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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PARADIGM OF TOTALITARIANISM IN POSTER ART OF THE USSR AND COMMUNIST POLAND DURING THE PERIOD OF LATE STALINISM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research paper is to analyze poster art as a tool for imposing communist ideologemes in Soviet and Polish societies during the period of late Stalinism, to identify the paradigm of Totalitarianism in the subject matter of posters, as well as the ways of its conveying through form and content, and to show the similarities and differences in the semantic and artistic tendencies of poster art of both countries.

The scientific novelty is in the comparative analysis of the subject matter and content of Soviet and Polish political posters during the period of late Stalinism (the mid-1940s – the first half of the 1950s) in terms of their use by the ruling regimes as tools of totalitarian propaganda.

Conclusions. During the post-war period, Stalin regime actively continued to use the poster as an important means of communist propaganda in order to create specific ‘memory markers’ in the mass consciousness of the population. The poster played not only the role of a channel for conveying information, but also influenced the mental, emotional, and behavioral state of a person living under the pressure of the totalitarian system.

The poster art of both states was under the absolute control of the Party and the government, its content and subject matter were determined by official documents. The visualization of slogans and images officially permitted by the authorities, enhanced by the appropriate color scheme, was intended to create a myth about the exceptional importance of the Party’s policy and to promote the implementation of Communism ideology in the mass consciousness.

A characteristic feature of a totalitarian system is the presence of a cult of the leader, who personifies the state, nation, and progress and is a sacred value for society. By means of poster art, the majestic, even monumental, image of J. Stalin was deliberately imposed on the population of the USSR in order to legitimize his stay in power. Unlike the USSR, in communist Poland, the cult of the leader was not developed significantly, which, accordingly, was reflected in poster art, although Polish artists were also forced to work in the framework of the artistic method of socialist realism imposed on them by Stalin’s regime.

One of the main subject matters of the USSR and Poland’s political posters during the Cold War period was the struggle for peace and criticism of the aggressive policy of the ‘imperialists,’ primarily the USA. The image of the ‘other’ (enemy) visualized in the communist poster contributed to the establishment in the public consciousness of a matrix of perception of the outside world in a bipolar coordinate system, at the opposite pole of which was absolute evil, which posed a potential threat to the existence of the socialist bloc.

Keywords: poster art, communist regime, post-war period, paradigm of Totalitarianism

СУСПІЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНА ПАРАДИГМА ТОТАЛІТАРНОГО У ПЛАКАТНОМУ МИСТЕЦТВІ СРСР І КОМУНІСТИЧНОЇ ПОЛЬЩІ У ПЕРІОД ПІЗЬНОГО СТАЛІНІЗМУ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета статті – проаналізувати плакатне мистецтво як інструмент насадження комуністичних ідеологем у радянському та польському суспільствах періоду пізнього сталінізму; виокремити парадигму тоталітарного у тематиці плакатів, а також способах її трансляції через форму і зміст; показати спільне та відмінне у смислових і художніх тенденціях плакатного мистецтва обох держав.

Наукова новизна полягає у порівняльному аналізі тематики та змісту радянських і польських політичних плакатів періоду пізнього сталінізму (середини 1940-х – перша половина 1950-х років) з точки зору використання їх правлячими режимами як інструментів тоталітарної пропаганди.

Висновки. Повеєнний період сталінський режим продовжував активно використовувати плакат як важливий засіб комуністичної пропаганди з метою створення певних «маркерів пам'яті» у масовій свідомості населення. Плакат слугував не лише каналом передачі інформації, але й впливав на ментальний, емоційний і поведінковий стан людини, яка жила під тиском тоталітарної системи.

Плакатне мистецтво обох держав перебувало під абсолютним контролем партії та уряду, його зміст і тематика визначалися офіційними документами. Візуалізація офіційно дозволених владою гасел, образів, підсилених відповідною кольоровою гамою, мала на меті творити міф про виняткове значення політики партії та сприяти імплементації комуністичної ідеології у масову свідомість.

Характерною рисою тоталітарної системи є наявність культу вождя, що уособлює державу, націю, прогрес та є сакральною цінністю для суспільства. Засобами плакатного мистецтва населенню СРСР цілеспрямовано нав'язувався величний, аж до монументальності образ Й. Сталіна з метою легітимізації його перебування при владі. На відміну від СРСР, у комуністичній Польщі культ вождя не набув значного розвитку, що, відповідно, знайшло своє відображення у плакатному мистецтві, хоча польські митці також змушені були працювати у фарватері художнього методу соціалістичного реалізму, нав'язаного їм сталінським режимом.

Однією з головних тем політичних плакатів СРСР і Польщі періоду «холодної війни» стає боротьба за мир і критика загарбницької політики «імперіалістів», насамперед, США. Візуалізований у комуністичному плакаті образ «іншого» («ворога») сприяв утвердженню у суспільній свідомості матриці сприйняття зовнішнього світу в біполярній системі координат, на протилежному полюсі якого – абсолютне зло, яке становить потенційну загрозу існуванню соціалістичному блоку.

Ключові слова: плакатне мистецтво, комуністичний режим, повеєнний період, парадигма тоталітарного

INTRODUCTION

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 made the issue of using various art forms as carriers/voices of propaganda for the so-called 'Russian Peace' more relevant than ever. 'Stalinism' and 'Nazism' are one of the sources of the formation of the ideology of 'racism'. The propagation of these totalitarian ideologies in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe and the USSR led to the destruction of traditional Christian and liberal and conservative values forming the basis for political and social systems of European states, including Poland. The development of military and political situation of this period clearly demonstrated how culture can become an effective tool for imposing political ideas and creating totalitarian empires (the Third Reich and the USSR).

In a communist regime, the poster, along with song or movie, was considered by the authorities to be one of the most important propaganda tools for influencing collective consciousness. The figurative and visual reproduction of the idea combined with textual information made poster art easy to understand and perceive by the general population. The posters were intended to shape the communist worldview of the individual and society in general, to instill loyalty in citizens to the government and its chosen political course. Therefore, the most common themes of Soviet poster art were the cult of personality and power of the Soviets, love for the socialist Homeland, and hatred for 'the capitalist West' and its liberal values.

