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Agitprop

(_sjanger) Et ord satt sammen av “agitasjon (som betyr “opphissing”) + “propaganda” (“idéspredning”). Sjangeren var viktig i Sovjetunionen, der staten ville bruke teaterkunsten i propagandaens tjeneste. Myndighetene sørget for at det ble vist agitprop-skuespill over store deler av landet, også på landsbygda der befolkningen hovedsakelig var analfabeter. Skuespillene tok opp spørsmål som forsvar av nasjonen mot dens fiender, renslighet og helse, og annet som fremmet “proletariatets sak”. På scenen ble det brukt talekor som representerte folke-massene. Stykkene skulle være aktuelle, så de ble skrevet raskt. Noen skuespill foregikk på vogner som ble kjørt rundt fra sted til sted, andre ble spilt ved utgangene fra fabrikker og på politiske møter. Det var minimalt med kostymer og kulisser.

“By mingling theatre and reality, politics and psychology, propaganda and agitation, a new form of performance was created which afterwards became known as Agitprop theatre. Although Agitprop theatre finds its socio-ideological form in the course of the Russian Revolution, it is rooted in the labor movements in other European countries in general, and in Germany in particular. Agitprop theatre, in its strict sense, emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century in Germany. The Soviet and German Agitprop theatres had reciprocal influence on each other and together came to be a great source of influence on Agitprop theatre in other countries.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. iii-iv)

“Jean Baptiste Von Schweitzer (1833-1875), who became president of the Universal German Workingmen’s Association in 1867, wrote two didactic plays. The purpose of his *Rascal*, written in 1867-68, was to familiarize the workers with the main points of Marx’s *Capital*, and it was performed frequently by the workers’ dramatic societies all over Germany. Schweitzer’s other play, *The Goose*, written in 1869, dealt with women’s rights. In the play, a woman tries to understand why she is paid less than a man for doing the same work. A trained Marxist intervenes and puts her employer in his place when he attempts to talk the woman out of the subject. Whatever the form, the content of this play demonstrates its agitational qualities. The eighteen-sixties, in fact, was the time for the emergence of all kinds of revolutionary, socialist, and agitational plays with different new forms. Cecil W. Davies writes: “During the sixties there were all kinds of one-act agitation pieces,

election farces, festival items, *tableaux vivants*, and full-length plays, especially strike-plays. Whatever the form, and however amateur the players, the workers' theatre dealt with the great social and national questions whose solution was necessary to the workers' well-being." There are records of two agitational pieces performed in this period. August Otto-Walster wrote *The Accident of The Agitator* in order to propagandize the resolutions of the First International at Basle on the issue of landed property. The second one is called *Dr. Max Hirschkuh or The Employment of Hypocrites*, by Lassallean organizer August Kapell (1841-1896). The play is recorded by the German theatre historian Friedrich Knilli in his *Frühes deutsches Arbeitertheater*." (Tehranchian 1982 s. 20-21)

"Agitational plays and sketches were prepared and performed by workers themselves. [Den tyske sosialdemokratiske politikeren] August Bebel recalled in 1913 "how in the 1860s there were hundreds of workingmen's educational clubs, many of which produced plays with their own home-made scenery and costumes, and flourished for more than a decade." (Tehranchian 1982 s. 21-22)

