VISUAL TRACES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION PRACTICES IN THE 1960-70s POSTERS OF THE BSSR

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In the article the connection between the visual means used in the posters of the 1960-70s issued in the BSSR and the prevailing social order is posited. Thus, the formal characteristics of typefaces used in the posters are considered as a representation of conformism or tactics of escape from the regulations imposed by the social order.

The logic of the production of visual aids, particularly political posters, in Soviet times does not appear to have allowed any scope for individual creativity. In the 1960-70s, orders to create a poster were distributed through the Poster Section of the BSSR Artist's Union[1], the production of visual aids was thematically rigidly structured, artists were guided by recommendations provided in textbooks[2] determining the visual means

to be used for representing different topics, and layouts were discussed at the editorial board of the BSSR Artists Union's Poster Section, with accepted posters being multiplied in the Artistic Factory ('KhudCombinat')

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1 The Poster Division in the Artist's Union of the BSSR was set up in 1961, but the regular production of posters is associated with "Agitplakat" established in 1966 by the Poster Division of the BSSR Artist's Union, followed by the establishing of the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), where silkscreens were done. About 10% of the posters were printed with offset in the J. Kolas publishing house.

2 *Visual Agitation methodical recommendations* issued by VNIITE or by affiliated organizations. Such textbooks were issued in Minsk, Vilnius, and other regional branches. Algimantas Pulokas, *Vaizdinėinformacijairagitacija. Visasąjunginio Techninės Estetikos Mokslinio Tyrimo Instituto Vilniaus Fili-*

alas – *Наглядная информация и агитация. Вильнюсский филиал Всесоюзного Научно-исследовательского Института Технической Эстетики*, Vilnius: Mintis, 1967; Janas Ryvesas, *Standartinis šriftas – Стандартный шрифт*, Vilnius: Mokslas, 1987; *Šriftai*. Lietuvos TSR Kultūros Ministerija. Respublikinis Kultūros-Švietimo Darbo; Mokslinis-Metodinis Kabinetas, Vilnius, 1962; *Vaizdinė agitacija*, Vilnius: Mintis, 1969; *Vaizdinė agitacija ir aplinka*, Vilnius: Mintis, 1967 (на русском и литовском языках); *Наглядная агітацыя Белорусского филиала ВНИИТЭ*, Минск: Беларусь, 1968; *Наглядная агитация*, Минск: Беларусь, 1974; Сергей Смирнов, *Шрифт в наглядной агитации*, Москва: Плакат, 1988; Смирнов Сергей, *Шрифт и шрифтовой плакат*, Москва: Плакат, 1-ое изд. 1977, 4-ое изд. 1980; *Состояние и некоторые проблемы совершенствования наглядной агитации*. Пропагандистский вестник, Минск: Беларусь, 1982; *Шрифты*, Минск: Выш. шк., 1964.

and distributed within obligatory mailing addresses. Thus, the whole process was institutionally organized and controlled, and it seems that there was no space for individual initiatives. This impression may be intensified if we take into account the fact that political posters were made by painters and graphic artists, for whom the posters as such were not a priority[3]. However, after 1972 the first generation of industrial artists graduated from the Theatre and Arts Academy (Minsk) and for whom posters, design labels, packaging and decoration for Soviet demonstrations were a priority, rather than painting and graphics[4].

Nevertheless, it is productive to consider even Soviet posters as a space of encounter or a fight between the social and ideological structures regulating artistic activity and an artist's creative intentions, rather than considering the latter (an artist's creative intentions) as strictly subordinated[5]. To reveal this dimension of Soviet culture, it makes sense to pay more attention to the formal means through which the textual information is presented in the posters. Text is explored as a combination of norms, rules and artistic will. On the one hand, letters must be identified, in correspondence with the dominant norms of reading and lettering, on the other, the text must somehow be harmonized with the pictorial part of a poster, and this is why artists were forced to make manipulations that were beyond the regulations of the dominant order. Therefore, the way the textual information was designed can be considered a representation[6] of the relationship between norms and creative intentions which were formed in a specific way in Soviet culture. The purpose of this article is to reveal the correlation between the norms and creativity specifically for 1960s-70s Belarus by considering the posters issued in this period. In 1966 the institutional capacity for the regular production of posters on up-to-date topics appeared, with it ending in 1980, when the power of the poster was reduced due

3   Such artists as Kashkurevich A., Chepic M. and many others were very well known as graphic artists while they were producing quite many posters during the 1960-80s. After the fall of the Soviet Union, when state orders on posters were stopped, they continued to produce graphic arts rather than posters. Younger artists such as Surskij O., Kalmaeva L. and others graduated from the Belarusian Arts Academy Visual Agitation department, starting their artistic career in the late 70s they considered themselves first of all as poster artists and took part only in poster exhibitions.

4   Systematic research into the history of Belarusian posters has not yet been conducted. Since 1983 a number of publications on the history of Belarusian posters have appeared in the journal *Mastatstva Belarusy* and several books about Belarusian design as a whole have been written, but there is no monograph on the Belarusian poster. In the post-Soviet period, some articles of a journalistic nature have appeared in the magazine *ProDesign*, issued by the Belarusian Designers Union. Thanks to the publications in the journal *Mastatstva Belarusy*, as well as the dissertation research of Helena Atrahovich, the posters of the 1960-70s are more systematized in comparison to those of other periods. An important impetus for the study of Belarusian posters was the conference (2010) and the exhibition (2012) "MODERNISATION Baltic Art, Design and Architecture in the 1960s–1970s", curators: Lolita Jablonskienė (Lithuanian National Gallery of Art), Kai Lobjakas (Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design), and Iliana Veinberga (Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art) which represented research on the Socialist Soviet Baltic design and architecture. Another significant impulse is the research into Socialist Modernism in the context of the social and cultural policy of the Cold War on both sides of the Iron Curtain, by Susan Reid, David Crowley and Jane Pavitt. The study of objects of design as a form of "big" policy reproduction in daily life opened up the possibility to look at the poster as a form of the reproduction and configuration of everyday practices, in the context of asymmetric power relations.

5   Michael de Certeaux, in his work *L'Invention du quotidien*, 1.: Arts de faire (1990) proposed the exploration of European culture as a dynamic relation of strategies (institutional order) and tactics (how people deal with imposed discipline and the dominant order). In this article, it is supposed that the configuration of strategies and tactics could be different in specific cultural contexts, such as the Soviet one. On everyday culture and its visual representation Highmore Ben, *Michel de Certeau Analysing Culture*, Continuum, 2006; Highmore Ben, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, London, New York: Routledge, 2002; Gardiner Michel, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000.