Purpose of the article is to analyze poster art as a tool for imposing communist ideologemes in the Soviet and Polish societies of the late Stalinism period; to identify the paradigm of totalitarianism in the themes of posters, and the ways of its transmission through form and content; to show the similarities and differences between semantic and artistic trends of poster art in both countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern Ukrainian and foreign historiography, the theme of poster art of the Stalinism period occupies a separate research niche. The Ukrainian researchers pay attention to the study of poster art of the USSR of the 1930s and the period of World War II. Given the subject of our study, the attention should be paid to the works of A. Liubchynskyi¹, I. Hridina², D. Shalyhina³, O. Maievskyi⁴, and L. Yakymenko⁵, in which posters are considered an important component of the Stalinist propaganda system, and the evolution of the depicted images and texts depending on the internal and external challenges faced by the communist system is traced. Modern researchers interpret Soviet political posters as "the main visual means of agitation for a utopian

¹ Лубчинський А. Плакатне мистецтво СРСР в часи німецько-радянської війни. *Вісник Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету ім. Івана Огієнка. Історичні науки*. 2018. Вип. 11. С. 289-301.

² Грідина І.М. Зображальні джерела в дослідженні духовного життя населення України в роки Другої світової війни. *Гілея: науковий вісник*. 2010. Вип. 34. С. 135-144.

³ Шалигіна Д. Плакатна пропаганда в Україні в період Другої світової війни. *Актуальні проблеми вітчизняної та всесвітньої історії* (Харків). 2008. № 11. С. 192-202.

⁴ Маєвський О. Політичні плакат і карикатура як засоби ідеологічної боротьби в Україні 1939-1945 рр. Київ, 2018. 268 с.

⁵ Якименко Л.М. Радянський плакат періоду «холодної війни» як засіб візуальної пропаганди. *Світ соціальних комунікацій*. 2013. Т. 9. С. 134-137.

communist society”⁶, and the mass media, which were a “visual expression of the tasks set by the leaders of the state”⁷, as “symbolic representatives of power”⁸.

The Ukrainian art historian V. Kosiv believes that “the indirect manifestation of the influence of total control of the Bolshevik government over the creativity of artists was that by the end of the Stalinism period, the authors did not dare to show signs of individuality; the result was diversified only by excellent technique (watercolor, gouache, pencil drawing), and technological features of printing”⁹.

By analyzing the role of political poster in the system of communist propaganda, Kyiv researcher Oleksandr Maievskiy emphasizes that “authoritarian and totalitarian regimes were not just customers of such a product, but promoters of the entire process: from generating political messages and selecting performers to methods of spreading and controlling the effectiveness of influence”¹⁰. In general, the theme of political poster of the late Stalinism period is not sufficiently covered in Ukrainian historiography in terms of the influence of totalitarian ideology on its style and content.

The results of research by Polish researchers on the history of political poster during formation of communist regime in Poland are largely consistent with the conclusions of their Ukrainian colleagues. In particular, Janusz Kazmierczak points out that “the government’s desire to control almost every aspect of human life, which extended to artistic life, including poster art, which played an important role in the communist theory of propaganda”¹¹, the poster served as a tool of «visual indoctrination of the nation»¹². Similar conclusions can be found in the works of A. Shablovska, who emphasizes that “political-propaganda and social posters, which were most appreciated by the authorities, were under the close supervision of censor authorities”¹³ and partly acted as the “quintessence of propaganda”¹⁴. By analyzing the themes of posters of the second quarter of the 1940s, Anna Adamek emphasizes that “graphic artists had to meet the requirements of the social realistic approach to ideology and give preference to such themes as political propaganda, health care and environmental protection propaganda”¹⁵. Despite the significant influence of censorship on the choice of content and form of poster art, Jeannine Harder believes that “at the time it established itself in Europe as an example of cultural diversity and free artistic design”¹⁶, which was a consequence of the greater freedom of creativity

⁶ Авраменко А. Радянський плакат 1920-1930-х рр. як засіб пропаганди. *Наукові записки НаУКМА*. 2010. Т. 101: Теорія та історія культури. С. 70.

⁷ Шайкан В.О. Радянський політичний плакат як засіб ідеологічної боротьби в роки Великої Вітчизняної війни. *Наукові праці історичного ф-ту Запорізь. нац. ун-ту*. 2012. Вип. 32. С. 269-272.

⁸ Кузіна К. ОДПУ/НКВС у радянському плакаті та карикатурі (1930-ті – початок 1940-х рр.). *З архівів ВУЧК-ГПУ-НКВД-КГБ*. 2019. № 1 (51). С. 220-263.

⁹ Косів В. Український радянський плакат 1945-1989 рр.: стилістичні зміни національної ідентифікації. *Мистецтвознавчі записки*. 2018. Вип. 34. С. 91.

¹⁰ Маєвський О. Політичні плакат і карикатура як засоби ідеологічної боротьби в Україні... С. 14.

¹¹ Kazmierczak J. The Community That Never Was: The European Defense Community and Its Image in Polish Visual Propaganda of the 1950s. *Journal of Cold War Studies*. 2009. № 11 (4). P. 125.

¹² Wrona G. Język plakatu politycznego jako językwładzy Głównie motywy na polskim plakacie propagandowym w latach 1945-1956. Kraków, 2010. P. 30.

¹³ Шабловська А. Польська школа плаката. *Мистецтвознавчі студії*. 2008. № 3. С. 119.

¹⁴ Bryan A. Introduction to Soviet Propaganda. URL: <https://bit.ly/4a4Mle4>

¹⁵ Adamek A. Review: *Dydo K. Masters of Polish Poster Art. Material Culture Review*. 1998. № 47 (1). P. 91.

¹⁶ Harder J. Polnische Plakatkunst als Medium transnationaler Kunstkontakte und Kulturpolitik im Ost-West-Konflikt. Themenportal Europäische Geschichte. 2015. URL: <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1656>

that Polish artists had, at least in the means of expressing the idea. A clear confirmation of this opinion is Krzysztof Dydo's beautifully illustrated work, in some chapters of which the achievements of Polish poster artists of the late Stalinism period are represented¹⁷.

