

Open Forum

Everyone likes a good argument. This column is the place to have it in the open. In Open Forum everyone can ventilate his ideas—but he lays himself open to anyone who disagrees. Anonymity will be retained if desired. The letters published this week in reply to the padre's article in the last number. If you have any ideas, put them on paper and send them in.

RELIGION IN RUSSIA

Sir,—

There appears to be a considerable misapprehension existing about the anti-religious campaign in Russia. It would be more correct to call it an anti-clergy campaign. Czar Vladimir and his successors through centuries "imposed" not only Christianity, but an organisation which became the greatest "power behind the throne" that ever influenced the history of Europe.

One of the notable aspects of the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent reorganisation of the vast Russian Empire, was the typical social-psychological reaction against religion. It is not easy to re-educate a great body of people to recognise the supremacy of the State and not a Church. Hence the necessity for the anti-religious propaganda that characterised the early development of the Communistic philosophy.

However, religion formed too great a part of the social structure of the Russian people to be readily incorporated into a non-religious society. Therefore, when the Communist regime was well established, interference with the religious inclinations of the people relapsed and has now practically disappeared.

From a psychological point of view it is natural that the more practical a people's economic philosophy, the greater the need for a symbolic and emotional theology.

So it is desirable in commenting upon, or observing, the reactionary history of religion in Russia, to bear in mind that the great anti-religious campaign proved a means to an end—and a very successful end.

STAR-CROSS'D LOVER

We were young, we were gay, we were lovers, and the world was a garden of flowers:

Now the blossoms are faded and fallen, and a winter unending is ours.
We are parted, and parted for ever—condemned without hope of reprieve;
For my love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.

We have met since it happened, but somehow—Paid Lance-Bombardier though I am—

I just can't make love at attention, while addressing the loved one as "Ma'am."
Oh, Spirit of Wellington, aid me! A soldier has no right to grieve,
But . . . My love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.

So play me "The Flowers of the Forest," let me drain sorrow's cup to the dregs,

I have loved, as a care-free civilian: I have lost, as laid down in King's Regs.
Let me burnish the breech of my Bofors and forget about seven days' leave;
For my love has a pip on her shoulder, and I but a stripe on my sleeve.

The leading question now becomes:
"Will the Russian people succeed in maintaining the right balance between their obligations to the State, and their support of the organised church in the coming years of world readjustment?"

—“WAAC GUNNER.”

Sir,—

In reply to the article in last issue of "FLAK," on the above subject, the following extract written by Alexander Werth, a war correspondent in Moscow in 1941, is of interest:—

"I haven't seen the slightest trace of anti-religious propaganda here; and God is often mentioned in conversation. I don't think the Soviet regime will ever bother about anti-religious propaganda again; but it will remain anti-clerical. It is, of course, probably justified in regarding the clergy as an undesirable influence, and the obscurantist Orthodox Church as having done its best to prevent the spread of education. The existence of churches and priests will be permitted, but limited, by the possibilities of having the priests trained and the churches financially maintained."

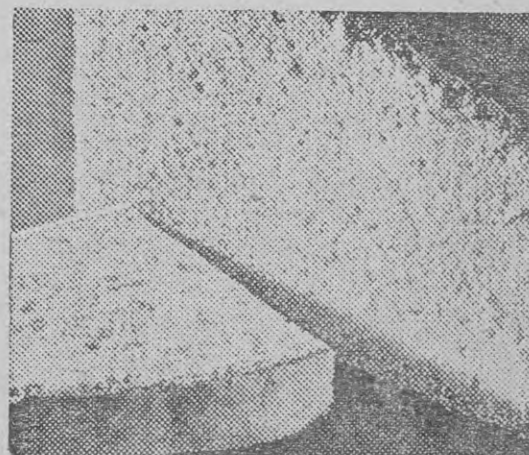
Atheism did not replace Orthodox Christianity. Rather should we say that non-religious bodies were allowed to flourish as well as religious. The tendency to swing against the clergy was caused by oppression and not from any anti-religious sentiment. However, according to the above article, Christianity seems to be taking its proper place in their lives.

—L/BDR.

URGENT APPEAL

"FLAK" takes the printer four days to prepare and publish. Before it goes to the printer, material has to be prepared by the editor and passed by the censor.

It is therefore urgently necessary that your material should be in the editor's hands **AT LEAST A WEEK** before publication. Please co-operate and hand in your copy for the next number **BEFORE** next Wednesday.



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