

## Political Posters

Satire and politics. Poster and politics. The trends of our age have inured us to the incessant pounding of the mass-media, and they can help to make some reflections on the importance in choosing means of expression when we try to communicate a message to a large public; these means have to be easy and striking, just like the satirical cartoon, or the large and effective images of posters.

The importance of the image and its use is not a recent discovery. We can mention, for example, how the Church has always tried to spread its ideals of faith through the images that adorn its sanctuaries: the so-called “Bible of the poor” has helped the worshippers (even if illiterates) to remind of the most important moments of religious history, and provided models of behaviour. That is why many political regimes have adopted means of communication that involve the most immediate of all the senses: sight. What we can see, strikes more than words, and is easily impressed in our memory.

In the Soviet context, the importance of a visual message has never been understated. Soviet artists, conditioned by the totalitarian policy of the regime, have always tried to present a model of life and belief, in order to stimulate and renew the consciousness of people. As a consequence, if the great celebrations for moments of national history were somehow collective and popular rituals, the propaganda diffused by the posters and satirical cartoons, aimed at spreading the values of the status quo, were nothing but means for power. Many artists conformed to this belief: we can mention for example Rodchenko and his wife Varvara Stepanova, who believed that art had a social function, and must be therefore easily accessible to the public.

The image exerted a sort of psychological pressure on the people; posters and satire contributed to the spreading of values supported by the regime, and to the condemnation of those ideas and people who were considered subversive or dangerous.

Satirical cartoons and posters, appealing to the public opinion, have become a primary part in the process of creation of assent. It is worth considering the leit-motives of the works of these artists, and capture the main features of their language.

The large number of images produced by Vasilij Fomicjov (1908-1998) bears witness of his creative capacity and technical skill. This artist collaborated all throughout his life with the most important newspapers of the country, like the “Pravda”. His works have a sharp wit and a peculiarity that makes them small masterpieces. The artist employed for his works the slight stroke of the pencil, the effectiveness of the Indian ink and the sweet softness of tempera. His satirical vein, so hard and mocking, is always ready to strike the enemies of Russia (first of all the United States) and exposes to ridicule all their vices, but is also good at condemning the errors of his own country.

We are publishing a series of art books in co-edition with a very important Italian publishing firm Editoriale Giorgio Mondadori: ‘L’Arte dell’URSS dalla Rivoluzione d’Ottobre al crollo del Muro di Berlino’ (Art in USSR, from Revolution to the collapse of Berlin Wall). Now we are preparing the 4<sup>th</sup> volume, dedicated to political propaganda and satire.

As regards satire, we own a wide collection of original cartoons, from Thirties to 1989, almost all of them issued on “Pravda”, “Izvestija” and the most famous soviet media and a large range of posters with propaganda purpose, in all about 4.000 subjects.