The theme of Soviet poster art of the Stalinism period is reflected in a number of scientific works by foreign researchers outside of Poland. In particular, Australian researcher of Soviet art Anita Pisch believes that "political poster was a key propaganda tool of the Stalin' regime and played a central role in the formation and maintenance of the Stalin's personality cult"¹⁸. A similar opinion is expressed by the Russian researcher Arthur Dydov, who focuses his attention on analyzing the symbolic and verbal messages of stylized images of Soviet leaders¹⁹. The monograph by famous American researcher Victoria Bonnell contains the analysis of the content and forms of Soviet propaganda posters in terms of their similarity to traditional Russian Orthodox iconography²⁰. The research of the Soviet visual propaganda of the postwar period by the Russian researcher Yevhen Fedosov confirms the conclusion that «it used symbolism endowed with sacred meaning»²¹. In general, it is worth noting that the theme of poster art during the Stalinism period is represented in modern historiography by a separate layer of scientific literature. However, the period after the World War II remains poorly studied, in particular, which makes the subject matter of our research heuristically attractive.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

First of all, we have to decide on the definitions we use to define the subject of our research. There is no single definition of the term 'poster' in modern historiography. We are impressed by the point of view of A. Andreikanich, who tends to consider the poster "to be one of the oldest promotional means of attracting attention. It is a message for the public and is seen as an informative, psychological and commercial tool, depending on the goals pursued"²². O. Maievskiy draws attention to the applied nature of the poster, emphasizing that "it is both a genre of political and artistic discourse and belongs to the so-called creolized text"²³. P. Kenez calls the poster the quintessence of propaganda, arguing that "its message can be quickly perceived by the most inexperienced viewer; its attractiveness does not depend on rational arguments; and it is capable of both promoting a commercial product and selling a political idea"²⁴.

Our research focuses on the characteristics of political poster that promoted a set

¹⁷ Dydo K. *Masters of Polish Poster Art*. Bielsko-Biala: Buffi, 1995. 239 p.

¹⁸ Pisch A. *The Personality Cult of Stalin in Soviet Posters, 1929-1953: Archetypes, Inventions and Fabrications*. Australia: ANU Press, 2016.

¹⁹ Dydov A. Image of the Builder of Communism in the Soviet Posters. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*. 2016. Vol. VIII, № 4. С. 174.

²⁰ Bonnell V.E. *Iconography of power: Soviet political posters under Lenin and Stalin*. University of California Press. 1999. 363 p.

²¹ Федосов Е. Диалектика сакрального в советской визуальной пропаганде 1920-60-х гг. *Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия II: История. История Русской Православной Церкви*. 2018. Вып. 81. С. 91.

²² Андрейканіч А.І. Антологія українського плаката першої третини ХХ століття. Косів: Видавничий дім «Довбуш», 2012. С. 4.

²³ Маєвський О. Політичні плакат і карикатура як засоби ідеологічної боротьби в Україні... С. 10.

²⁴ Kenez P. *The Birth of the Propaganda State Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization 1917-1929*. University of California, 2009. P. 111.

of ideological, political, moral, and social values of totalitarian society: cult of personality of party leader; idea of dominance of “a single mass party that <...> stands above or is closely connected with the bureaucratic state organization”²⁵; embedding in collective consciousness the matrix of perception of the outside world in a bipolar coordinate system, at the opposite pole of which is absolute evil posing a potential threat to the existence of the countries of the Socialist Bloc.

PROPAGANDA SUPPORT OF ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The inherent need of every totalitarian system, regardless of the time of its existence and the subjects of power, is to establish and maintain comprehensive control over all spheres of state life. This task cannot be implemented without the use of “mono-propaganda’ that has distinct features of myth-making, with the help of which the authorities replace the real reality with a fictitious one”²⁶. From the very beginning of Soviet regime, Bolshevik leaders considered the method of visualizing propaganda slogans to be a vital means of communication and education for the population of the USSR, which was largely illiterate. In addition, posters could quickly respond to the constantly changing military and political situation. “Although many of them quickly became obsolete, they were effective in directing revolutionary energy to where it was most needed”²⁷. The texts, colors, and graphic symbols depicted on the posters were a kind of codes for conveying the main meanings of the political and ideological attitudes of the Communist/Stalinist regime.

In the postwar period, the vector of official propaganda was primarily aimed at mobilizing the population to solve national political and economic problems. The policy of mobilization was also used as a tool for the program of creating a ‘new Soviet man’, which began in the mid-1930s and continued in the mid-to-late 1940s. This goal was achieved through maximum involvement of the population in national projects, programs, and political actions (fulfillment of tasks of the next five-year plans, celebrations of the anniversaries of the October Revolution, May Day demonstrations, etc.) Therefore, the theme of national labor or political uplift was one of the key themes in Soviet posters of the postwar period.

The elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1946 and to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics in 1947 can be considered to be one of the largest events ‘consolidating the Soviet people’, which, according to the authorities, were supposed to strengthen the regime’s power positions and inspire the war-weary society. A significant number of posters united by the slogan ‘All to the elections!’ (‘Vse na vybory’) were devoted to this theme. The key figure in most of these posters was an ordinary Soviet citizen – peasant, worker, or representative of the intelligentsia in clothing typical of this stratum of the population²⁸. People’s faces are focused or smiling, they look into the distance, and their posture and movements radiate confidence and firmness of conviction²⁹. Many posters depict groups of people

²⁵ Friedrich C.J., Brzezinsky Z.K. Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher, 1962. P. 10-11.

²⁶ Поченцов Г. СССР: страна, созданная пропагандой. Харьков, 2019. С. 10.

²⁷ Kenez P. The Birth of the Propaganda State Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization 1917-1929... С. 112.

²⁸ Шмаринов Д. «Голосуйте за кандидатов коммунистов и беспартийных» (1945).. URL: <https://bit.ly/3PIV8Eq>

²⁹ Ватоліна Н. «Депутат – слуга народа! Советской женщине – слава!» (1950). URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3122128-bufet-i-tanci-abo-ak-prohodili-vibori-v-srsr.html>

going to vote, which was supposed to represent the collectivist nature of socialist society united by common goals and objectives³⁰. The posters depicted people of different ages and genders (men, women, boys and girls, pensioners, children) to create a sense of involvement in the event for every member of society³¹. The posters often visualized a sense of space and time by depicting a wall clock with the hands at the number 12 or a tear-off calendar with inscription 'February 10, 1946. Election Day to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR'. Such time markers symbolized the beginning of a new era, the transition from one time dimension to another, as 12 (24) – It was the boundary line of the day. In this case, the hands of the clock pointed to the onset of a bright socialist future, which was associated with the elections. The tear-off wall calendar, which by that time had become a part of the everyday life of Soviet people, represented the well-being and stability of their daily life, ensured by the communist government, and the red date was a symbol of the unity of their interests³². The visualization of such images on political poster indirectly contributed to the formation of a person's sense of involvement in national achievements and idea of realizing a brighter future. In the Union republics, appeals on posters were written in national languages³³ as part of Lenin's national policy.

