



## Then and Now Vsevolod Pervunin 1930



Vsevolod Pervunin's poster "Then and Now" is divided into two halves, which compare the old tsarist and the new Soviet army. In the upper part of the left side, tsar Nicholas II is depicted in uniform as an alcoholic with two bottles in his hands. The patriarch next to him has the same red nose. On the right, a capitalist and the black Russian eagle draw their attention to a group of white guards shooting at a proletarian demonstration.

The scenes of daily life in the barracks are shown below: Soldiers salute in front of a Russian flag two images of saints.

To their right, a soldier and a dog are excluded from the officers' mess by a sign saying: "Lower ranks and dogs are forbidden to enter." At the bottom of the picture, a tsarist officer yells at a soldier. More important, however, are the bible and a prayer book which together with the Order of St. George (abolished after the Revolution) form the religious basis of the military system.

The right half of the picture shows the new revolutionary army. A loudspeaker announces: "The Red Army, the Armed Forces of the World Proletariat". On the left, a Red Army soldier guards the border. Other scenes show theoretical and practical lessons for military personnel. Two slogans accompany the illustration. One reads: "We carry out the orders of the Revolutionary Military Council." Instead of the military exercises on the left, the soldiers of the new era play chess and football. Mirroring the religious foundation of the tsarist army, a Soviet soldier carefully studies the monthly magazine *Bezbozhnik/The Godless* with three books, one by Lenin, waiting to be read.

The dual arrangement of the poster allows the artist to easily contrast the reactionary military system of the past with a modern army based on advanced educational methods instead of the coercive principle of order and obedience. While the tsarist army oppresses the people with the help of an outdated and repressive religion, the forward-looking Red Army serves the purposes of the proletarian government. The content of the picture is less influenced by grim atheism. Even in the historical context of its production in 1930, when the first purge of the Stalin era had already taken place, the poster as a whole appears to be non-religious rather than anti-religious.