6   After Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), the notion of representation is considered as a construction of meaning through a process of interpretation. This means that in considering posters as a form of cultural representation, we are reconstructing the meanings they conveyed in the 1960s-70s.

to the prevalence of other communication media, such as TV and radio (multi-programme radios). Between 1966 and 1980, the topics of posters did not change to any significant extent, and the ways of distributing copies to libraries and other organizations worked without interruption. From the early 80's commercial posters became popular, the range of customers increased (for example, Gorreklama and Vneshtorgreklama appeared), and the number of posters on socio-political issues was reduced. Such phenomena as authorial posters appeared, in which industrial and graphic artists printed posters at their own expense to participate in international competitions and festivals. Competition posters remained in private collections and were not distributed to the addressees of mandatory distribution. For this reason, from the 1980s onwards, access to a complete collection of posters is difficult.

In the posters of the studied period, two fundamentally different approaches to the use of text were identified: the imitation of typesetting in hand-drawn texts and the incorporation of texts in materials, substances, objects, etc. Inside these two approaches some variations can be distinguished, but these are still variations of one of these two basic approaches. It is important to understand what caused such a repertoire of expressive means for the texts in Belarusian political posters of the 1960s-70s. In other words, the article proposes to look at these two approaches of text operation as a result of the dynamic relations between institutionally imposed rules and regulations, and the individual tactics of dealing with them.

RULES, REGULATIONS AND THE TYPEFACE
REPERTOIRE IN THE BSSR
THE IMITATION OF TYPESETTING
IN BELARUSIAN POSTERS OF THE 1960s-70s

A particular feature of USSR publishing politics was that Poligrafmash VNIITE's Department of New Typefaces was the only institution assigned to develop fonts for all the languages of all the USSR republics, for those using Cyrillic as well as those using Latin alphabets, with the exception of the Georgian and Armenian republics. As a result, the Literaturnaya, Zhurnalnaya, Akademicheskaya, etc. typefaces were developed for all the languages used in the USSR. Thus, no national writing traditions were taken into account. In total, during the existence of this department about 40 headsets were developed that were used to publish/print all the texts of all nationalities that were part of the Soviet Union. Font headsets were adapted for different types of commercial printing, and used mainly for typesetting in newspapers, magazines, books and manuals. Therefore, from the beginning of the 1930s[7] right up to the 1970s, wherever display fonts where required, such as on the title pages of books, newspaper titles and in other cases, the texts were drawn by hand. In this regard, the VNIITE Department of New Fonts published catalogues of hand-drawn display typefaces designed for copying where display typefaces were needed[8]. Because of a limited choice of display typefaces and the uniformity of the existing collections of typefaces, artists were forced not only to draw, but to invent typefaces by themselves. In posters which also required display typefaces, the text was hand-drawn and this was a common practice.

The necessity to use hand-drawn fonts was also due to the silkscreen printing technology that was the common technique of multiplying posters at that time: about 10% of posters were printed with offset, with hand-drawn typefaces being used as well.

The peculiar feature of hand-drawn texts in Belarusian posters is that they imitated machine typesetting: serif or sans-serif typefaces were drawn, letters of the same size and colour were arranged in lines with

7   At this period, all machine typesetting remaining from pre-revolutionary publishing houses had been demolished.

8   Абрам Шицгал, *Русский рисованный книжный шрифт советских художников*: Альбом образцов / Всесоюз. науч.-исслед. ин-т полигр. пром-сти и техники Главиздата М-ва культуры СССР, Москва: Искусство, 1953, XXIV, с. 96.
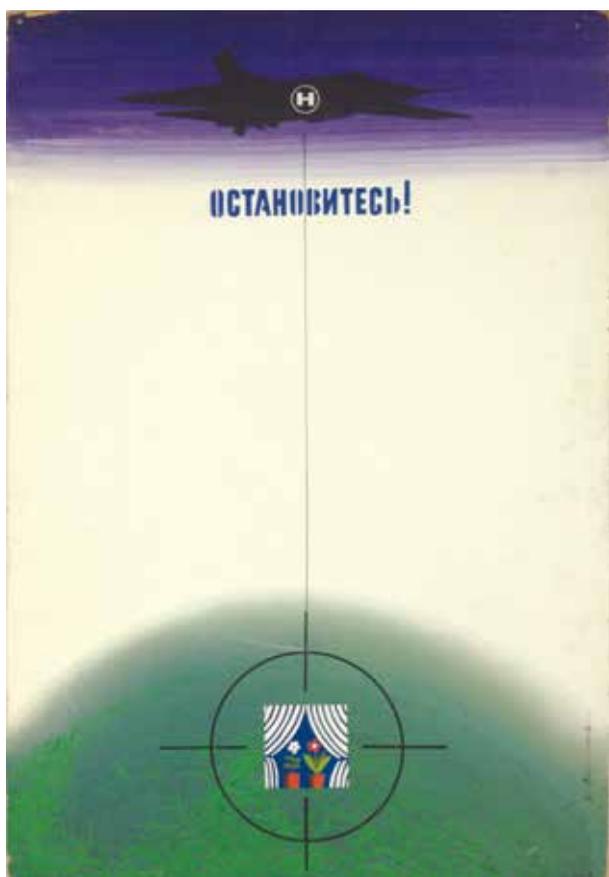
1. Viktor Filimonov, *Остановись / Stop*, 1973, Prototype: gouache, 60 × 80 cm, Belarusian Design Union archive (BDUA), photo by Youri Toreev, Minsk, 2013

Viktor Filimonov, *Sustok*, 1973

standard line spacing, and the texts were usually right, left or centre justified. Despite the fact that the letters were hand-drawn and therefore there were no technological limitations associated with silk printing, only a limited set of grotesque fonts that varied in their proportions and contrast were used.

Partly this was conditioned by the textbook guidelines where sans-serifs typefaces were strongly recommended for posters because of their readability, functionality and connotations to modernity[9]. The fol-

lowing recommendations were common for Soviet times: "Political posters mostly carried out by various headsets of sans-serif (grotesque or 'rublenyj') typefaces. Why? Because firstly, the sans-serif best meets the objectives of the political poster due to its simple graphic shapes and readability. Secondly, the graphic structure of the serif typeface corresponds to the present[10], as classical serifs corresponded to the classical 19th century, and Renaissance serifs to the Renaissance époque"[11]. Serif typefaces are characterized as "monumental, solemn that are distinctive through the utmost clarity, purity and differentiation of graphic forms. Therefore, they should be used in critical, festive and solemn memorial work"[12].