The government, actively using the mechanisms of agitation and propaganda, introduced into collective consciousness the idea that participation in voting was not only a constitutional right of a Soviet citizen, but also his and her civic duty. To ensure the mass scale of the process, the voters were tried to be convinced that creation of a «brighter future» depended on their vote for pro-government candidates. The election campaign posters were full of headlines: 'Long Live the Stalinist Bloc of Communists and Non-Partisans!', 'Vote for the Candidates of the Bloc of Communists and Non-Partisans together with the whole nation!'. Some of them contained, so to speak, a clarifying component: 'For the Further Prosperity of the Socialist Village', 'For the People's Happiness', 'For the Happiness of Children', 'Young Soviet People Vote for a Happy Youth', and so on³⁴. Since they were the non-alternative elections, such statements, implemented in the Stalinist totalitarian discourse, contributed to the formation of a positive mythologized image of the Bolshevik/Communist Party, which represented the state power.

Polish political posters of the postwar period were in many ways similar to Soviet ones, as their main customer was the ruling Communist Party, whose members cooperated closely with the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (KPRS). The establishment of communist regime in Poland "significantly influenced political, social and cultural relations in general, which – unlike in the West – were not based on respect for democratic principles and pluralism of worldviews, but were subordinated to the top-down directives of the Polish United Workers' Party"³⁵. As in the Soviet Union, Polish artists were limited by 'socialist realism' and were under the

³⁰ Иванов В., Бутова О. «Все на выборы!» (1946).

URL: <https://ru.pinterest.com/pin/487936940860688114/>

³¹ Савостюк О., Зотов О. «Усі на вибори» (1952). URL: <http://www.antikdivan.ru/product/2338/>

³² Ливанова В. «День выборов в Верховный Совет С.С.С.Р!» (1946). URL: <http://surl.li/nhusi>

³³ Серебряковский А. «Всё в точку! Голосуйте за блок коммунистов и беспартийных!» (1954). URL: <http://surl.li/nhuik>

³⁴ Иванов В. «10 февраля 1946 года. Выбирайте в Верховный Совет СССР лучших сынов и дочерей нашего народа!» (1946). URL: <http://surl.li/nhuzp>

³⁵ Bieczyński M. Historia autonomizacji plakatu. Postawy, kierunki, trendy. Wrocław, 2022. P. 174.

close supervision of the party and state bureaucracy. “The official line and interpretation of state propaganda was determined by central institutions. Initially, this task was entrusted to the Agency for Artistic Propaganda, founded in 1945, and later the omnipresent censorship (Main Directorate for Press, Publishing and Audience Control established by decree in 1946) was supposed to guard the author’s honesty”³⁶.

However, unlike Soviet artists, Polish poster artists had more opportunities for creative expression outside the framework of official discourse. Polish researchers emphasize that “despite the introduction of censorship limiting the freedom of artistic creativity, there were favorable conditions for the development of poster art in postwar Poland”³⁷. First of all, we are talking about the sphere of cultural poster art, in which Polish artists, achieved impressive success and international recognition, including due to the state support policy. “Freedom in the sphere of cultural poster became a compensation for forced ideological servility, which involved dispositional participation in ritualistic and spectacular events of the authorities, i.e. in parallel creation of propaganda posters”³⁸.



Fig. 1 Campaigning propaganda poster. 1946.
 “Walczyłem o Polskę Ludową. Głosuję trzy razy ‘tak’”.
 (URL: <https://bit.ly/3BQYzA2>)

³⁶ Kolekcja plakatu polskiego XX wieku. Polski plakat XX wieku. URL: <http://www.postermuseum.pl/kolekcja/kolekcja-plakatu-polskiego/>

³⁷ Bieczyński M. Historia autonomizacji plakatu. Postawy, kierunki, trendy... P. 174.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 177.

During the large-scale pre-referendum campaign of the Polish Workers' Party and its 'allies', Poland "was literally flooded with various propaganda materials"³⁹. On June 30, 1946, a government-initiated referendum ('popular vote') was held to "study public opinion, separate the wheat from the chaff, and force people to make a primitive choice 'for' or 'against' Mykolajczyk"⁴⁰, and foremost "to legitimize the changes taking place in Poland"⁴¹. In fact, there was no question of any study of public opinion, and the Polish communists were trying to buy time to gain a foothold in the political system of Poland.

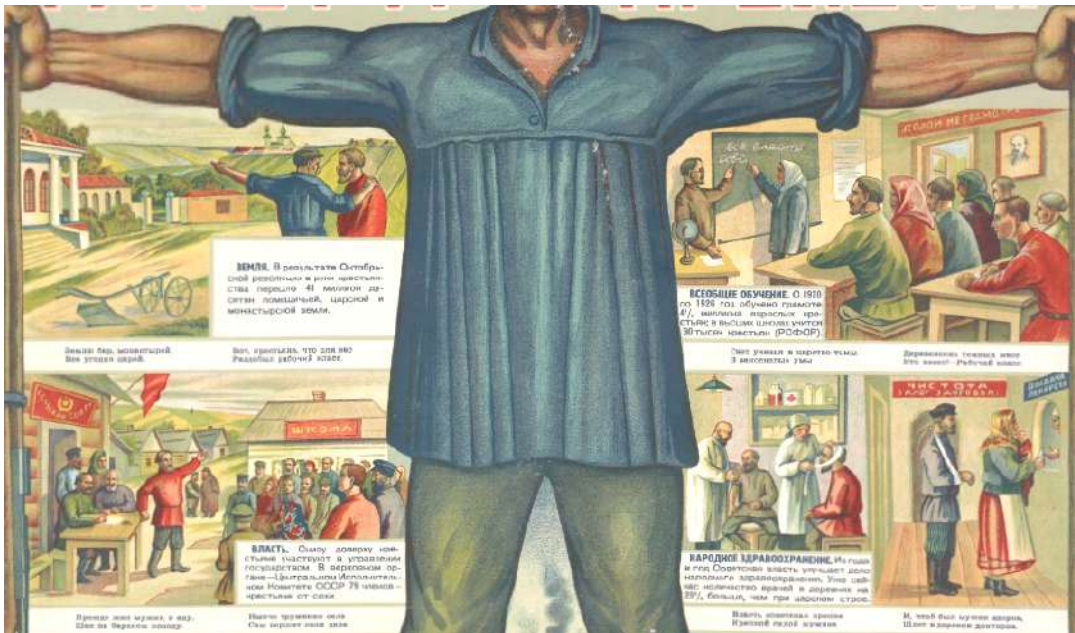


Fig. 2. Campaigning propaganda poster. 1927. «Что дала крестьянству диктатура пролетариата». 1927. (URL: <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/russianposters/rpcps02011>)

