The Propaganda Posters of Authoritarian Regimes of Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union

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1. Introduction

The visual impact of out door advertising as seen in the poster, cut out and bill board has been subjected to multidisciplinary research in recent times.

Especially in Germany, comprehensive exhibitions have been focusing on the aesthetics of Fascist regimes of the Germany, Italy, Spain and the Soviet Union as seen in the exhibitions called “Art and power” (1996), “Berlin – Moscow, Moscow – Berlin” (1996) and the very recent exhibition “Art and propaganda” (2007).

The exhibitions have drawn large crowds in Munich, Berlin, London, Barcelona, Moscow, Paris and Rome, and the exhibition catalogues to which academics from Russia, Spain, Italy and Germany contributed, have now become the foundation for the research in this field of out door advertising.

Since over 100 years Commercial Art has been exercising a strong impact on urban the society. Posters have not only been marketing products or selling dreams but also selling visions of Utopias varying from communist, socialist, democratic and fascist ideologies.

Visits to poster museums, archives and the above mentioned exhibitions on one hand have inspired me for this research. Back at home I have always been fascinated with the multitude of bill boards (hoardings or cut outs) and posters and banners in the most congested areas of the city and is not a secret that in Sri Lanka large sums of money (public and private) are spent on political propaganda. In spite of increasing hours of television consumption and the mushrooming of FM radio channels, out door advertising seems to gain in importance as a medium for political propaganda.
Advertising has become one of the highest paid service industries. Companies with a long history of advertising their brands provide sponsorship for research and most of the prestigious museums devote special sections to poster art and art of packaging.

2. Scope of the research

In this research paper which carries the title "Rhetorics of Power: The Propaganda Posters of authoritarian regimes of Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union."

I would place a selection of the propaganda material from 1930 to 1945 of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the Communist Soviet Union from the initial period after World War II. Both Hitler and Stalin had specific ministries in charge of the party propaganda. Posters were in the twenties and thirties, next to political meetings, ceremonies and parades organized by the party, the most effective instrument to manipulate and demonstrate power.

An important component of official party programs would be to celebrate the image of the "hero", who would be able to guide the confused masses to a golden future. Very often this "Unknown hero" was stylized to be the "Leader" of the monolithic party who becomes the head of state. The individual sacrifice to the victory of the party would be coinciding with the sacrifice for the state or nation. (See KuM p. 16)

Posters with simple rhetorics that could be read by the masses are today valuable sources for research on political propaganda. As such, this would be a study between the disciplines – art history, visual communication and social history.

3. Projecting power

Images have been used to project and sustain the cult of a ruling personality as seen in the gigantic statues of the Pharaohs in Egypt. The Roman emperors too had statues of themselves installed in public space to awe and inspire the citizens of the Roman Empire. Following this pattern, monarchs of Europe since then had themselves portrayed in over-life seize statues and paintings were hung in the vestibules and antechambers of the palaces to impress the privileged visitors to the absolutist king deriving power direct from God. The iconography and body language for these "heroic paintings" were generally appropriated from classical statues of Rome and emblems of power like the Imperial Eagle, Laurel Wreath have been used by many counties in Europe, as well as in the United States of America and Russia. With the development of mechanized printing, posters were used to hail the image of the ruler especially during World War I. In addition, picture cards or post cards with images of the king and the members of the royal family were printed and circulated to mark the coronation, wedding or the anniversary, or birth day in order to elevate the popularity among all classes of people and also to propagate regal authority. As such, one may discover links between the monumental statues at Abu Simbel of Rameses II, Marcus Aurelius in Rome, Mosaics of the Byzantine rulers in Ravenna and portraits and statues of monarchs like Louis IV of France and German Emperor Wilhelm I. After the end of World War I, which had destroyed the ruling empires of Russia, Germany and Austria and political parties were competing for power and with the advent of commercial art and the technology of the lithograph, which falls in the same time, the propaganda poster was established as the most powerful medium in propagating the "Cult of the leader".