The uniformity and limited repertoire of typefaces forced the search for diversity onto a micro level, i.e. in the formal characteristics of fonts: "By the way, how is the content of the text „illustrated" within fonts? It can be calm, tense, dynamic and static, monumental and decorative, rigorous and fun, it can have historical and national features"[13]. It is worth noting that applying the above-mentioned properties for the sans-serif font actually requires the development of a new font for each property: something which was impossible in the official font production infrastructure existing in the USSR, as this was the only place for the development of professional typefaces. Therefore, instead of using a limited repertoire of pre-designed display typefaces, artists were more interested in inventing their own techniques for obtaining new ones.

Texts in Belarusian posters are particularly long, often quatrains or extensive quotations from the speeches of Communist party leaders[14]. Large letters

9   Grotesque font appeared in the 19th century and is associated with the processes of industrialization and modernization (the name is Greek for simple or rough - intended for the quick printing of cheap books), after Philip B. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, New York: John Wiley, 2005.

10 In this context, present is understood as Soviet times, the time of Soviet modernization opposed to prerevolutionary age.

11 *Наглядная агитация*, Минск: Беларусь, 1974, с. 45.

12 Сергей Смирнов, *Шрифт в наглядной агитации*, Москва: "Плакат", 1988, с. 67.

13 *Наглядная агитация*, Минск: Беларусь, 1974, с. 46

14 A member of the BSSR Writers Union was responsible for the texts in the posters. Their names were indicated on the poster, as well as that of the artist and editor.

for the main (usually short) text were shaped within stencils [Fig. 1]. Stencil production is a time consuming process, and perhaps this was the reason why only uppercases were used. Capitalized text significantly impairs its readability. In spite of the fact that text books were recommending the abandonment of capital letter texts, the samples of typefaces in them were given mostly in uppercase, except italics, which were in any case rare in posters. Lengthy excerpts from the speeches and resolutions of party leaders were drawn without any stencil, but in capitals.

The techniques for copying letters in scale were not clearly explained in textbooks, so artists were forced to invent their own techniques of zooming and drawing the letters in texts to achieve an acceptable result.

Foreign magazines, such as Projekt from Poland, *Neue Werbung* from the GDR[15], and *Interpress Graphic* from Hungary were considered sources of typefaces of higher-quality and originality in the 1970s. From interviews with renowned designers of that time, such as Vladimir Vasyuk[16] and Vladimir Krukovskij[17], the sequence of text creation has been reconstructed: first, the text from a magazine was photographed; then Latin letters were transformed into Cyrillic by means of photographic optics and the retouching of the letters[18]; then the desired text was composed from Cyrillicized letters and photographed in the required size; and fi-

2. Viktor Smoliak, Уладзімір Каваленак. *Рэкорд працягласці жыцця на арбітальнай станцыі – 140 дзен* / Uladzimir Kavalionak. *Record life expectancy on the orbital station – 140 days*, 1988, Prototype: gouache, pastel, 60 × 79 cm, BDUA, photo by Youri Toreev, Minsk, 2013

Viktor Smoliak, Uladzimir Kavalionak. *Gyvenimo kosminėje stotyje rekordas – 140 dienos*, 1988

nally it was placed on the poster layout or prototype [Fig. 2]. Even during the 1980s, such practices were discussed (in widespread terms), but interpreted as unprofessional, and those who practiced them were called "cold cobblers"[19]. However, in an interview with

15 On the basis of interviews it was found that the use of foreign magazines and catalogues was possible because of the establishment of the Belarusian Branch of VNIITE, where magazines from Socialist countries were regularly received, mainly from the GDR and Poland. *Die Neue Werbung* was particularly popular.

16 Vladimir Vasyuk (born 1947), artist and member of the Agitplakat's editorial section in the Artist's Union of the BSSR from 1975 to 1989, was interviewed on 20 March 2012 in Minsk by Alla Pigalskaya. The interview was recorded in the form of a diary.

17 Vladimir Krukovskij (born 1937), artist and member of the Agitplakat's editorial section in the Artist's Union of the BSSR from 1972 to 1989, was interviewed on 10 January 2014 in Minsk by Alla Pigalskaya. The interview was recorded in audio format.

18 So the Latin letter 'R' through a mirror image was transformed into the letter 'Я' of the Cyrillic alphabet, an 'N' could become an 'И', etc. Characters that could not be derived from the Latin alphabet – were transformed from existing letters.

19 "Cold cobblers" were mentioned in the book *Moscow and Muscovites* by V. Gilyarovskij - in the old days, this term was used to refer to shoemakers who worked on the street ("right in the cold") with primitive devices, "shoes repaired quickly, cheaply and well". In a figurative sense, the word "cold cobbler" came with an ironic condemnatory colouring - a specialist not of the highest level, and now "cold cobblers" refer to people related to a case without a soul, without a spark.

3. Vladimir Krukovskij, *Масква – 80 / Moskow – 80*, 1979,
Prototype: gouache, 60 × 80 cm, BDUA, photo by Youri Toreev,
Minsk, 2013

Vladimir Krukovskij, *Maskva – 80*, 1979

Vladimir Vasyuk and Vladimir Krukovskij[20], it emerges that although this method of text creation was considered time consuming, all of the designers attached great importance to it and had always regarded it in a positive manner in spite of the imperfections inevitable in this case.

There were a few typical shortcomings and differences in a lot in posters. For example, in the poster *Maskva - 80* by V. Krukovsky, the first and second letters are stuck to each other which this disturbing the

rhythmic pattern of the text [Fig. 3]. In the poster *Vital Tsvirka Exhibition* by V. Vasyuk, the apex of the letters ‚A‘ rises above the upper base line, thus destroying the integrity of the text [Fig. 4]. Vulnerability in terms of uniformity of rhythm and interalphabetic lumens might be considered a drawback, but at the same time it is through these signs that 'the voice' of the artist is felt.

The fact that texts for posters were composed from letters copied from typeset text from magazines does not explain what makes artists attached to making up hand-drawn texts as though they had been formed by a typesetting machine. It is important not only to analyze the widespread practices of creating Cyrillic letters based on Latin typefaces taken from magazines in the light of copyright infringement or professional standards, but also to reconstruct the values that were given to these practices in the Soviet cultural space. The interpretation of them as a sign of the mechanization of labour associated with the idea of modernization, a key node for Soviet culture, partly explains this.