During this campaign, the Polish Workers' Party, among other propaganda tools, widely used visual political advertising (posters and leaflets), trying to convey the party's idea of a 'brighter communist future' to the broadest segments of the population. Unlike Soviet posters, which relayed the idea of the interethnic unity of the Soviet people, the Polish poster had a specific addressee – a Pole. The slogans, visualized in symbols, appealed to their national consciousness: "The only manifestation of Polishness will be voting "three times 'for'": "You are Polish, vote 'for'", "Voting 'FOR' is your sign of Polishness"⁴². It was about three questions put to the referendum (land reform and nationalization of the main sectors of national economy while preserving some forms of private property, liquidation of the Senate, fixing the western border), a positive answer

³⁹ Siedziako M. Głosowanie w cieniu represji. Trudne referendum 1946 roku // Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. URL: <https://bit.ly/3BOYzA2>

⁴⁰ Епплблм Е. Залізна завіса. Приборкання Східної Європи 1944-1956. Київ, 2017. С. 238.

⁴¹ Cylwik A. Referendum 1946 r. na Pomorzu w świetle odtajnionych raportów amerykańskich. *Studia Gdańskie. Wizje i rzeczywistość*. 2022. T. XIX. P. 169.

⁴² Siedziako M. Głosowanie w cieniu represji. Trudne referendum 1946 roku...

to which allowed the Polish Workers' Party to legitimize its right to power. The similarity of the compositional structure and semantic content of Polish posters (for example, 'Walczyłem o Polskę Ludową. Głosuję trzy razy 'tak'' (Fig. 1) and Soviet posters during formation of the Bolshevik regime catches the eye (for example, 'What the dictatorship of the proletariat gave the peasantry' (Fig. 2). Both posters are compositionally divided into three parts, and the central figure of each is a figure representing the people's power. On the Soviet poster, it is a worker who holds a weapon in one hand and a hammer in the other. His image symbolizes the power of the proletariat and the striving of the working people (including the peasantry) for a brighter future. On the left and right, the benefits enjoyed by the peasants thanks to the establishment of Soviet regime (opportunity to learn to read and write, free medicine, use of agricultural machinery, etc.) showed by bright colors (with obligatory emphasis on red). The dominant figure of the Polish poster is a soldier who represents every Pole who fought for the freedom of Poland. The main idea of this graphic work is to demonstrate the unity of the party and the common people, because only under the leadership of communists can Poland be revived and become prosperous. It is worth noting that, "since the artist's primary goal was to make a political statement rather than to achieve originality, no one was concerned about plagiarism"⁴³.

Many propaganda campaigns in postwar Poland were devoted to the creation of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), as evidenced by the poster 'Kongres Jedności Klasy Robotniczej. Warszawa 8 grudnia 1948'⁴⁴. Its author tried to visualize the main idea of communist movement – unity of the working people in the struggle for freedom, equality, and justice. Two hard-working calloused hands (representing the traditional union of peasants and workers) holding a pole of a red flag are showed in the foreground of the poster, against the background of the factory chimneys and festive column of demonstrators. The attention should also be paid to the inscriptions on the spread cloth – these are the names of PZPR comrades who died during World War II at the hands of the Gestapo. Thus, the poster was intended to attract votes by emphasizing the merits of PZPR members in the struggle for independence of Poland. The poster reproduces the content and symbolism of the political life of Poland, which will later fill the entire space of everyday life of Poles: traditional demonstrations and parades on the occasion of communist holidays, and mainly red color scheme of state symbols, etc.

The images and content of another group of election posters were intended to evoke negative emotions in potential voters towards an alternative choice and to awaken responsibility for the consequences of voting against pro-government candidates. The central figure of the poster 'Głosuj 3 razy 'tak'' (Fig. 3) is a worker, whose shadow on the wall is much larger than 'the enemy of the Polish people' – American soldier, whose shadow is a soldier of the German Reich. The image of the enemy is conditional. It could be anyone or anything, for example, 'enemy' radio station, party or organization that did not share the communist ideology, etc. The semantic structure of the posters "perfectly expressed the Bolshevik mentality, which emphasized conflict and simple oppositions: proletarian versus capitalist, progressive versus reactionary, good versus evil"⁴⁵.

⁴³ Kenez P. The Birth of the Propaganda State Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization 1917-1929... C. 113.

⁴⁴ Barman M. «Kongres Jedności Klasy Robotniczej. Warszawa 8 grudnia 1948». (1948). URL: [https://przystanekppl.pl/lyk-historii/powstanie-pzpr/#iLightbox\[gallery-1\]/0](https://przystanekppl.pl/lyk-historii/powstanie-pzpr/#iLightbox[gallery-1]/0)

⁴⁵ Kenez P. The Birth of the Propaganda State Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization 1917-1929... C. 112.

In general, the visual symbolism of the Polish political poster was not particularly diverse. Among the persistent allegories were positive images of peasant, worker, and young people symbolizing the brighter future of socialist Poland. They were contrasted with negative characters of 'imperialism', 'fascism', 'the German corpse', etc. The plot of many posters tells about vengeance or demonstrate a positive force, the image of which is usually conditional. The symbolic meaning was emphasized by contrasting colors: red (lightning, silhouette of worker, star, flag) symbolized goodness and life; black (swastika, snake or animal-like creature, skull, corpses) symbolized evil and death.



Fig. 3 Campaigning propaganda poster. 1946. «Głosuj 3 razy «tak»
(URL: <https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Файл:3xtak.jpg>)

IMAGE OF THE PARTY LEADER ON POLITICAL POSTERS

Totalitarian state is a political hierarchy headed by a leader who represents the state, nation, progress, and is a sacred value for society. Characteristic feature of Soviet political posters of the postwar period is the visualization of the idea of glorification of the leader, party and government, and people's gratitude. In the coordinate system of the Soviet totalitarian state, the objects to which the words of approval and gratitude were addressed were primarily the ruling Communist Party and its leader Stalin, whose image was increasingly gaining cult-like features after the victory over Nazi Germany. Among the variety of posters on this theme, those emphasizing Stalin's concern for the welfare of workers, happy childhood of Soviet children, dignified position of Soviet women in society, and those thanking the party and government for the victory in the war, etc. attract attention. Some researchers of poster art of the totalitarian era consider "Stalin's images within the framework of the iconographic tradition"⁴⁶, emphasizing that "the iconography of this art is very simple and extremely obvious: image of the Leader and minor Leaders; Leader as an inspirational figure; Leader as a wise teacher and best friend"⁴⁷.

