

Atheist propaganda, Dr. Powell believes, is misconceived, misdirected and ineffective. But in order to retain credibility as a revolutionary organization the Party must be seen to be actively engaging with an enemy. To feed the myth of revolution is especially necessary in these days of post-Khrushchev stagnation and post-Stalin ideological disillusionment. Nevertheless, success in the ideological battle has eluded the atheists. A factor which has contributed to this failure, according to Dr. Powell, is the lack of Bibles and other religious texts in the USSR. As these are virtually unobtainable atheist agitators can never acquire a true understanding of their enemy. They rely on second-hand prejudiced notions and propaganda slogans. True believers remain untouched by their arguments.

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The Spiritual Basis of Solzhenitsyn's Creative Work (*Dukhovnye Osnovy Tvorchestva Solzhenitsyna*)

by Tatyana Lopukhina-Rodzyanko, Posev 1974, 178 pp., No price.

Solzhenitsyn's Religion

by Niels C. Nielsen Jr., Mowbrays, 1976, 164 pp., £4.95.

The Spiritual Basis of Solzhenitsyn's Creative Work is a promising subject for a book, and it will be useful to those who read Russian, but it is not likely to be translated. In modern Russian the word "spiritual" has a wider meaning than our "spirituality" and connotes morality, aesthetics and almost all intellectual effort, as well as religion. So this book is primarily about Solzhenitsyn's ethical assumptions. His concept of the *pravednik* – the just man or woman, such as Matryona – by whom a village, a country and the world itself stand, is analysed by reference to a number of characters in Solzhenitsyn's books. This is interesting and it leads naturally to a similar analysis of how he understands conscience – for which it is better to die than to lose. Finally, why do some people lose their consciences when put to the test, while other people's consciences survive every ordeal of life in concentration camps?

The *pravednik* and his or her conscience always depend on religious tradition and in Solzhenitsyn this is often a specifically religious tradition. Alyosha, the Baptist in *Ivan Denisovich*, is a central figure in this analysis, but otherwise religion plays a surprisingly small part in this book, sensitive and perceptive as it is. I should have liked, for instance, a consideration of General Samsonov's agony of prayer in *August 1914*.