4. Portraits of Power

Let us begin with three portraits of the rulers: Josef Stalin (1946), Benito Mussolini (1936) and of Adolf Hitler (1937) (See Image no. 1 from Běgleihev Kup p. 56., Image no 2 from Běgleihev Kup p 21. and Kup. P 306 and Image no 3 from KuM p. 295)

Stalin's and Hitler's portraits follow the rhetorics of the "State portrait", a commissioned life seize portrait of a head of state. Mussolini's portrait by the artist Gerardo Donori follows the aesthetics of the Futurist movement, which Mussolini derived much inspiration from.

After takeover of power in 1933 Hitler had many portraits of himself done. Only very of these portraits survived his downfall at the end of WW II. One of these portraits is the oil painting of Heinrich Knirr (127 x 76 cm) which is supposed to have been copied from a photograph in 1937 (See. Image no 3 from KuM p. 295).

It is kept in the Imperial War Museum in London. Hitler is not seen as an agitator as seen in the propaganda posters of the election times, but poses like a modern head of state. His eyes are fixed on the
viewer. The artist has taken pains to show details of the muscles of the stern face and the most resolute hands. The eye of the viewer however would focus on the brown colored uniform of the National Socialist German Worker’s Party (NSDAP) with the red band on the upper arm with the Swastika. He is wearing a decoration of the Iron cross of the first order which he earned from the WWI and a medal of the wounded through which shows his very personal sacrifice in the previous war.

The background landscape imitates the outdated gloomy mood of the German romanticism, which was popular over 80 to 100 years ago. Hitler was no admirer of contemporary art of the twentieth century (KuP p. 306). The art of the 20th century avant-garde was publicly ridiculed and defamed at the exhibitions titled “Degenerate Art” in 1937 by the Cultural Ministry of Nazi Germany.

Josef Stalin was portrayed by Fjodor Schurpin about 1946 in the year after the end of World War II (See Image no. 1 from Begleitheft KuP p. 56. It carries the title “The awakening of our fatherland”. After the victory over Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union celebrated Stalin as the great commander of the Red Army which resulted in statues and busts of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR being installed all over the Soviet Union.

In this portrait which is 167 X 232 cm there is no trace of the bitter war which cost the Soviet union over 30 million lives and devastated over 1700 cities and 70 000 villages. Stalin stands on an elevated area with clasped hands looking into the glow of the rising sun. He is not wearing a military uniform. The landscape below shows the early flowers of spring and the machines are sowing grain. In this calm and peaceful picture full of hope and optimism the artist has included a few visual foot notes that indicate that the infrastructure, industry and supply of energy has resumed. For this very vivid interpretation of Josef Stalin’s vision for the future the artist received the Stalin Prize in 1948.

Mussolini’s portrait has been planned in a complete different manner by the artist Gerado Doiotri. (See Image no 2 from KuP p. 115.) This oil painting on plywood is called “The founder of the Empire”. Although the face of the Duce is not in the focal point, the empty space in the middle of the painting first attracts the eye to the head of the horse and then guides to the upper right hand corner to the upturned head of Mussolini. The chin and the jaw are highlighted and the eyes are aimed at the vision ahead.

In a large triptych 154 X 281 by another Futurist painter, Alessandro Bruchetti we have this upturned face appearing on the side of the main image. Here Mussolini’s crave for power is most explicit (See Image no 4 from KuP p. 112 and 113). The workers who ushered in self esteem to the Italy to have been displaced into the wings of the triptych. Photographs of Mussolini appearing in postcards too show his resolute face in his most favorite pose and low camera angle (See Image no 5 from KuP p. 117). It is well known that Mussolini saw himself as a Roman Emperor on horseback like the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius seen on the Capitoline hill in Rome (See Image no 6 from Begleitheft KuP p. 20).

Finally, before moving onto the propaganda posters, let me introduce a most unusual portrait of Hitler. This painting of rather unusual dimension (153 x 153 cm) by Hubert Lanziger shows the newly appointed Chancellor Adolf Hitler as a “Flag Bearer” (See Image no 7 from KuP p. 306 – 307). Hitler is dressed like a “holy knight” or “Warrior saint” known in Christian icons. This is the most remarkable of all paintings as Hitler was never known to like horse riding like Mussolini and seldom turned to Christian iconography as a source of inspiration for his propaganda. It may also be noted that Hitler did not appreciate to be photographed or portrayed in profile, which makes this representation very unique.