Among the most vivid examples of this series of posters are the works by Georgian artist Irakli Toidze 'Stalin's Cares Illuminate Future of our Children!'⁴⁸ and Nina Vatolina 'Thank You Dear Stalin for a Happy Childhood!'⁴⁹. The researchers of poster art emphasize that "the size of figures of Soviet leaders is a very important feature of any Soviet poster. The viewer's attention should be focused primarily on the leaders, prominent figures of the party"⁵⁰. The central figure of both works is Stalin in a Marshal's uniform, indicating his role as the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army and the victor in the German-Soviet war. The joyful and respectful figures of the children on the posters, on the one hand, represent happy and protected childhood, and on the other hand, their deep gratitude to the 'leader and teacher' for their daily care and support. Given the monumental nature of Stalin's image in poster graphics, the depiction of the communist leader "the portrayal of Stalin in posters was not intended to relect his personal qualities as a man, or even as a leader, but that his persona was constructed along archetypal and mythic lines in order to symbolize the essential qualities of Bolshevism as an ideology, and more concrete but impersonal entities, such as the Party and the state"⁵¹. The propaganda of the leader's positive image helped to strengthen the legitimization of the ruling Bolshevik Party in a society that was constantly subjected to repression.

Unlike in the USSR, the cult of personality of party leader did not become widespread in postwar Poland. However, Polish researchers "emphasize 'the shamefully hidden' evidence of 'the adoration' and 'cult of the President' in the form

⁴⁶ Pisch A. The personality cult of Stalin in Soviet posters, 1929-1953: Archetypes, inventions and fabrications. ANU Press, Acton A.C.T., 2016. XXII+516 p. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/PCSSP.12.2016>

⁴⁷ Kalpakcian V. Art as a Political Means: Socialist Realism in the USSR in the Stalin Period. Stalin, his time and ours. *Irish Slavonic Studies. Yearbook of the Irish Association for Russian and East European Studies*. 2005. P. 98.

⁴⁸ Ираклий Т. «Озаряет Сталинская ласка будущее нашей детворы!» (1947). URL: <https://www.techpedia.pl/index.php?str=tp&no=12477>

⁴⁹ Ватоліна Н. «Спасибо родному Сталину за счастливое детство». (1950). URL: <http://surl.li/ngswg>

⁵⁰ Dydrov A. Image of the Builder of Communism in the Soviet Posters... P. 174.

⁵¹ Pisch A. The personality cult of Stalin in Soviet posters, 1929-1953... P. 3.

of not necessarily forced, but often spontaneous reactions of various groups of Polish society”⁵².

Instead, the theme of gratitude to Stalin and the Soviet Union for liberation from Nazi occupation and help in rebuilding the country’s economic life clearly prevailed in poster art of Poland, which added additional emphasis to the formation of the cult of personality of ‘the leader of all nations’. In the image of Stalin mythologized by Polish propaganda, we can distinguish three of his most important features, which were symbolically reflected in a number of posters. Some of them correspond to the leader’s image that was cherished in the USSR, while others reflect the expectations of Polish society: “builder of socialism, leader of the progressive part of humanity, and commander who defeated Nazi Germany and became the guarantor of Poland’s borders after the war”⁵³.

The series of posters dedicated to Stalin does not stand out for its original plot. Their main goal was to convey to the viewer/consumer the idea of the greatness of a man who embodies the ideal of a communist leader, is a true friend of socialist Poland, and is ready to support and defend it from all enemies. The poster ‘Sztandar Stalina w mocnych i pewnych rękach’⁵⁴ is the design was quite laconic and almost monochrome. The author used only two colors – red in the center of the composition and green as a background. The «wise and calm look of the leader into the distance» catches the eye. The other poster – ‘Stalin uczy’ (Fig. 4) is made in more restrained colors and is characterized by a certain monumentality. The image of Stalin at the top of the poster resembles a granite bust, which is associated with ancient and timeless sculptures. The quote used in the work has a deep implication: a wise teacher (Stalin) instructs his younger Polish comrades to follow the Soviet path of state development.

The purpose of this series of posters was to evoke in Poles a feeling of gratitude to the Soviet leader for his help and to promote the formation in collective consciousness of a strong belief in a brighter future under the leadership of the Communist Party. The graphic works depicting Polish party leader Boleslaw Bierut side by side with Stalin is a natural continuation of this associative series. A classic example of such a poster is the work of Maciej Nieringa⁵⁵. The figures of both leaders are calm, balanced, and seem a bit tired, but at the same time radiate confidence. The figure of Stalin is taller than that of the Polish leader and is associated with a wise teacher, a mentor. The symbols and color scheme on the poster emphasize the superiority of the Soviet state over Poland, and at the same time demonstrate the friendship between the countries.

Other posters by Polish artists on the same theme partially duplicate the above works, in particular those that contain only quotes from Bierut’s speeches expressing gratitude to the head of the Soviet state.

⁵² Pleskot P. Wokół kultu Bieruta / Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. URL: <https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/propaganda/82051.Wokol-kultu-Bieruta.html>

⁵³ Opulski R. STALIN! STALIN! STALIN! Kult przywódcy Związku Sowieckiego w komunistycznej Polsce / Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. URL: <https://bit.ly/4a0AMu4>

⁵⁴ Trepkowski T. «Sztandar Stalina w mocnych i pewnych rękach». (1953). URL: <https://artinfo.pl/dzieło/sztandar-stalina-1953-r>

⁵⁵ Nehring M. «Przyjaźń polsko-radziecka to pokój, niezawisłość, szczęśliwe jutro naszej ojczyzny» (1952). URL: <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Plakat--Przyjazn-polsko-radziecka-to-pok/3D836808EC7C8F45>

