

Queen's University Library

Propaganda - the Medium is Never the Message!

Library Exhibit, 17 March - 4 May, 2003

What is Propaganda?

It is a public action or display of doctrines, ideas, arguments, facts or allegations spread by deliberate effort through any medium of communication in order to influence others, to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause. In its Latin derivation, the word means "to propagate" or "to sow".

The focus of this colourful exhibit in the Jordan Library Special Collections is on our collection of posters and broadsides, supplemented by related books, music and other research resources.

The display includes sections on the following regimes:

- Revolutionary France
- Nazi Germany
- Chinese Cultural Revolution
- Bolshevik Revolution in Russia

There are also sections on World War propaganda and different types of media.



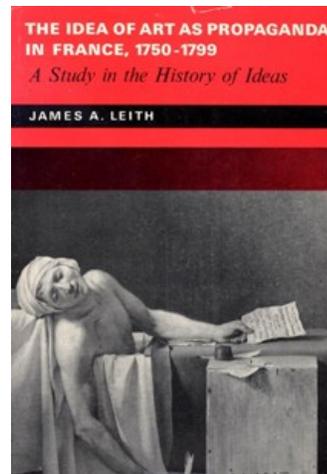
French Revolutionary broadside proclaims the abolishment of hereditary titles of nobility

Public Lecture by Dr. James A. Leith

Wednesday, March 26, 4:00 p.m.
W.D. Jordan Library, 2nd floor, Douglas Library

Professor Emeritus, Queen's University, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Dr. Leith will discuss the role of propaganda in revolutionary times, indicating how, in this instance, Marshall McLuhan's famous rubric of mass communication, "The medium is the message", can be negated.

Dr. James A. Leith is a leading historian of revolutionary France, whose publications are being featured. Educated at University of Toronto and Duke University, Dr. Leith taught at the University of Saskatchewan before coming to Queen's. Dr. Leith is author or co-editor of about a dozen books and innumerable articles. Two of his best known works are *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799: a study in the history of ideas* and *Space and Revolution: projects for monuments, squares and public buildings in France 1789-1799*.



The Biblia Pauperum

"In 1622, the Vatican established the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, meaning the sacred congregation for propagating the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. Because the propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church had as its intent spreading the faith to the New World, as well as opposing Protestantism, the word propaganda lost its neutrality and subsequent usage

has rendered the term pejorative."

Propaganda has been used throughout human history from the time of Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire to the Reformation. When the printing press was invented in the mid-15th century, it became a powerful tool for the distribution of propaganda. As new mass media were developed, they too were adopted as the propaganda machine became increasingly sophisticated. Propaganda continued to play a major role in shaping the outcome of wars and revolutions from the 18th century to the present day.



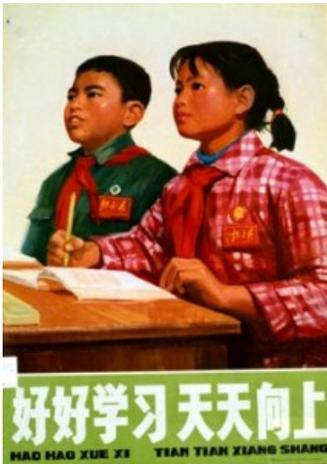
Page from the facsimile edition of Biblia Pauperum in the Esztergom Library, Hungary (published by Dausien, Hanau, 1967)

Chinese Cultural Revolution

To create a new breed of citizen, a programme of mass education and seduction to the ideals of the state was required. In these instances, the aim was to indoctrinate the individual from childhood onward through a variety of means.



The paper cut poster is a beautifully executed example of art in the service of politics. This one illustrates one of the major themes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: "Destroy the Four Olds [old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits]. Establish the Four News".



This poster depicts the indoctrination of children into Chairman Mao's Little Red Guards. The slogan reads: "Learn Well and Progress Daily".

