



Against religious holidays, for a good work ethic

Anon.
1930



In the Soviet Union, religion was pursued and prosecuted. The communist state doctrine considered religion as a pillar of the old feudal order and a product of the outdated class society, so the new state claimed to pave the way for a new socialist culture. The question was not whether religion had to disappear or not, but whether this process should be accelerated. While some expected religion to decline automatically, others wanted to speed up the disappearance of religion by active antireligious propaganda and campaigns.

The poster was published during the First Five Year Plan. As economic problems occurred, religion was one of the factors to be blamed for the difficulties, which also delayed the dawn of the communist society. That is why the propaganda focus again turned to those counterrevolutionary forces that threatened the Soviet Union. Religion and especially the orthodox church were seen as an eminent center for such forces.

To disempower religion, campaigns and actions were launched against churches, their representatives, and the religious way of life in general. But while the effectiveness of these measures is still discussed by research, the early 1930s with their peak production of posters and campaigns are an important phase to analyze anti-religious Soviet propaganda art.

This particular poster was part of the Anti-Christmas-campaign of 1930 to inhibit traditional behaviour and to boost morale and productivity in the factories. Concurrently, workers were encouraged to form so-called "shock brigades" which combined high productivity and work morale with anti-religious stances to advance the socialist revolution. The slogan of the poster promotes a "shock tempo of work" and denounces the drunkenness that is associated with religious holidays and economic unproductivity.

Thus, anti-religious propaganda also highlights the positive qualities of socialism and propagates its own magnificence and superiority. The idealized image of the worker depicts a certain aesthetic of the New Man, which is typical for early Soviet posters.

The smaller characters that latch on to the worker impersonate the Soviets' resentment and preconceptions against religion: The image is determined by drunkenness, inferiority, weakness, and desperation. On the other side, socialism is embodied by the worker with his height, his superiority, uniformity, and determination. This inherent dualism is visualized by the differences in size, colour, and shape.