The painting was exhibited in the “Great Exhibition of German Art” in 1937 and reproduced in postcards with a quote by Hitler that read “When in luck or bad luck, in prison or in freedom I will remain true to my flag which is the flag of the German Empire”. The flag is the party flag of the NSDAP, which was introduced in 1923 and was elevated to the status of the National flag of the “Deutsches Reich” (German Empire) under the “Reichsflaggegesetz” of 1935.

5. Propaganda by posters

Artists of this era made maximum use of the new technique of photomontage, and for political propaganda this technique became inevitable: Stalin is the central monumental figure in the next poster
under scrutiny (See Image no 8 from KuP p. 206). He is seen addressing a meeting at the House of the Trade Union in Moscow. Photomontage allows the audience applauding him to appear as a mass of unrecognizable heads and a few as members of the Politburo endorsing his second five year plan appearing as recognizable portraits. Lenin’s bust looms as the inspiring spirit against the red flag and the state emblem is firmly mounted on the wooden panel be behind Stalin provides the state authority to this historical event in 1936. The slogan reads “Long live the genealogy of Stalin belonging to the Stachanov-Heroes”. The leader of the high productive worker’s movement Alexej Stachanow is seen in the bottom right hand corner. The image of the General Secretary of the Communist Party is given added authority by the portrait of the “Hero of Workers”, who was hailed as the model worker by sacrificing his manpower to the Soviet State to the utmost.

Summing up, this poster incorporates many features of a political propaganda poster. The main figure is Stalin receiving applause in a historical meeting at a historical venue. All state and party emblems that authorize Stalin’s power are very clearly seen. The important figures of the worker’s movement too have been added, thanks to the technique of photomontage. At an early stage such emblems of power seem to be inevitable for the political leaders, who have not yet seen themselves confirmed in their power by unprecedented masses. This poster was designed by Gustav G. Kluzis who is regarded as the father of photomontage in the Soviet Union.

The next poster under scrutiny is from 1939. In this out door scenario Stalin is looming above the Red Square not as an observer, but more like some supernatural being (See Image no 9 from KuP p. 206, 207). His head is turned to the west, the sky of Moscow is overcrowded with fighter planes and the Red Square is overrun by troops and tanks. This poster is believed to have been designed for the celebration of the founding of the Red Army or the commemoration of the October Revolution in 1939. Everything, flags, air planes and artillery seems pointing to the west. On the largest red flag is written “Through the spirit of Stalin our army is strong and powerful”. The star, the hammer and sickle, the Kremlin and the Lenin Mausoleum provide the necessary emblems to legitimize the power. Stalin’s aggressive look too can be interpreted: On 23rd August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact, also called “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”, which is marks the start of Stalin’s aggressive military plan. Following the assurance given by Hitler of not interfering with the politics of expansion, the Red Army attacked eastern Poland on the 17th October and Finland on the 30th November 1939.

A poster from 1951, six years after the end of the World War II, bears the slogan “Under the leadership of the Great Stalin, the forward march to communism” (See Image no 10 KuP p. 208). This too is a photomontage in the tradition of Kluzis using the technique offset print. The colour of the communist party red that became inevitable almost all posters since the birth of the Soviet Union is not dominant in this poster, Stalin once more in an heroic gesture is the central figure, pointing his second finger. He appears to be less stern, now that the war against Fascism is over. The audience hailing him is recognizable dressed in the different national costumes of the vast Soviet Union. Also all types of workers too are represented, beyond them the people are seen as a mass of heads. A few sky scrapers and pylons mark the horizon symbolizing the development. The viewer is to identify himself as one of the people shown here “marching to communism” under Stalin’s leadership. The map of the Eastern Europe and the Soviet Europe stretches from the River Danube to the Aral Sea and from the Caucasian mountains to Moscow. This map very clearly shows the rivers which will be playing an important role in the hydroelectricity projects of the fourth Five Year Plan.

If we may compare this poster with a very popular poster having the slogan “Beloved Stalin, a fortune to the nation”, we may observe a paradigm shift. Not Stalin, but the people are in the focal point here (See Image no 11 from KuP p. 209). They are bringing bouquets to thank the father like leader dressed in different types of national costumes. Nevertheless, their eyes are turned to the leader on a rostrum which bears the emblem of the Soviet Union. Stalin’s head would be at the apex of this triangle. The State flag is at the backdrop. Stalin’s Uniform together with the state emblem make the perfect interior background showing all the emblems of power surrounding the leader.