Bolshevik Revolution in Russia



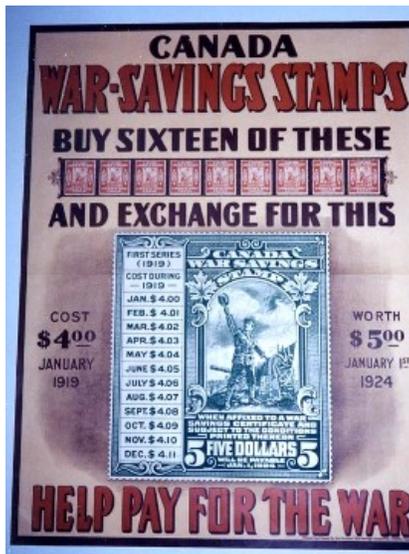
The slogan on this 1927 Russian poster encourages the workers of the world to unite. "Everyone to the polls to elect the Soviets!" This is one of the set of 40 "Posters of the Russian Revolution, 1917-1929", issued in 1967 by Grove Press, New York.

World War

All countries involved in the two world wars relied heavily on nationalist propaganda to build and maintain support for "the cause". Typical themes are:

- recruitment and conscription
- war loans
- security issues and secrets

These images are selections from our extensive collection of Canadian war loan and victory bond posters.



Media

All media have been instruments of political propaganda at one time or another.

Print Text Media

- Key Revolutionary publications:
 - Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*, the manual for the Communist way of life
 - Mein Kemp*, Adolf Hitler's manifesto on national socialism
- Broad­sides (Proclamations and Manifestos)
- Political Pamphlets
 - The medium that preceded newspapers as a forum for discussing ideas and garnering public support
- Newspapers, Periodicals, Cartoons

- Children's Stories and Games
Playing cards and games from the French Revolution are included in the exhibit



A panel from the children's "Game of the Goose", played during the French Revolution. There are many versions of this instructional game in various cultures.

Visual Print / Image Media

- Fine Arts: painting, sculpture, monuments and architecture
- Posters
Because of their mass distribution, posters are a powerful means of glorifying war and leading public opinion in all cultures. They create and help perpetuate easily identifiable symbols and icons.
- Photographs
- Postage stamps (miniature posters)
- Flags
- Medals and coins are produced to honour leaders and heroes. There are several medallions from the French Revolution on display.

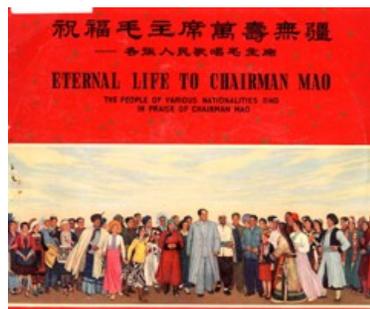


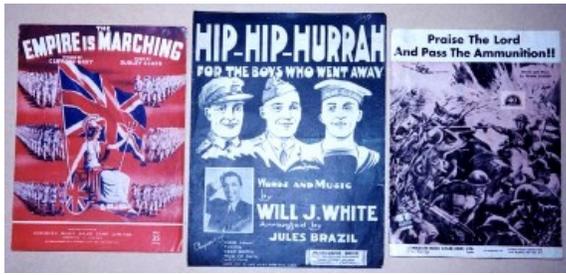
The magnificent evocative painting by Canadian artist John Byam Lister Shaw, entitled "The Flag", illustrates the theme of patriotism.

Performing Arts

"Of all the fine arts music is the one which has the greatest impact on the emotions, the one which legislators should encourage most. A piece of moral music composed by a master never fails to act on our feelings and has far greater influence than a good essay in moral philosophy which may convince the mind but cannot change attitudes."
...Napoleon

- Music - Military Marches, Songs, National Anthems
- Theatre and Operas
- Film
- Radio, Television, Internet and other Electronic Media





The exhibit was curated by Vivien Taylor in collaboration with Dr. James A. Leith.

Last Updated: 14 March 2012