This method of producing characters reveals particularities of the Soviet modernization process which actually mark it out as distinct from Western modernization, understood as standardization and a matching of products with standard or "abstract" norms engendered by mechanization and the automation of labour. The particularity of Soviet modernization, revealed as the reproduction of signs of modernization expressed through the copying of the „original" signs, constitutes a conjuring of the processes of modernization, rather than mechanization and automation itself. This combination of mechanization and manual labour in the frame of an ideology of modernization took place not only in the area of the production of visual aids, but also in agriculture and the production of household goods[21]. Through this logic can be seen more clearly

20   See footnote 13, 14

21   "In the mid-60s about a third of workers were employed in manual labour, and by the end of the 70s, this number had risen by half because of gaps in the processes of automated and mechanized enterprises" – *Актуальныя пытанні гісторыі БССР.* Минск.: Народная Асвета, 1991, с. 133. On the parti-

4. Vladimir Vasyuk, *Выстаука творау Віталя Цвіркі–народнага мастака БССР / Works of art Exhibition by Vital Tsvirka – People's (Honoured) Artist of the BSSR*, ap.1980, Prototype: gouache, 60 × 80cm, V. Vasyuk's personal archive, photo by Youri Toreev, Minsk, 2013

Vladimir Vasyuk, *BTSR liaudies dailininko Vitalio Tsvirka paroda*, apie 1980

the degree of freedom artists had in choosing the "original" for copying: the principal matter is not so much that a font was copied from a European magazine, as the connotations that it was able to transfer.

cularities of Soviet Modernization *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970*, eds. David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, London: V & A Publishing; First edition 2008; Лебина Наталья, Чистиков Александр, *Обыватель и реформы. Картины повседневной жизни горожан в годы НЭПа и Хрущёвского десятилетия*, Санкт-Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин, 2003.

TEXT INCORPORATION INTO MATERIALS, ELEMENTS, OBJECTS

Text imitating typesetting stands alongside text endowed with the plastic expressiveness of different objects (a flag, hammer), substances (blood, vodka), or elements (fire, earth). As a word whose letters are formed by flags, grain, ground, blood, etc., we can say that the text takes on a materiality[22]. The text takes on a unique shape and plastic properties never to be repeated on other posters. This metamorphosis of text can be observed in posters on industrial, political, social and satirical issues, which were printed in the same manner as that described in the previous section of this text: silk printing and, on rare occasions, offset.

In the poster, *Manufacturing Defect, Illness, Absenteeism...* by Churko L., 1977 [Fig. 5], the text, represented as 'vodka' poured from a bottle into a glass, announces the consequences of drinking: manufacturing defects, illness, absenteeism, crime, divorce and accidents. The words drop with a fluid shape, but the text retains its readability. The text in this poster is a compositional accent that practically cannot occur if a text imitates typesetting.

In satirical posters it is also common for a text to be shaped to fit the poster's plot. In the poster, *The Black Deeds of Colonels Hang with Blood Over Greece* by Churkin A., 1968 [Fig. 6], the word 'Gretsyya' / Greece replaces the Parthenon pediment, and the word 'junta' – is the knife of a 'black colonel' – thus, letters reproduce plastic characteristics of items that are illustrative of the poster's meaning. On the left side of

22 Incorporated text in Soviet posters could look similar to the plastic language of the psychedelic posters of the 60s in the USA and Europe. It is important to consider the general context in which certain features are legitimized and the reasons why they are common. In psychedelic posters, waving lettering represents the opposition to the visual language developed for commercials and advertising. In Soviet culture incorporated text alludes to pictographic writing and allows the discovery of the archaic connections of Soviet culture, being one of the typical aids in the official state visual agitation.

5. Churko Leonard, *Вытворчы брак, хвароба, прагул, злачынства… / Manufacturing Defect, Illness, Absenteeism...*, 1977, Issued by Agitplakat, printed in the publishing house "Belarus", offset, 58 × 84 cm, National Library of Belarus Archive (NLBA), BDUA

Churko Leonard, *Gamybinis brokas, ligos, pravaikštos, nusikaltimai…*, 1977

6. Churkin Askold, *Чорных палкоўнікаў чорныя справы — над Грэцыяй хунта вісне крывава / The Black Deeds of Colonels Hang with Blood Over Greece*, 1968, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 59.5 cm. NLBA, BDUA

Churkin Askold, *Juodų pulkininkų juodi darbai – virš Graikijos kabanti kruvina chunta*, 1968

7. Youri Tereshchenko, *Нашай планеце – бяспеку і мір / To our Planet – Security and Peace*, 1975, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the publishing house "Belarus", offset, 84 × 59 cm. NLBA, BDUA

Youri Tereshchenko, *Mūsų planetai – saugumas ir taika*, 1975

8. Viktor Filimonov, *Мір – сцяг нашай эпохі / 'Peace is a Flag of our Era'*, 1978, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the publishing house "Belarus", offset, 56.5 × 76cm. NLBA, BDUA

Viktor Filimonov, *Taika – mūsų epochos vėliava*, 1978

9. Valerij Soloviev, *ВЛКСМ. З нястрымным запалам юнацкіх гадоў мы ўперад нясем эстафету бацькоў / VLKSM. With the Irresistible Ardour of Youthful Years We Carry Forward the Father's Baton*, 1968, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 60 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Valerij Soloviev, *Komjaunimas. Su nesulaikomu jaunatvišku užsidegimu nešame tėvų estafetę*, 1968

10. Michael Chepic, *50 лет ЛКСМБ. Камсамол у барацьбе і працы заўсёды з партыяй, з народам / 50 Years of the LKSMB. The Young Communist League in Fight and Work is Always With the Party and the People*, 1970 issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 60 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Michael Chepic, *50 metų komjaunimui. Komjaunimas kovoje ir darbe visada su partija ir liaudimi*, 1970

the poster, meanwhile, a text that simulates typesetting with right justification over the head of a 'Colonel' is scarcely affiliated with any element of the composition.