“The Nation states which have been led by these dictators who seemed to give the people some kind of solution to the problems created
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the party symbol the Swastika was shown in propaganda posters. This was a conscious effort of Hitler’s party, NSDAP to absorb a maximum amount of sympathizers to the party agenda, who would see the party as the only refuge from the “Chaos of democracy” of the weak Weimar Republic.

However the poster from 1932 showing Hitler as the presidential candidate is an exception. This poster shows Hitler’s face and his name “Hitler” in white and no other text at all (See Image no 13 from KuP p. 313). In the context of an election poster, it is expected that the viewer is to know the message of this propaganda poster with a face and a name “Hitler” on it. The outcome of the election of 10th April 1932, which brought the decisive victory for the NSDAP to take control of power, shows that this type of propaganda was successful.

The poster for the election of 31st July 1932 shows a worker in heroic pose looking down at the conspiring red capped “Bolshevik”, “Jewish Journalist” and “Socialist Politician” (see Image no 14 from KuP p. 30). The focal point is occupied by a monumental edifice in the form of the party symbol, the Swastika. This seems to symbolize the collective “Work” of the NSDAP. The slogan reads “We workers are awake”. When viewed from a distance, one may read this slogan an imperative appeal “Wake up Workers!”. The slogan at the bottom “We will vote for the National Socialists” refers to the viewer identified as the worker, who will vote for Hitler, as he has promised them work (employment). Superman like the worker with clenched fist emerges from a grey industrial landscape. Such over-dimensional figures of the worker seems to be a common feature, as seen in the poster of the bourgeoisie party “Zentrum” when campaigning with the Nazis in coalition (KuP p. 31).

The poster of Hitler’s party for the Mayday celebration of 1933 reveals another feature to Nazi Propaganda. A worker and a farmer flanking a man dressed like a bourgeois are swearing an oath (See Image no 15 from KuP p. 35). The worker is a blacksmith, the farmer carries a scythe and the middle class office worker is wearing spectacles, to show that he is from the educated class. The slogan “As Germans, let us join hands for work (Employment)”. The party symbol is hidden on this poster for the worker’s day. Hitler’s doctrine of National Socialism
breaks away from the bourgeoise classes of the industrialized Nation-state of the 19th century and their party politics. According to the NAZI doctrine there would be no class distinction any more, but a "Volksgemeinschaft", which can be loosely translated as "Community of the German people", in which all class distinctions will be erased. As such, it was believed that the class struggle and exploitation of the lower classes would not exist any more.

This poster from 1936 has the most unusual rhetorics (See Image no 16 from KuP p. 314 und 315). The Volksmpfung, or the budget radio called "People's Receiver" introduced after the "Takeover of Power" in 1933 is now the focal point of the photomontage. Following the motto: "A radio for every household", this radio was developed and marketed to low income groups with the intention of creating a propaganda instrument, that is capable to reach the masses. The Slogan reads "All Germany listens to the Führer" at the top, and the bottom line continues "...with the Volksmpfung" (the People's Receiver). This radio becomes the medium between the "Führer" (leader) and the "Volk" (People). Collective listening in the work place and public space was an important instrument of the Nazi propaganda. From 1933 when the "People's Receiver" was launched by the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Gobbles with the motto "a radio for every household" to 1935, over 1,5 million "People's Receivers" were sold in Germany. In the next years the price was reduced drastically, from an initial 76 Reichsmarks to 35 Reichsmarks in 1938.

The masses shown in this poster are not only farmers and workers but all classes of Germans are grouped around this very important propaganda instrument of the Dictator. This would be a visual interpretation of the "Volksgemeinschaft", "Community of the German people" listening to the voice of the Führer. Photomontage as we have seen, was a much favored technique of Stalin's propaganda too.

