactical solutions and adequate forms of party activity among the masses, largely determine the communist movement's own prospects in the Moslem countries and the orientations towards social progress. The socialist alternative will become a reality only when it is accepted by the overwhelming majority of the faithful. It is the duty of Communists to work for this goal.

The survey was prepared in the Commission on the Exchange of Party Experience by Ali Ahmed al-Tayeb, Representative of the Sudanese Communist Party on the WMR Editorial Council, and by Yevgeniy Novikov, Cand. Sc. (Philos.)