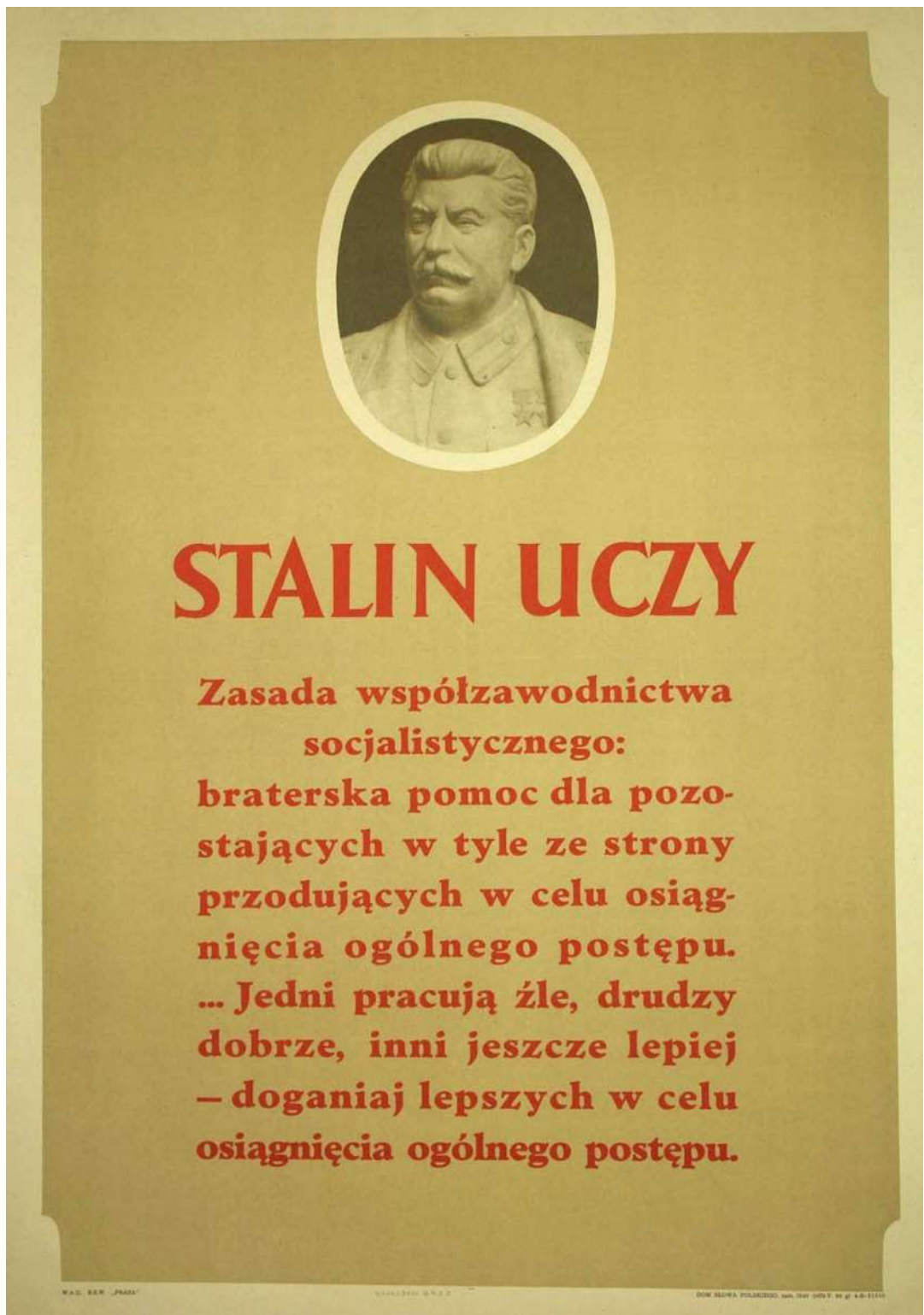


Fig. 4. Campaigning propaganda poster. 1952. «Stalin uczy»
(URL: <https://www.lodz.ap.gov.pl/art,59,plakaty-propagandowe-z-lat-1945-1989>)

IMAGE OF THE ENEMY IN POSTER ART

Characteristic feature of the propaganda of totalitarian regime is the division of the world into 'friends' and 'foes', use of the image of the enemy as a means of justifying the militarization of the economy and important factor in mobilization of society. After the end of World War II, Soviet propaganda, including visual propaganda, exploited the theme of the Great Victory of the Soviet people and liberation of Europe from Nazism for a long time, which was sufficient to demonstrate the political superiority of the Soviet Union in Europe and the world.

Ratcheting up of 'Cold War' tensions in the mid-to-late 1940s intensified relations between the two superpowers and led to the formation of a bipolar world, forcing poster artists to look for new images and artistic means to reflect the content and principles of international policy of the USSR. The vector of their creative search was determined by the official instructions of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which outlined the themes of visual materials revealing the «instigators of new war», criticism of the 'arms race' and 'imperialist foreign policy and bourgeois ideology of foreign countries'. Among the most significant works of this period are the works of Soviet poster artists V. Briskin 'Get Out of the Way, Warmongers!'⁵⁶ and V. Govorkov 'Phrases and... Bases'⁵⁷. It is significant that in these works the image of the enemy has specific American features, as indicated by the presence of such symbols as the U.S. flag, the U.S. dollar, the Statue of Liberty, the White House, Uncle Sam, etc. In 1947, B. Yefimov and M. Dolgorukov created a poster 'The Instigators of New War Should Remember the Shameful Outcome of Their Predecessors! (N. Bulganin)'⁵⁸, which for the first time depicted the image of the enemy in a personalized caricature with Winston Churchill, General Charles de Gaulle, and other famous politicians. The same series includes works by the Ukrainian artist V. Zadorozhnyi 'Fraternal Greetings to All Peoples Fighting for the Victory of Democracy and Socialism!' (1949) and 'Taming the Aggressors' (1953)⁵⁹.

The works of this cycle have a clear anti-war focus and are characterized by the psychological intensity of female images. The composition of the poster 'Taming the aggressors' is based on a photo from the press of the time, which covered the armed conflict between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Korea. The figure of the mother is full of determination and readiness to defend her home (her left fist is raised), but at the same time it is a symbol of insecurity and peacefulness (she holds a hoe in her right hand and a child with a bloody headband on her shoulders). The emotionality of the image is enhanced by fiery red of the woman's shirt.

The poster of I. Kruzhkov 'Mothers of the Whole World! Be in the Vanguard of Fighters for Peace!'⁶⁰ depicts an older woman with a determined posture and look, who holds a Soviet cult book 'The Story of Zoya and Shura' by L. Kosmodemyanskaya.