The illustrated weekly "Ogonjok" of 1949 show masses at the Red square to celebrate Stalin's seventieth birth day on 21 December 1949 (See Image no 17 from KuP p. 211). "Ogonjok" had a special issue on the 21st December 1949 in celebration of Stalin's seventieth birthday. Stalin, who was at the zenith of popularity, is seen as some god like figure emanating rays of light over the dark silhouette of the Kremlin.

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The people gathered on this cold winter night seem to be undisturbed by this astral appearance on the photomontage.

The rhetorics of the propaganda posters of Benito Mussolini seem so be more direct deriving inspiration from the Roman Empire. In propagating the Führerkult (Cult of the leader) the designer places the Führer or Leader who was the centrefuge of his Fascist party Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) almost always in the focal point. The conscious effort to stylize him as a Roman Emperor is evident. In this poster Mussolini is shown in profile (See Image no 18 KuP Begliehtef p. 31). In Roman Majuscule characters reminiscent of inscriptions of the Roman Empire the word "DUX" is written, the Latin equivalent of "Duce" which means Führer in German or "Leader". The aims of the Fascist party Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) was to promote the image of the "Duce", which was omnipresent, not only on propaganda posters and as photographs in the offices of state institutions and ministries. Ashtrays, exercise books and post cards brought his image to everyday use of the civilian (KuP Begliehtef p 51).

The catalog cover for a giant propaganda exhibition of the Fascist Party has the illustration of the head of the Duce as a monumental sculpture with the slogan "Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista" (See Image no 19 from KuM p. 141). A. The sculpture was of the giant head of Mussolini erected by the Italian soldiers in Ethiopia in 1936 (See Image no 20 from KuM p. 139), a statue that has been demolished after the end of the Italian occupation. The diagonal design in typogrophy "DU-CE" is supposed to evoke the cry of the masses hailing the party leader "Duce"!, "Duce"!!... (Leader! Leader!) at the propaganda meetings and Mussolini's public appearances.

We notice a shift in the rhetorics when Italy during the World War II announced war against France and Great Britain in 1940 (See image no 21 from KuP p. 118). Here Mussolini in full uniform is on the focal point. The background shows the marching soldiers. The slogan at the top reads "The Duce in all victories", which is supplemanted by a larger slogan which seems to have been a spontaneous addition by a viewer in white paint "Win and we will win" ( vincere et vinceremo). The victory of the people depends on the successful invasion of the two neighboring countries, France and England.
6. Parallels and shift of paradigms

We can see many parallels between the rhetorics of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, not only in propaganda posters but in most state-sponsored events, like exhibitions, parades and other rituals engaging masses to celebrate the Cult of the Führer (Leader). Each dictator seems to be inspired by the other in organizing mass events, to demonstrate the development of each country.

A paradigm shift can be observed in the Soviet Union when the soldiers, weapons and the civilians are to demonstrate the power of the respective dictator, who seldom appears. A very good example is El Lissitzky’s poster from 1942 with the slogan “Give us more tanks” (See Image no 22 from KuP p. 245) shows not soldiers but factory workers in the arms industry. The slogan on the top of the poster begins with “Everything for the warfront, everything for the victory”, and a long list of weapons follow (KuP p. 239). Similarly in all counties engaged in the war the image of the soldier either marching forward or in combat appears in the posters of the war years.

Youth organizations pay an important role in authoritarian regimes. The National Socialists (Nazis) believed that the strict education of the child should begin at an very early age. Ten year old boys were at first requested to volunteer to join the “Hilferjugend” (Movement of Hitler Youth) which became compulsory after 1936. Different groups were initiated to absorb boys and girls of different age groups. As such, the indoctrination was programmed on these children, who are to become the heirs of the “Thousand Year’s Empire”. Discipline, fulfilling of one’s duty, ready for sacrifice for the betterment of the Society and Körperliche Erziehung which can be translated as “Toughening of the body” were some of the important qualities that would have to be cultivated from the very early age (KuP p. 326–327).

A poster to woo youth to the “Hilferjugend” (Movement of Hitler Youth) from the year 1939 (See Image no 23 from KuP Begleitheft p. 48) with the slogan; “Youth serves the Führer” with a bottom line “All those are ten years old join the Hitler Youth Organization” shows no ostensible power of the dictator. The blond girl in the Hitlerjugend uniform looks up as if to some heavenly angel. The unseen charismatic power of the dictator becomes almost celestial. In another poster of the same series we have the image of this charismatic power (See Image no 24 from KuP Begleitheft p. 41 and KuP p. 326).