"Agitprop, sammensat af begyndelsen af ordene *agitation* og *propaganda*. I Sovjetunionen opstod i 1920'erne en række omrejsende trupper, der med partiets støtte brugte teatermediet til at agitere for den kommunistiske sag over for de store analfabetiske befolkningsgrupper. I 1923 dannedes ved det statslige institut for journalistik i Moskva en trup, der kaldte sig Blåbluserne, fordi de optrådte i blå arbejdsdragter. Blåbluserne, der snart fik forgreninger over hele landet, så det som deres opgave at informere masserne om dagsaktuelle spørgsmål og fungere som 'levende aviser'. For at opnå kontakt tog de alle midler i brug: akrobatik, musik, dans, sketch, talekor, karikatur, satire og ønskede at virke som 'kollektive hypnotisører'. A-bevægelsen bredte sig til det kapitalistiske Europa og blev et vigtigt led i den kommunistiske agitation. En dansk aflægger var gruppen RT – Revolutionært Teater. Særlig kraftfuld blev bevægelsen i Tyskland, hvor den ofte allierede sig med venstreintellektuelle forfattere, komponister og teaterfolk. Den forenkede plakatagtige form gjorde det dog let for politiske modstandere at overtage den, og A blev også i et vist omfang benyttet i den nazistiske propaganda." (<https://teaterleksikon.lex.dk/agitprop>; lesedato 16.02.23)

"Agitprop theatre is a form of theatre [...] designed to raise the audience's consciousness of a political or social situation. It emerged after the Russian revolution in 1917 and developed mainly in the Soviet Union and in Germany between 1919 and 1932-1933 (when socialist realism was introduced by Zdanov and Hitler took power). It had little success in France; its sole publication *Scène ouvrière* had only a fleeting existence. [...] In its connections to current political events, agitprop theatre appears above all as an ideological activity rather than a new artistic form. It proclaims its desire for immediate action by defining itself as "agitational play rather than theatre" or as "information plus stage effects". Its ephemeral and periodical nature makes it difficult for the researcher to follow: text is only one means among many of stirring political awareness, and it is relayed by

just gestural and stage effects that are intended to be as clear and direct as possible – hence its attraction to the circus, pantomime, buffoonery and cabaret. [...] A *chorus* of storytellers or singers sums up and “inculcates” the political lessons or slogans. Art may even come into play, when agitprop is inspired by and inspires avant-garde movements (Futurism, Constructivism) and mobilises artists such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht or Erwin Piscator.” (Meenakshi Pawha i https://www.lkouniv.ac.in/site/writereaddata/site_Content/202004161031121723pawha_AGITPROP_THEATRE.pdf; lesedato 12.08.22)

Den russiske futuristiske dikteren Vladimir Majakovskijs “role as official *agitprop* artist of the Department for Agitation and Propaganda included futurist-style mock trials and performances against the enemies of the Soviet regime” (Conversi 2009).

Agitprop er underlagt et prinsipp om aktualitet og umiddelbarhet; framføringene er ofte en reaksjon på en brennaktuell sak (Denis 2000 s. 81). Stykkene ble skrevet og innøvd i løpet av et par dager. De rettet seg til arbeidere eller til folket generelt, og ble framført der folk befant seg (s. 81). En av de dramatiske nyskapingene ved agitprop var talekor som skulle forestille folket som masse (s. 81).

“In Agitprop theatre form is subservient. The reason for this is not difficult to explain. Since Agitprop theatre is usually done for uneducated people, its form must not impede their understanding of the central idea – the political message of the play. Depending on the time and place, different theatrical forms were used in Agitprop theatre. The French scholar Christine Hamon defines the form often used. “The noble playwriting of linear structure is replaced with a spectacle of broken form. This is the most striking thing about an Agitprop spectacle: the succession of short, varied, efficacious scenes, constantly renewing the interest and the political combativity of the spectator by its diversity.” The political message, however, was more important than the form.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 149)

“Often it was the language of the literary cabaret which made itself felt in the Russian Agitprop theatre. “The parodical citations, the sliding of the meaning, the burlesque presentations, and abundance of farcical discourses” were the characteristics borrowed from the literary cabaret.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 156)