In posters on political topics, the text is often replaced with flags or imitates their plastic properties, always in a unique way, as in the poster *To our Planet – Security and Peace* by Tereshchenko Y., 1975
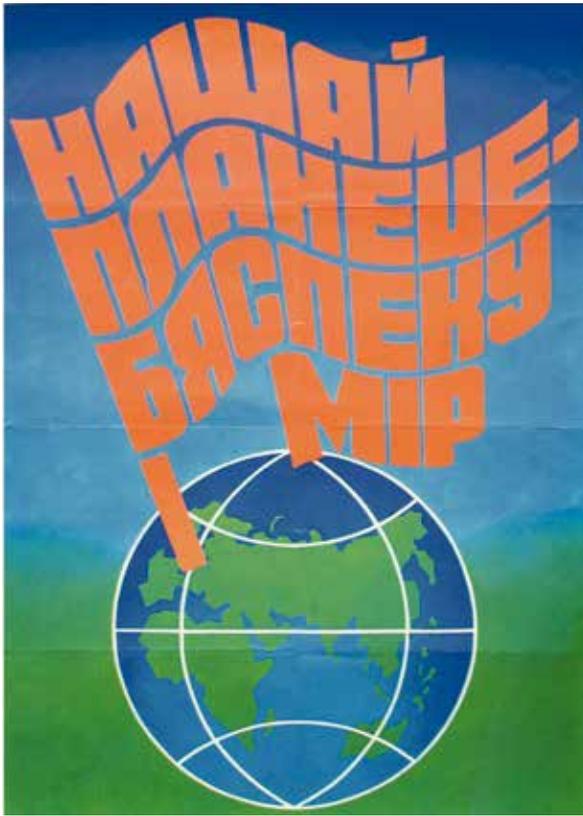
[Fig. 7], where the entire text of the poster is represented as a flag and thus it is natural that the letter 'I' has become the flagpole. In the poster *Peace is a Flag of our Era* by Filimonov, 1978 [Fig. 8], only the word 'mir' / peace is represented as a flag, the rest of the text is placed in a much smaller scale below. The poster, *With the Irresistible Ardour of Youthful Years We Carry Forward the Father's Baton* by Solovyov V., 1968

11. Fiodor Vypas, *Пяцігодку датэрмінова выканаем! / Five Year Plan Ahead of Schedule!*, 1967, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 59.5 × 79.5 cm, NLBA, BDUA

   Fiodor Vypas, *Penkmečio planas lenkia grafiką!*, 1967

12. Ivan Vladychik, Р*ашэнні XXV з'езда КПСС выканаем! / The Solutions of the XXV USSR Communist Party Congress will Succeed!* 1979, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 60 × 79 cm, NLBA, BDUA

   Ivan Vladychik, *TSKP XXV suvažiavimo nutarimai bus įgyvendinti*, 1979

[Fig. 9], presents an abbreviation 'VLKSM'[23] in the form of a flag, while the rest of the text is also hand-drawn but imitates typesetting. In the poster, *50 Years of the LKSMB. The Young Communist League in Fight and Work is Always With the Party and the People* by Chepik M., 1970 [Fig. 10], the word 'Komsomol' is presented as a flame in a torch, while the rest of the text, as in other posters, is painted as typesetting .

In each of these posters, the incorporated text is a natural part of the pictorial part of the poster, and the text's graphic characteristics are determined by the general stylistic solution used in the poster. In this ap-

proach, a single word or a phrase forms a composition accent. Thus, it seems that artists feel free in selecting the appropriate plastic means for the poster and appear more interested in designing the incorporated text, while text simulating typesetting, on the contrary, is usually placed outside the image or has poor connections with the pictorial part of a poster.

VOLUMINOUS TYPEFACES IN POSTERS

Virtually every textbook recommended using voluminous typefaces in agitation posters. Voluminous letters could be perceived as objects, so they could be taken as close to the incorporated text, since they are

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23   VLKSM is a abbreviation for the All-Union Komsomol organization

13. Ivan Vladychik, *Сустрэнем 26 з'езд КПСС ударнай працай!* /
*Meet the XXVI USSR Communist Party Congress with Hard
Work!* 1980, Issued by Agitplakat, printed in the publishing
house 'J. Kolas', offset, 54 × 85cm, NLBA, BDUA

Ivan Vladychik, *Sutikime XXVI komunistų partijos kongresą
sunkiu darbu!*, 1980

14. Ivan Kreidik, *XXVI з'езду ЛКСМБ ударную вахту!* /
To the XXVI Congress of the Komsomol, Hard Work!
1979, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory
('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 60 × 78 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Ivan Kreidik, *XXVI komjaunimo suvažiavimas*, 1979

naturally included into the composition. At the same
time, however, as opposed to the case of incorporated
text, which varies depending on the materials and
elements in which it is included, voluminous letters
should be considered as an updated graphic system
of phoneme transmission, abstracted from their par-
ticular situation of use. Thus, within voluminous type-
faces, the typographic poster appeared as a genre. In
the 1970s, in textbooks where guidelines for political
posters were fixed, the usage of voluminous letters was
offered as an example and a recommended solution[24].
This form of textual representation can be found in
a number of posters, such as *Five Year Plan Ahead of
Schedule!* by Vypas F., 1967 [Fig. 11], where the volume
of text is presented in the form of plates which rise
towards a construction crane. In the posters, *The So-
lutions of the XXV USSR Communist Party Congress
will Succeed!* by Vladychik I., 1979 [Fig. 12], and *Meet
the XXVI USSR Communist Party Congress with Hard
Work!* by Vladychik I., 1980 [Fig. 13], voluminous text
is not likened to any matter or thing, and is presented
simply in the form of volume, leaving behind the ap-
parent field of the poster. In the poster, *To the XXVI
Congress of the Komsomol, Hard Work!* by Kreydik,
1979 [Fig. 14], voluminous text is included in a com-
plex game of colour spots. This example is indicative as

