

Russian Civil War Poster Bolsheviks' Atrocities in Churches, circa 1918-20.

Measures 16" x 23 1/2", printed on thick medium-quality paper. The publisher is unknown but, judging by the subject matter and the two verses from Revelations down the right margin, the poster was most likely printed in a part of Russia still controlled by the White Army during its last-ditch effort to win their belloved Fatherland back and restore order.

For those unfamiliar with the text of Revelations, here is the translation of the two verses quote on the right-hand margin of the poster.

Revelations 6:9. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

Revelations 6:10. "And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

The poster is in very good condition. There is minor fraying to the edges, including loss of small areas of paper at the corners. The "worst offenders" have been repaired with library tape on the verso. If desired, the entire perimeter may be reinforced with tape before mounting the poster onto a backing.

The image is self-explanatory, and will not be a huge surprise for anyone familiar with the history of Russia at the onset of the Soviet Power. What is not seen in this poster, and would probably require a lot of canvas and the talent of Hieronymus Bosch to depict realistically, is the nature and scope of atrocities the Bolsheviks brought down on the Russian Orthodox churches, monasteries, clergy, monks, and ordinary Russians who persisted in their religious convictions instead of accepting the new religion of Communism. Officially, the church was persecuted as a "class enemy", part of the Red Terror policy the Bolsheviks practiced during the Civil War. But it was not enough for them to "nationalize" the Church' land, buildings, and everything of value in them. Torture, public executions of clergy, mowing down with gunfire entire religious processions on Easter night, burnings - the zeal with which Bolsheviks executed (pun intended!) their policy of elimination of their "class enemies" is difficult to put in words. Perhaps a quote from Lenin's 19 March 1923 note addressed to Politburo, OGPU, People's Commissariat of Justice and Revolutionary Court Martial, will help to feel it. "Seizure of valuables, especially from the richest churches and monasteries, must be executed with merciless decisiveness, unconditionally and in the shortest period of time. The more representatives of reactionary bourgeoisie and reactionary clergy we will manage to execute in the process, the better. We must teach these people a lesson so that for many decades they will not dare to even think about resistance."

And the comrades rushed into fulfilling Lenin's plan with gusto nothing short of diabolical. Murder, rape, defecation on the altar, mutilations, beheadings, torture which often took forms that would make a professional medieval executioner green with nausea. It goes without saying that anyone the Cheka caught with this poster would not have died quickly and easily.

According to some historians, about 42,000 clergy perished from 1918 to the late 1930s through executions and in places of incarceration. In 1918 alone, about 3,000 of them were executed by firing squad or just shot by some GPU commissar on the spot without any semblance of a trial. And, as is always the case with systemic atrocities, the official statistics, monstrous as they may be, are most likely no more than half of the actual number of victims. Knowing the Bolsheviks, it's probably much higher than that.

Please note that the 1-ft. ruler in our last photo is for size reference.

Item# 43635

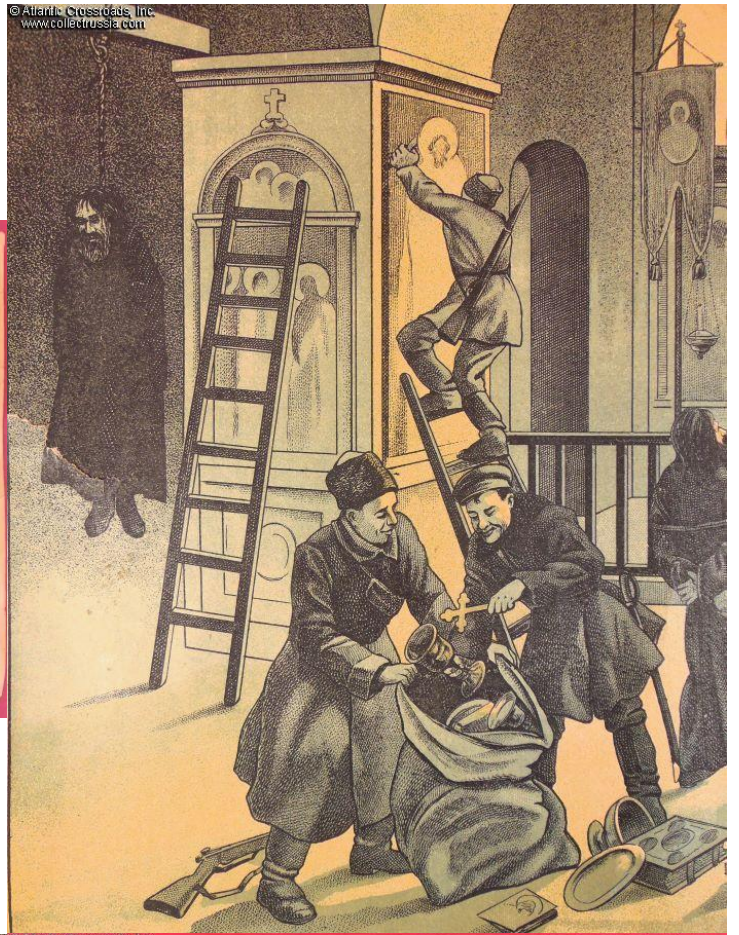
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БЕЗЧИНСТВА БОЛЬШЕВИКОВЪ ВЪ ЦЕРКВИ



„И егда отверзе пятую печать, видехъ подъ алтаремъ души избѣнныхъ за слово Божіе и за свидѣтельство, еже имѣху. И возопиша глаголюще: Владыко Святый и истинный не судиши и не мстиши крови нашей отъ живущихъ на земли?“

Александръ Габбэ в. 1898-99 г. 10-4.



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