I was born in Fort Wayne, and grew up on the Florida Panhandle. I moved back to Fort Wayne in 1993. After a few years I stopped hating snow and noticed that I enjoyed the change of seasons. For this project, I combined my interests in art and history. I find propaganda posters interesting because they offer a bit of insight into the thinking of a regime, or at least parts of a regime. They boil everything down to the essential message. The visual element lends them an impact that often allows them to be read fairly well, even if one does not understand the language.

Abstract

During the Cold War the Soviet Union's use of men and women in propaganda posters shifted focus according to its objectives. Different target demographics required different avenues of communication, and themes like motherhood, fatherhood, work, peace and exploration required different approaches. Sex roles sometimes diverged and sometimes coincided with each other in posters of the Khrushchev years, 1954 to 1964.

Since for the Soviet government, the family had become the basis of communism, rather than a cultural institution that would wither away to allow society to raise children in communal centers, many of the propaganda posters of the period spoke to the nuclear family tendency. Woman and men played different roles, but whatever roles they played served the state. Woman served as nurturers of the future of the state, which was often embodied in the child. Men served as more aggressive workers.

Soviet communism theoretically demanded equality of the sexes and Nikita Khrushchev wanted women to have a more visible public role. This desire shows up in very few of the posters examined. Though Khrushchev may have wanted women to be part of the face that communism projected to the world, the regime's main priority for women was their important role in raising “good communists” as building blocks of the state. The roles mothers and fathers played involved the teaching of important qualities embodied in the concept kul'turnost', which contained masculine and feminine elements. Parents also were global peacekeepers and workers, transforming war instruments into industrial machines. The task of building communism seeped into nearly every aspect of life from exploring, to building cities to vacationing. All can in some way relate to the future of the state. In most of the posters examined, men play a leadership role or an aggressive role as women play a more subordinate role.
Bibliographical Note

The paper was based on my analysis of the collection of Soviet propaganda posters at plakaty.ru database under the headings "Propaganda" and "Social and Motivational." I also read articles by scholars including Susan E. Reid, Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, Eric Hobsbawm, and Victoria E. Bonnell.