

1955**Report from S. Rizaev to N.A.Mukhitdinov****Citation:**

"Report from S. Rizaev to N.A.Mukhitdinov", 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, S. Rizaev, 'Sharaf Rashidov: Shtrikhi k portretu,' 24-26. Obtained and translated by Artemy M. Kalinovsky. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/177861>

Summary:

Recommendations for the Soviet Union to improve its image among Muslims, including utilizing the physical heritage of Islamic culture within the USSR and respecting freedom of religious practice.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

To comrade N.A. Mukhitdinov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan.

During my recent trip with comrade A.I. Mikoyan to Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Burma, I was confronted with numerous examples of anti-Soviet propaganda in these countries on the part of English and American imperialists. This propaganda is conducted to a significant degree through the Muslim clergy.

As you can see in the attached note, which was sent by me to the CC CPSU, Anglo-American imperialists have used print, radio, and their agents to spread rumors that Muslims in the USSR live in a "horribly difficult situation" that communists deride national and religious feelings of Tajiks and other Muslims, and forbid them from practicing Islam.

In recent times in the journal "Islamic Review" (London) and "Middle East Journal" (USA) and a number of newspapers there have been a series of slanderous articles proving that in Uzbekistan not only the freedom of religion is being liquidated but also the Uzbek people and its national culture.

It is necessary, in my view, to assign the Oriental Studies organizations in Tashkent to systematically inform the CC buro about all materials concerning Uzbekistan that are published in the East by our friends and our enemies. We cannot leave anti-Soviet attacks in the Anglo-American press and in the newspapers of their intelligence services in the countries of the East.

Our task, in my view, consists of juxtaposing Anglo-American provocations against our propaganda, aimed at clarifying in the countries of the East the nationalities policies of the Communist party and Soviet government, the constitutional rights of citizens and especially the freedom of religion in the USSR, the successes of the peoples of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics in their economic and cultural development.

To this same end we need to clearly demonstrate to international delegations the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion in our country, to show mosques, mazars, seminaries [dukhovnykh uchilish] and religious monuments.

At the same time, studying his question has shown that our print and radio propaganda, as well as our information activity in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Burma is carried out in a very limited way and is not sufficiently energetic.

In radio programs of Uzbekistan's Committee for Radio for countries of the foreign East questions of individual freedom and freedom of religion in the USSR are raised only rarely. There is virtually no literature on these questions.

It follows that we must organize speeches on our radio as well as in the foreign press by representatives of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan aimed at debunking the false rumors and reports about the freedom of religion in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics.

Nothing justifies the suspension in 1948 of the journal of the Spiritual Administration for the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in 1948. The necessity of such a journal is obvious. There is also no guidebook for religious sites in Uzbekistan.

Many mosques, mazars and religious monuments in Uzbekistan are in a poor state and are not being used for their intended purpose.

Thus, for example, a kerosene retailer from Tashpromtorg is housed in the left wing of the Barak-khan medresah in Tashkent, currently undergoing renovation.

A building belonging to the spiritual administration, located on the territory of the central SOBORNAIA Mosque Tilla-Shaykh is being used as a gym by school 23, and its windows look out onto the courtyard of the mosque.

In the immediate vicinity of the medresah and the central mosque, in the arc of the market in the old town, there is a loudspeaker that is turned on at prayer time and drowns out prayer.

The mosque by the Imam Kaffal Shahi mazar is being used by students of the auto-school; a red banner is placed on top of the crescent, a religious symbol, on the dome of the mosque.

[...]

All of the aforementioned mosques and mazars not only represent valuable architectural monuments, but are also known in Muslim countries of the foreign East as "holy places." International delegations visiting Uzbekistan, especially those from Muslim countries, show great interest in these "holy places" and try to visit them.

The facts mentioned above, as well as other similar ones lead to discontent among the clergy as well as believers, and also make a bad impression on foreign guests and cause negative responses abroad. All of this plays into the hands of Anglo-American imperialists and is used by them to spread lies about the Soviet order.

I believe that the intervention of the CC CP Uzbekistan in this affair is needed. A draft resolution is attached.

Sh. Rashidov.

[Draft resolution, approved by CC CP Uzbekistan, attached.]