“[A]gitprop, abbreviated from Russian *agitatsiya propaganda* (*agitation propaganda*), political strategy in which the techniques of agitation and propaganda are used to influence and mobilize public opinion. Although the strategy is common, both the label and an obsession with it were specific to the Marxism practiced by communists in the Soviet Union. The twin strategies of agitation and propaganda were originally elaborated by the Marxist theorist Georgy Plekhanov, who defined propaganda as the promulgation of a number of ideas to an individual or small group and agitation as the promulgation of a single idea to a large mass of people. Expanding on these notions in his pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), Vladimir Lenin stated that the propagandist, whose primary medium is print,

explains the causes of social inequities such as unemployment or hunger, while the agitator, whose primary medium is speech, seizes on the emotional aspects of these issues to arouse his audience to indignation or action. Agitation is thus the use of political slogans and half-truths to exploit the grievances of the public and thereby to mold public opinion and mobilize public support. Propaganda, by contrast, is the reasoned use of historical and scientific arguments to indoctrinate the educated and so-called “enlightened” members of society, such as party members.” (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/9224/agitprop>; lesedato 02.10.12)

“Agitprop is political propaganda, especially in the form of art or literature, which is used to advance a political stance. The term originated in Soviet Russia and is an abbreviation of *agitatsiya propaganda* (agitation propaganda.) Propaganda was a key aspect of Soviet governing strategy. In a 1902 pamphlet, *What Is to be Done*, Vladimir Lenin set out his beliefs about the roles of propaganda and agitation. In Lenin’s view, each had an important role to play. The propagandist worked mainly in print and produced logical analysis of social problems like poverty. The agitator, for his part, operated on an emotional level, rousing people to take an interest in social ills. By the 1920s, the Agitation and Propaganda section was a well-established part of the Soviet government. The section operated at the most local level, and agitators were the Party’s chief means of communication with most people. Posters, sculptures, and paintings – usually done in a stylized, hyper-realist style – also were a major part of Russian agitprop.” (Taegan D. Goddard m.fl. i <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/agitprop/>; lesedato 17.01.23)

“The term *agitprop* originated as a shortened form of the Agitation and Propaganda Section of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. This department of the Central Committee was established in the early 1920s and was responsible for determining the content of all official information, overseeing political education in schools, watching over all forms of mass communication, and mobilizing public support for party programs. Every unit of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, from the republic to the local-party level, had an agitprop section; at the local level, agitators (party-trained spokesmen) were the chief points of contact between the party and the public. The word *agitprop* is used in English to describe such departments and, by extension, any work, especially in the theatre, that aims to educate and indoctrinate the public. It typically has a negative connotation, reflecting Western distaste for the overt use of drama and other art forms to achieve political goals.” (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/9224/agitprop>; lesedato 02.10.12)

“Agit prop or agitational propaganda, as the very term implies, seeks to deliberately change people’s beliefs through well-planned strategies of persuasion, transformations of spectators into (spect)actors, and their subsequent mobilization into agitating communities. [...] The emphasis on the deliberateness of the communication involved distinguishes this form of theatre from other forms of political theatre and from mere conversation. Many accusations have been levelled

at agit prop theatre. Of these, the three primary ones are, first, that such theatre lacks artistic viability; second, that it is short-lived and works only in a certain historical context; and third, that it is only propaganda, not theatre. [...] agit prop theatre can evolve and undergo considerable artistic development to survive as good theatre and not just as good propaganda. Although agit prop does generally emerge in moments of crisis and in periods of revolutionary change, this does not imply that its value is erased once the moment passes. A good agitprop theatre company cannot, in fact, sustain itself on mere propaganda.” (Pal 2010)

Russeren Vladimir Belotserkovskij skrev stykker for agit-prop-teater, f.eks. *Ekkkoet* (1924) (Demougin 1985 s. 205).

