



Fight against Religion is Fight for Socialism

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Looking at the picture, the dualisms are striking. The eye is first caught by the iconic tractor that forms a unity with the two men riding it. The tractor drivers are moving upwards to the industrial city – towards progress, standardisation, collectivism, and industrialisation. The group of religious leaders seemingly hinder this movement. They stand in between the ambitious tractor drivers and the progress which is marked by industrialisation.

One tractorist is holding a red flag with the slogan “cultural revolution!!!”. It was popular in the 1930s as a means to

adopt a new culture by the New Man of socialism, who was thought to be atheist, productive, uniform and progressive. By looking at the tractorists, you can see from their outward appearance that they totally meet this ideal.

This uniformity of the socialist workers is a direct opposite of the heterogeneity of protesting men – the ‘enemies’ of the New Order. A closer look reveals that one figure does not fit into the category of religious leaders: the kulak. They are frequently depicted with religious leaders or capitalists as the enemies of socialism by representing the influential positions of the Old Order.

But the inscription focusses the anti-religious impetus is accurately: “Fight against religion is fight for socialism” clearly underlines that the kulak is put in a context in which he can be read as representant of religion, too. Even though kulaks were imagined as rural capitalists, as indicated by Stalin’s *Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class* (1929), they were inseparable as a class from other peasants. Rather, every peasant who did not take part in a collective farm (*kolkhoz*) and had a certain amount of private property or employees, could be marked as kulak and thus, as a class enemy.

But the visual focus of the poster is still on the tractor. The first Five-Year Plan incited a mass production of agricultural machines. This mass introduction of tractors went not without problems. In the beginning, peasants were meant to drive them without further training. That resulted in the frequent misuse of the machines and even sabotage. In contrast to the factory workers, many peasants were unwilling to adapt to mechanized work.

The tractor on this poster has two functions: it makes clear that the industrialisation and cultural revolution also claims to change the rural way of life. They do not limit themselves to the urban population. Thus, there is a focus on agriculture that is evoked by the tractor.

And the tractor functions as one of the main symbols of scientific atheism and stands for all convictions and promises of the socialist state.

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