⁵⁶ Брискин В. «Прочь з дороги, поджигатели войны». (1949). URL: <https://www.litfund.ru/auction/342/256/>

⁵⁷ Говорков В. «Фразы и... базы». (1952). URL: <http://surl.li/ngtbz>

⁵⁸ Ефимов Б., Долгоруков М. «Поджигателям новой войны следовало бы помнить позорный конец своих предшественников! (Н. Булганин)». (1947). URL: <http://surl.li/nhtww>

⁵⁹ Задорожний В. Приборкати агресорів. Плакат. Мистецтво. 1969. № 2 URL: https://uartlib.org/downloads/OM19692_uartlib.org.pdf

⁶⁰ Кружков И. «Матери всего мира! Будьте в авангарде борцов за мир! Боритесь против поджигателей новой войны!». (1950). URL: <https://permartmuseum.com/exhibit/20847?&>

By using a dissonant color scheme (bright red and gloomy gray), the author aimed to evoke certain emotions in the viewer: sympathy for the mother-victim of Nazi aggression and hatred for the American imperialists, 'instigators of new war'. According to researchers, "this color scheme was understandable to the citizens of the USSR, had a symbolic meaning rooted in the minds of the people through historical associations"⁶¹, and therefore best suited the idea of Soviet propaganda.

The theme of peace was also widely reflected in poster art of postwar Poland, for which the war was primarily associated with the loss of state independence and thus a threat to the existence of the Poles as a nation. Under this perspective, the official slogan of 'defending peace' became a propaganda tool that appealed to both communists and opponents of the government. The large-scale anti-war propaganda in Poland was aimed at uniting society by forming in people's minds the belief that the bloc of popular democracies opposes any armed conflict and redistribution of state borders, and that the warmongers are American imperialists who perceive the expansion of the socialist camp as their own threat. Nevertheless, "an important role in this confrontation was to be played by West Germany"⁶², with which Poland had long-term tense relations due to the reluctance of the German government to recognize the Potsdam decisions of the Big Three on the return of lands east of the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse to Poland.



Fig. 5 Anti-American propaganda poster 1953.
«Amerykańskie zasiewy».

(URL: [https://przystanekp1.pl/galeria-propagandy/#iLightbox\[gallery-13\]/12](https://przystanekp1.pl/galeria-propagandy/#iLightbox[gallery-13]/12))



Fig. 6. Anti-American propaganda poster 1953.
«Słowa i czyny imperializmu amerykańskiego».

(URL: [https://przystanekp1.pl/galeria-propagandy/#iLightbox\[gallery-13\]/13](https://przystanekp1.pl/galeria-propagandy/#iLightbox[gallery-13]/13))

Characteristic feature of the Polish anti-war poster is its allegorical nature and concise text. It is interesting that the means of expressing the idea here is not a

⁶¹ Якименко Л.М. Радянський плакат періоду «холодної війни» як засіб візуальної пропаганди. *Світ соціальних комунікацій*. 2013. Т. 9. С. 136.

⁶² Jacek W. Figura wroga w ideologii i propagandzie XX-wiecznych totalitaryzmów – przyczynek do dyskusji. *Media – Biznes – Kultura. Dziennikarstwo i komunikacja społeczna*. 2017. № 1. P. 59.

person, but objects and the world around them. For example, weapons, in particular, bombs that «Uncle Sam» uses to sow the field, and waters it for a good harvest ('Amerykańskie zasiewy') (Fig. 5), or military aircraft ('Słowa i czyny imperializmu amerykańskiego' (Fig. 6). The gloomy color scheme and repulsive face of the collective image of the American were meant to evoke negative emotions in the viewer, to cultivate fear in his or her mind of the threat of the eternal enemy – the imperialist. The famous poster by T. Trepkowski 'Nie'⁶³ depicts the destroyed burning house framed within the silhouette of the bomb. The work is characterized by laconic style and great emotional expression and is perceived as a vivid image of war and the suffering it brings.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, in the postwar period, the Stalin' regime continued to actively use the poster as an important means of communist propaganda in order to create certain 'memory markers' in the collective consciousness of citizens of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, including Poland. Due to the mass nature, visibility, and tautology of recognizable images and symbols, it was not only the channel for transmitting information, but it also distinctly influenced mental, emotional, and behavioral state of a person living under the pressure of a totalitarian system.

The poster art of both countries was under absolute control of the Communist Party: its content and themes were determined by official documents, and the process of production and distribution was strictly controlled by censor authorities. The single method of social realism imposed by the state, which turned into a system of control over art, impoverished the creative pursuits of artists depriving them of their individuality, was manifested in poster art in the restriction of themes, conventional character of forms and means of expressing ideas, similarity of plots and conceptual solutions.

The visualization of themes, slogans, and images officially authorized by the government, and enhanced by the appropriate color scheme, was intended to create a myth about the exceptional importance of the party's policies and to promote the implementation of communist ideology in collective consciousness of the population. The inherent need of the totalitarian regime to mobilize the masses for its support was manifested in the use of a large number of posters during election campaigns.

The totalitarian theme in poster art of the USSR was primarily represented by the appropriate depiction of Stalin as 'a wise leader' of 'the state and father of all peoples'. The poster art was used to purposefully impose his majestic, even monumental image, on Soviet society. In this way, the myth of heroism, sacrifice, and infallibility of the leader of the Soviet state was implemented into collective consciousness. Unlike in the USSR, in communist Poland, where civil society was much more developed, the cult of personality of the leader was not noticeably employed, which was reflected in poster art, although Polish artists were also forced to work in the wake of the artistic method of socialist realism imposed on them by the Stalin' regime after Poland was included in the sphere of Soviet influence.

One of the main themes of political posters of the USSR and Poland during the Cold War was the struggle for peace and criticism of the aggressive policies of the

⁶³ Trepkowski T. «Nie» (1952). URL: <https://bid.desa.pl/lots/view/1-36DF71/tadeusz-trepkowski-plakat-nie-1952>

'imperialists', primarily the United States. The image of 'the other' ('enemy') visualized in the communist poster contributed to the embedding in collective consciousness the matrix of perception of the outside world in a bipolar coordinate system, at the opposite pole of which is absolute evil posing a potential threat to the existence of the countries of the Socialist Bloc. The poster art widely used the method of clear division into 'friends' ('good') and 'foes' ('bad') at both the textual and visual levels, which allowed for clear demonstration of criminality of bourgeois systems and advantages of socialism. The propaganda persistently emphasized the leading role in the list of external enemies of American imperialism, which was caused by the fierce confrontation between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, during the 'Cold War'.

Soviet and Polish political posters of the late Stalinism period fully correspond to the paradigm of totalitarian art defined as the ideological weapon of the regimes, which is designed to create a new social order, a new man within the framework of communist doctrine, and to resist the challenges of the system in the international political sphere.

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