24 Сергей Смирнов, *Шрифт и шрифтовой плакат*, Москва:
    "Плакат", 1-ое изд. 1977, 4-ое изд. 1980, с. 97.
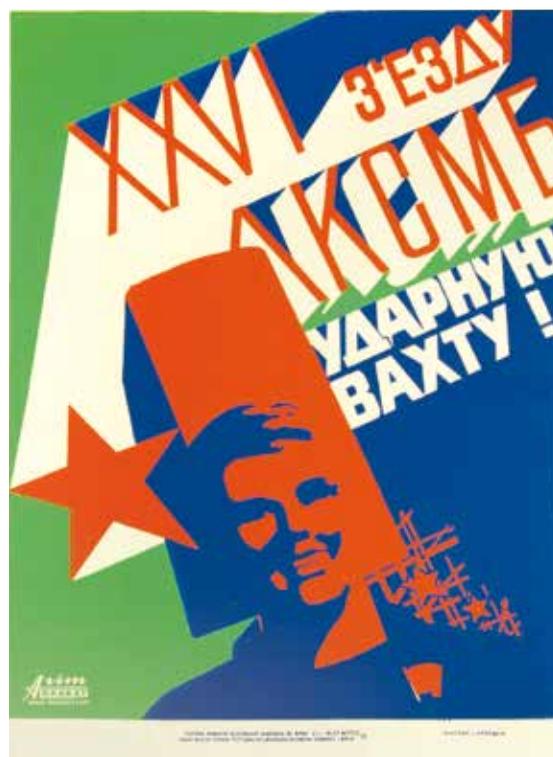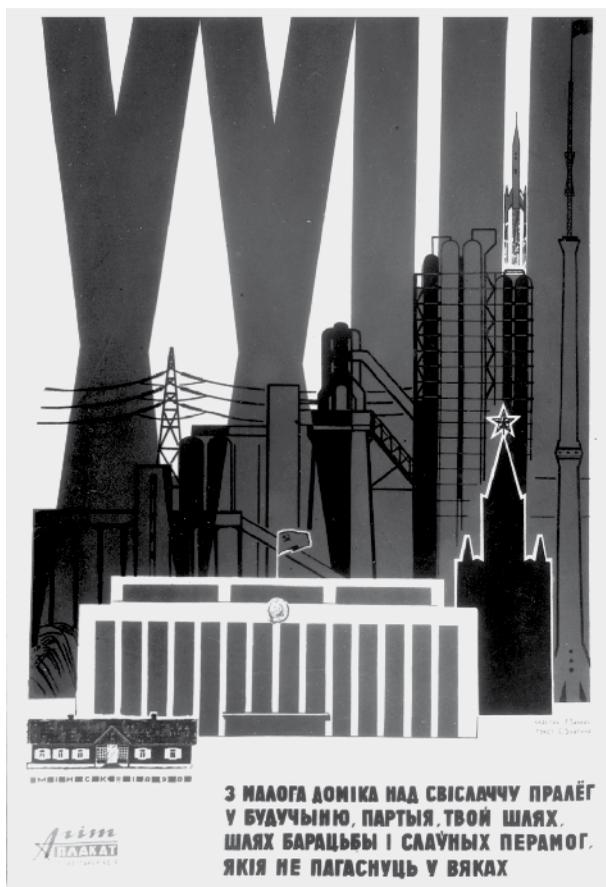
15. Leonid Zamach, *З малога доміка над Свіслаччу пралёг у будучыню, партыя, твой шлях, шлях барацьбы і слаўных перамог, якія не пагаснуць у вяках* / *In the Little House on the Svisloch is Held the Future: the Party your Path, the Path of Struggle and Glorious Victories that do not Fade through the Centuries*, 1966, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 120 cm. Reproduced from Агітплакат Саюза Мастакоў. Мінск: Беларусь, 1986, p. 20

Leonid Zamach, *Iš mažo namelio prie Svisločiaus nusidriekė ateitis: partija tavo kelias, kelias kovų ir neblėstančių pergalių, kurios neužges per amžius*, 1966

it enables the discovery that voluminous text may vary to a significant extent, but that it is limited as to the topics that it can be used to represent: in particular, the numbering of Party and Komsomol Congresses, and Revolution and WWII anniversaries, since these were especially important for Soviet culture and thus the conventions for their representation were established in this distinctive form.

THE PLASTIC MEANS SELECTED
FOR FIGURES MARKING ANNIVERSARIES,
FIVE-YEAR TIMING OBLIGATIONS, ETC.

The conventions for the numbering of commemorative dates and Congresses were subject to variation, but they were usually presented as large-scale figures in comparison with other elements of posters, and they were usually closer in their graphic solutions and the value given to them to the pictorial component of posters than to textual elements. Anniversaries and Congresses marked the timescale of Soviet culture – the domination of an absolute timescale, where astronomical time is considered insignificant. This is comparable with the monotony of the spatial dimension of Soviet posters, resulting from the homogenous publishing and agitation policy for different nationalities in the USSR.

The substitution of figures by an object appeared in the mid-60s. Roman numerals were often used to rep-

16. Izrail Radunskij, *XXIV съезд Ленинской партии. "Я планов наших люблю грамадьё"* / *The XXIV Congress of the Leninist party. 'I Love the Extent of the Plans'*, 1971, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 60 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Izrail Radunskij, *XXIV Lenininės partijos suvažiavimas. „Aš mūsų planus myliu nepaprastai"*, 1971

17. Igor Kreidik, *XXXV год перамогі савецкага народа ў Вялікай Айчыннай вайне / XXXV Years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War*, 1980, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 60 × 90 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Igor Kreidik, *XXXV metų pergalei Didžiajame Tėvynės kare*, 1980

resent the numbers of Party Congresses, but they were incorporated within construction cranes and beams, and thus forged into a desired configuration. In the poster, *In the Little House on the Svisloch is Held the Future: the Party your Path, the Path of Struggle and Glorious Victories that do not Fade through the Centuries* by Zamah L. 1966 [Fig. 15] – the figure 'XXIII' is displayed in a number of architectural structures and towers over factories and power plants etc., and occupies the entire length of the line of the horizon at the top of the poster. In the poster, *The XXIV Congress of the Leninist party. 'I Love the Extent of the Plans'* by Radunsky, 1971 [Fig. 16], the figure 'XXIV' occupying the entire space of the poster, is made up of high-rise blocks and construction cranes, and thus the audience read it as part of the grand construction. In the poster, *XXXV Years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War* by Kreydik, 1980, [Fig. 17] Roman numerals also occupy almost the whole space of the poster and are represented in the form of rays, ending with a salute.