Frames too play an important role in projecting an image of a leader. The Mussolini calendar from 1932 is in two parts (See Image no 25 from KuP p. 115). The upper has the Duce in full military uniform. It is once more a low angle photograph. The bottom register shows members of the youth organization “Balilla” in the formation of the letter “M” the monogram for “Mussolini. Mussolini is dressed in the uniform as the commander of this para-military group. The un-individualized mass represent Mussolini’s power, in a rigid formation of his monogram. The slogan below reads “Non son amiamo, sffermerci troppal sul passato. Forse la nostra volonta, si spinge verso il futuro”. This is a quote from the leader “We are not interested in the past, because our will power trusts us to the future”. The letters on the left side “PNF” stand for the fascist party “Partito Nazionale Fascista” and the “A X VII” stand for “A(anno Domini) XVII” which gives the 17th year of the rule of the party. The sheaf of grain on the left side symbolize the “Battle for Grain” and the rods of the right side it the symbol of the party. Mussolini’s attempt to create new symbols here is evident.

A rather badly designed poster from the early years of the fascist party too has an interesting frame (See Image no 26 from German Propaganda Achieve). The image of Hitler shows the Swastika Flag bearing Hitler with clenched fist leading the robot like party members. He is the “Führer” leading the party members in he party uniform. The “Reichsadler” (the Imperial Eagle) is flying above him. The rays emanating from the eagle is reminiscent of the “Holy Spirit” known in Baroque Art. This symbol of the medieval “Holy German Empire” became the most frequently used symbol of the NSDAP.

The Oak leaf too which was used as a symbol of honor appears here as a boader. It is is discontinued at the bottom to make place for the slogan “Es lebe Deutschland” which means “Long live Germany”. Here we see that German symbols from the past are mixed with the Swastika and the emblem of the NSDAP to give the central figure of Hitler power and authority coming down from history. The typography imitating the Medieval Gothic Letters which had its come back in the Gothic Revival in the 19th century too is appropriated.
In this final poster to be discussed in this observation has a very simple message. Stalin is sitting at his writing desk late at night. This picture does not project the image of the most powerful Statesman of the Soviet Union but a simple man at his writing desk of his modest office. There are no emblems of power and nothing to hint of the authoritarian ruler. Only Stalin’s uniform and the expensive looking table lamp, may provide a clue that this is a leader (See Image no 27 from Begleithefp.p 33). It is late at night and the red star is shining on the tower of the Kremlin. Stalin is still working. Beneath him the slogan: “Stalin in Kremlin is looking after each of us”. This poster is from 1940, an year that marks the massacre of 4000 Polish Officers of the highest rank in Kyan, occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the murder of Leo Trotsky by Soviet agents. When compared with the poster discussed earlier, caring the slogan “Through the spirit of Stalin our army is strong and powerful” of 1939, the double headedness of the image of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is evident (KuP p.206, 207).

7. Conclusions.

All three authoritarian figures have used the medium of poster to project their “Führer” image. They appeal to emotions, maintain simplicity, and follow the main features of propaganda.

Nevertheless some common aspects and exceptions could be summarized as follows:

1. Each leader has chosen a specific iconography, bearing very clearly in mind, which symbols, uniform and emblems of power could be enhanced. After consolidating power, the party symbols become elevated to state symbols. Hitler’s NSDAP, Mussolini’s “Partito Nazionale Fascista”, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union become the singular parties functioning.

2. The background usually shows the masses from whom the power is derived. They are generally unidentifiable as individuals, but depending on the context, they could be portraits of role models of the state apparatus, a specialty of the Soviet Union. Historic locations like the Kremlin some times provide the backdrop for the multitude assembled.

3. As a charismatic figure, the leader often is seen leading the armed forces. With the beginning of World War II, the figure of the soldier becomes the central figure in the poster. Once again, in the Soviet Union Stalin’s image is not always shown in an aggressive manner.

4. Use body language of Emperors and Kings and past rulers who ushered in the “Glorious past” are appropriated by the leaders. Imperial Symbols too appear in German and Italian propaganda, and new symbols are created to consciously project the image of the new party as in the case of the Soviet Union.

