

## SOVIET PROPAGANDA POSTERS

1941-1945

### Biography

Soon after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941, the Okna TASS studio spontaneously formed in Moscow. Comprised of renowned artists, poets and literary figures, the new consortium would oversee production of a powerful, extreme form of visual expression to urge Soviet citizens to fight on and ultimately do the nearly impossible - change the course of the war, the course of history.

Against a backdrop of horrific human loss (estimated at 20 million killed, 10 million missing), these propaganda posters (referred to as "TASS windows") conveyed a "point of no return." During the 1,418 days of the war, the group produced 1,240 posters. Preferring stenciling to lithography, and working in teams, the artists established an assembly-line method of production, painting posters in sections on individual sheets of paper to enable easy handling. Horror, sadness, fear, moral shock and visual unease - these sensations were counter-balanced against the vibrant palette, evocative caricatures and rich, painterly textures of the works. Nowhere else in the lexicon of wartime imagery had suffering and horror been portrayed in such an absurdist way. Nowhere else was the face of the enemy, Hitler's portrait in particular, composed using twenty-five garishly bright colors.

While political propaganda, as a whole, was tightly controlled by the state, TASS windows occupied a privileged position and were subject to minimal censorship. As Pravda, the official communist paper, wrote at the time, Okna TASS "is a part of the Red Army's military equipment alongside tanks and airplanes. We should take care of it and love it no less than our rifles or guns." By taking on their aesthetic responsibility in such a radical way, the TASS windows artists introduced a dimension of audacity and ingenuity in their work that has yet to be matched in the annals of wartime propaganda.