Arabic numerals signifying anniversaries also vary in their design, but the range of their variation is limited according to the mode of their reification: flags, or beams of light from the cruiser Aurora, etc. In the poster, *50 Years of the USSR* by V. Krukovsky, 1972 [Fig. 18], the figure '50' is composed of the flags of the 15 republics spread out in the form of the number '50'. In the poster, *The Beams of October Illuminate our Road* by V. Krukovsky, 1978 [Fig. 19], as in other posters on similar subjects, the figure '1917' rises from the horizon and covers almost the entire background of the poster.
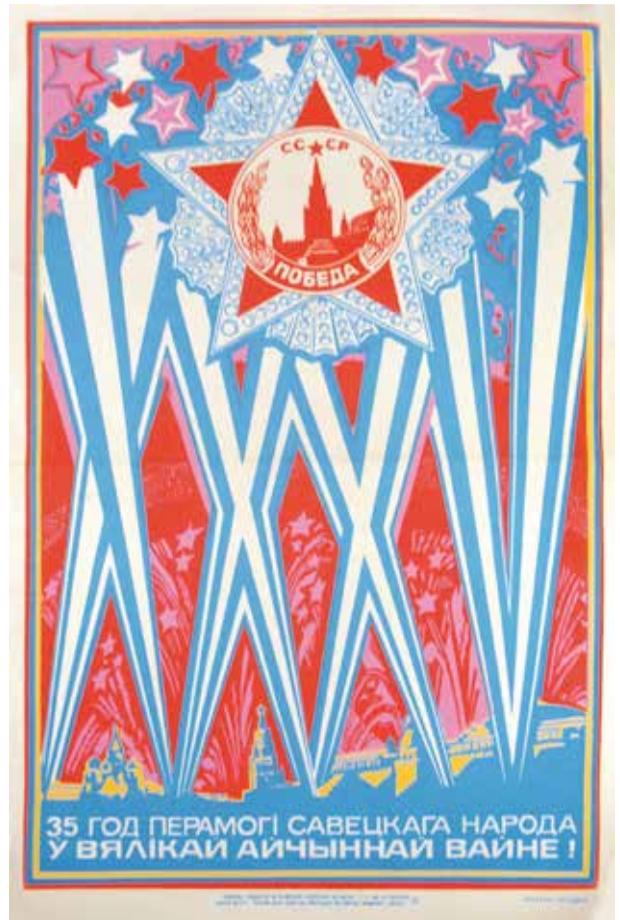
18. Vladimir Krukovskij, *50 год Саюзу ССР/50 Years of the USSR*, 1972, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 60 × 80 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Vladimir Krukovskij, *50 metų TSRS*, 1972

19. Vladimir Krukovskij, *Прамень Кастрычніка нам асвятляе шлях / The Beam of October Illuminate our Road*, 1978, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 79.5 × 59 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Vladimir Krukovskij, *Spalio šviesa mums nušviečia kelią*, 1978

20. Leonid Zamach, *Беларусь! Зямля працоўнай славы, край вясны і сонечных дарог. Поступам упэўненым, дзяржаўным ты ідзеш да новых перамог. 1966-1970 / Belarus! Land of Labour Glory, Country of Spring and Sunny Roads. You are Going with Confident State Steps Toward New Victories*, 1966, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 120 cm, Reproduced from Агітплакат Саюза Мастакоў. Мінск: Беларусь, 1986, p. 19

Leonid Zamach, *Baltarusija! Žemė šlovingo darbo, pavasario ir saulėtų kelių kraštas. Jūs einate pasitikinčios valstybės žingsniais link naujų pergalių*, 1966

to be considered as absolute time[25], the time to which all the social and industrial processes of the country conform.

In comparison with absolute time, the measure of time of five-year plans had a somewhat less pretentious visual representation, with it being embodied in images of factories, construction sites, etc., as it was associated with the processes of modernization. In the posters, *Belarus! Land of Labour Glory, Country of Spring and Sunny Roads. You are Going with Confident State Steps Toward New Victories* by L. Zamach, 1966 [Fig. 20] and *50 Years after the First Five-Year Plan* by Radunskij, 1973 [Fig. 21], the figure '5' resembles a cornucopia of the benefits of modernization in the form of goods that rush outward toward the viewer. The poster, *Generous Work in the Service of You, our Native Land. With Competition, We are in Friendship – We Gave our Word, and Kept it! 3, the Decisive Year* by Y. Hayrulin, 1973 [Fig. 22] is about the third year of a five-year plan,

Congress numbers and anniversary dates are attributed with specific value in Soviet culture, as they tend to occupy the upper segment of a poster and be presented in bright colours with varying shapes. The time associated with anniversaries (Anniversaries of the Socialist Revolution and the Victory in the Great Patriotic War), and the numbers of Congresses have

25 Балина Марина, "Дикурс времени в соцреализме", in: *Соцреалистический канон*. СПб.: Академическийпроект, 2000. С. 585-595. On the absolute, objective and subjective time Wilcox Donald, *The Measure of Times Past*, The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

21. Izrail Radunskij, *50 год першай пяцігодкі / 50 Years after the First Five-Year Plan*, 1979, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinať'), silkscreen, 59 × 79.5 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Izrail Radunskij, *50 metų pirmajam penkmečiui*, 1979

22. Jakun Hairulin, *Праца шчырая на службе ў цябе, наш родны край. Са спаборніцтвам мы ў дружбе –*
*слова даў, стрымай! 3 год рашаючы / Generous Work in the Service of You, our Native Land. With Competition, We are in Friendship – We Gave our Word, and Kept it! 3, the Decisive Yea*r, 1973, issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory ('KhudKombinať'), silkscreen, 60 × 80 cm, NLBA, BDUA

Jakun Hairulin, *Nuošidrus darbas tavo paslaugoms, mūsų gimtasis karšte. Su varžybomis mes draugaujame –*
*duotą žodį ištesėjome! 3, lemiami metai*, 1973

which is designated as the most important. In this poster, a massive figure '3' occupies the whole poster and is filled with industrial images.

The posters dedicated to New Year celebrations are considered a representation of astronomical time. The figures in these posters are small, with some posters not even labelled at all, as in the poster *Happy New Year!* by Naumenko, 1970 [Fig. 23].

CONCLUSIONS

The representation of numbers in the Belarusian posters issued in the 1960-70s reveals that the anniversaries of the October Revolution and Party Congresses mark the absolute time of the Soviet cultural space, while the five-year plans mark objective time. All social, industrial and everyday processes were scheduled in accordance with absolute and objective time, and this is the reason why the conventions of their representations allowed artists to use a wide range of shapes, forms, and so on, in their depiction. When interviewed, V. Krukovskij mentioned that posters of anniversaries provided a lot of space for artistic creativity[26].