5. The earlier posters show the images of the “Founders” of Soviet Union, but as Stalin establishes himself in power, these images are seldom used. Hitler and Mussolini establish their image as a singular ruler from very early times.

Notes:

1. Posters and Bill boards have not received due attention in art history as art historians have kept hand clean from all genres classified as “Commercial art”. The analysis and scientific research of all types of outdoor advertising is comparatively new.

2. Since 1966 the International Poster Biennial is held in Warsaw, where one of the world’s first Poster Museums was opened. This was followed by the opening of the Poster Museum in Essen, Germany in the same year, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York dedicated a section to Commercial Art. Since then, exhibitions that focus on and posters have been a regular event drawing large and enthusiastic crowds. With the advent of term “Visual Culture”, all types of advertising media, printed and electronic, have been elevated as worthy of methodical scrutiny. Today, when Commercial Art has entered the curricula of art teaching and art history, interdisciplinary research of out door advertising is firmly established within disciplines of “Media Studies”, “Social Anthropology”, “Art History” and “Visual Communication”.

3. In the first three decades of the twentieth century the Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union experienced an authoritarian leader: Adolf Hitler (1933-45) in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy (1922-1945) and Josef Stalin (1922-45) in the USSR strove to fashion a new state breaking away from the previous, more liberal forms of government. All these figures gained much support from the masses at the beginning of their careers by creating much optimism of developing the economy by means of high industrial and agricultural production.


5. The Organizing team of the exhibition “Art and Power” sees similarities in all three regimes, which classes Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin as authoritarian rulers, who's
political parties exercised unquestioned power. Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union under these rulers witnessed a highly militarized state depending largely on the armed forces to exercise and maintain power. In all three regimes the head of state and his party exercised more power in maintaining law and justice. Violence and terror were used to "subordinate the Individual's Will under the Will of the State." To attain this, traditional bondings between classes had to be destroyed, and the masses to be reorganized and radicalized to support the new order of social structure, which has the ruling party as its solid base.

6. In the Introduction to the catalogue of the Exhibition "Kunst und Macht im Europa der Diktaturen 1936-1945," Eric Hobsbawm points that modern art, which generally appeals to a minority, has always created a problem to authoritarian regimes. As a result, all authoritarian rulers tend to choose art that would appeal to masses, with simple messages and images which could appreciate art without much reflection (See KdM. p. 13). Benito Mussolini, who was inspired by the Italian Futurist Movement commissioned artists of this movement to propagate this personality cult of the "Duce."


9. Hannah Arendt in her comprehensive study "The origins of Totalitarianism" (1951) has pointed out that Germany under Adolf Hitler (1933-45) and the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin (1922-45) show clear systems of "Totalitarianism," which uses the mass movement as its centrifuge. This, she sees as the result of the downfall of the National State and the political structure based on parties. Arendt points out that, using techniques of mass propaganda, Hitler and Stalin were able to demand utmost devotion from their followers, propagating moral values appealing to a Mob. These values dictated by the ruling fascist party and its leaders is not governed by constitutions. Political criticism will not be tolerated and other oppositional political parties are silenced. All this amounts to a total breakdown of the class systems of the 19th century.

10. For further material on Nazi Propaganda Posters. See German Propaganda Archive: www.calvin.edu

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Image No 13
Election poster of Hitler's Party NSDAP (1932)

Image No 14
Poster of Hitler (1932)

Image No 15
Nazi Propaganda for May Day (1933)

Image No 16
Poster of Hitler's Party NSDAP (1936)

Image No 17
Cover page of illustrated weekly 'Gosgenok' (1949)

Image No 18
Poster of Mussolini's Fascist Party PNF (1939)

Image No 19
Catalogue cover of Propaganda exhibition of Fascist party (1936)

Image No 20
Giant head of Mussolini erected by the soldiers in Ethiopia (1936)

Image No 21
Mussolini's "Duce in all Victories" (1940)

Image No 22
El Lisitsky's poster "Give us more tanks" (1942)

Image No 23
Poster of the Hitler youth organization (1939)

Image No 24
Poster of the Hitler youth organization (1939)
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