26 See footnote 14
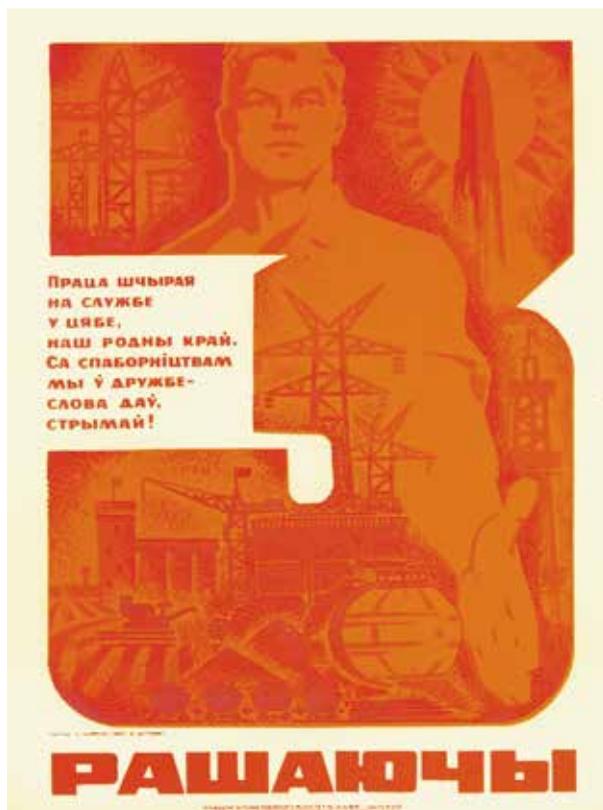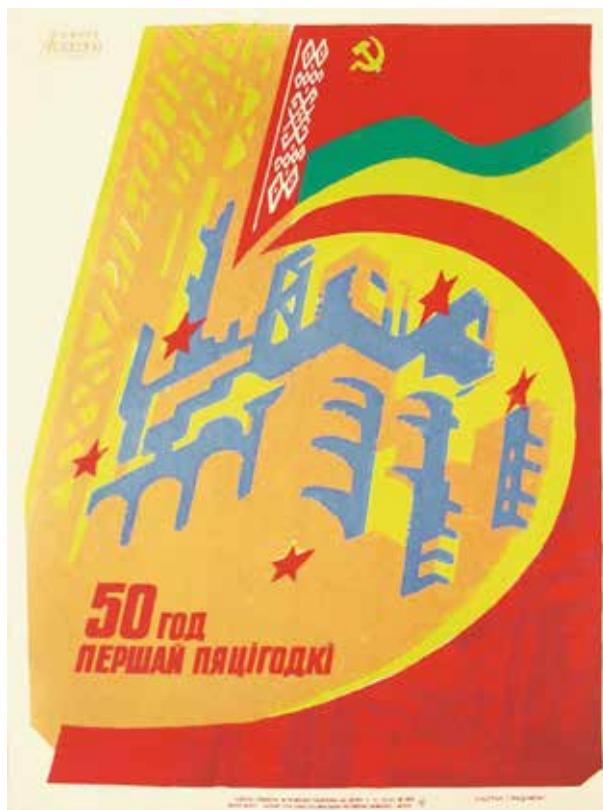
23. V. Naumenko, *З Новым годам! / Happy New Year!* 1970,
issued by Agitplakat, printed in the Artistic factory
('KhudKombinat'), silkscreen, 80 × 60 cm, NLBA, BDUA

V. Naumenko, *Su naujaisiais metais!*, 1970

Being diverse in their expressive means and compositional solutions, forms of representation of absolute time are key components of the dominant paradigm of Soviet culture designed to synchronize various industrial, public and everyday practices in accordance with the general rhythm given by the Congresses and the five-year plans. Thus, the great artistic diversity used to represent absolute time can in fact be considered a form of representation of social conformity.

Much more humble in terms of its expressiveness is text that simulates machine typesetting. This text, created through the laborious Cyrillization of the Latin alphabet to achieve subtle differences, reveals a suppressed dimension of Soviet culture. The imperfections of letters and their instability in terms of uniformity, tracking and kerning could be considered a drawback. However, at the same time this can also be seen as a sign of unaccepted techniques for overcoming the homogeneity of Soviet culture through individualized typefaces. Painstaking work on lettering texts resists being naturally embedded into a coherent picture. This type of text creation constitutes the objectification of an otherwise invisible process.

This is a tactical activity of groups or individuals already caught in a network of homogeneity and synchronization, but who find ways not to comply with it in full. This is not a public protest – but a distancing from the dominant order and an attempt to establish one's own rules which would correspond to their own particular rationality: a rationality in which the poster is understood not only as a reproduction of ideological stereotypes and clichés, but as a possibility of individual statements using opportunities and resources that eluded Soviet institutions of control.

It is symptomatic that a rupture of Soviet homogeneity appeared in connection with visual signs intending to represent modernization. Individualization as one of the key elements of modernized European culture, as understood by Michael Foucault[27], was suppressed in Soviet culture, but returned under the guise of visual signs of machine standardized forms.

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VIZUALINIAI INDIVIDUALIZAVIMOSI PRAKTIKŲ ŽENKLAI XX a. 7-8 DEŠIMTMEČIO BSSR PLAKATUOSE

Ala Pigalskaja

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sovietinė modernizacija, politinis plakatas, sovietinė agitacija, šriftai, raidės, rinkinys.

SANTRAUKA

Alos Pigalskajos straipsnyje sovietiniai plakatai nagrinėjami kaip meninę veiklą reguliuojančių socialinių ir ideologinių struktūrų bei kūrybinių menininko ketinimų susidūrimo arba kovos erdvė. Paaiškėjo, kad dailininkai buvo labiau linkę išrasti savo technologijas naujiems šriftams sukurti, negu naudotis jau esama ribota pasiūla.

XX a. 7-8 deš. plakatui būdingos dvi visiškai skirtingos teksto panaudojimo strategijos: spausdintų raidžių imitavimas ranka rašytuose tekstuose ir teksto integravimas į medžiagas, objektus ir kitur.

Teksto, kuris iš esmės atspindėdavo atitikimą dominuojančiai tvarka, didelė meninė įvairovė faktiškai gali būti laikoma socialinio prisitaikymo forma. Kuklios išraiškos, nestandartizuotų, nesutvarkytais tarpais mašininį rinkinį imituojančių raidžių tekstas gali būti interpretuojamas kaip nepripažinta taktika, kuria siekiama individualizuotais šriftais pralaužti sovietinės kultūros vientisumą. Tai taktiniai veiksmai menininkų, jau pakliuvusių į standartizacijos ir sinchronizacijos tinklą, bet atrandančių būdų su tuo galutinai nesusitaikyti. Tai nebuvo viešas protestas, bet šioks toks atsiribojimas nuo dominuojančios tvarkos. Plakatas traktuojamas ne tik kaip ideologinių stereotipų ir klišių reprodukavimas, bet ir kaip individualaus pranešimo galimybė, panaudojant aplinkybes ir išteklius, kurių neįžvelgė sovietinės kontrolės institucijos.