“Put simply, agit prop is the more or less systematic effort to deliberately manipulate people’s beliefs, attitudes and especially actions by means of symbols such as words, gestures, banners, movements, music, insignia, hairstyles and so on. Theatre is one of the mediums of agit prop, with three clear aspects. In essence, agit prop theatre is: (a) an interventionist theatre, (b) a historical phenomenon (i.e., it emerges in certain historical contexts), and (c) generally politically left-oriented since its origins, ideology and techniques seek primarily to raise the consciousness of marginalized sections of society and induce in them the urge for self-empowerment.” (Pal 2010)

“Since agitprop performances had ephemeral goals that changed according to state and local needs, the works were rarely performed long after they were conceived. One style of Soviet agitprop theater that attracted considerable attention abroad was the living newspaper (*zhivaia gazeta*). A method of acting out the news for largely illiterate audiences, this performance style gained great popularity during the Russian revolution and civil war. Living newspapers were composed of a series of short vignettes that loosely followed the structure of a newspaper. [...] Since this performance style did not need sophisticated stages, lighting, or props, living newspaper troupes could perform almost anywhere. [...] performing in clubs, cafeterias, and on factory floors.” (Lynn Mally i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3185580.pdf>; lesedato 17.01.23)

“Agitprop theatre appears suddenly at the time of acute political upheaval, when the humanist and “bourgeois” heritage seems irrelevant and dated. It disappears just as rapidly once the situation has stabilised (in Fascism and Stalinism, but also in a liberalism capable of withstanding any shock), or once authorities no longer tolerate any questioning or statement. When its message begins to lose its relevance, agitprop tends to become too repetitive – it makes the audience laugh or squirm rather than helping them “progress” ideologically. To avoid this pitfall new forms of agitprop theatre (like Teatro Campesino, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Bread and Puppet) try not to be too schematic and take pains with the artistic presentation of their radical political message. They realise perhaps that even the most inspired political speech can only convince if the actors keep in mind the

aesthetic and formal dimension of the text and its stage performance.” (Meenakshi Pawha i https://www.lkouniv.ac.in/site/writereaddata/siteContent/202004161031121723pawha_AGITPROP_THEATRE.pdf; lesedato 12.08.22)

Agitprop-teatergruppene publikum var først og fremst “the uneducated masses. Therefore, in order to be understood by the majority, the content needed to be highly visual. In order to keep material varied enough to remain interesting, actors were required to constantly engage and involve the audience with different physical activities or improvised scenes. [...] agitprop brigades – indeed, fittingly charged language – were sent to factories and to the front between October 1917 and October 1922 during the Russian Civil War. [...] actors chose a few themes or messages that would be emphasized greatly through caricatures, symbolism, repetition, etc.” (Kevin Brown i <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi>; lesedato 17.01.23)

“The intensive activity of the communist Agitprop troupes made it possible for them to penetrate extensively among workers and create a highly motivated enthusiasm in them to take part in Agitprop performances. A survey done by The Red Megaphone in June and September of 1930 shows that of the 60 troupes under study, 39 were composed only from workers, and in the remaining troupes workers were the majority of the members.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. s. 108-109)

“Despite its often exaggerated tug at the emotions, melodrama could be expediently fashioned by early Soviet artists as agitprop – a variation on the short propagandistic films, *agitki*, that appeared immediately after the 1917 Revolution – to spread lofty socialist ideals and revolutionary propaganda. [...] The Soviet government’s Agitprop Department increasingly aspired to make cinema “intelligible to the millions” and also entertaining” (Tim Harte i <http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/>; lesedato 03.11.17). Agitki var “newsreels reedited for the purpose of agitation and propaganda (agitprop). The agitki were transported on specially equipped agit-trains and agit-steamers to the provinces, where they were exhibited to generate support for the Revolution. (The state-controlled Cuban cinema used the same tactic after the revolution of 1959.) In fact, during the abysmal years of the Russian Civil War (1918-20), nearly all Soviet films were agitki of some sort.” (<https://www.britannica.com/art/history-of-the-motion-picture/The-silent-years-1910-27#ref508013>; lesedato 01.12.17)

I 1923 dannet Boris Yuzhanin og andre ved Moskvas journalistiskole en teatergruppe (eller -brigade) kalt Blå bluse (“Siniaia bluza”). Det ble snart dannet andre Blå bluse-grupper i Sovjetunionen, og antall medarbeidere skal ha nådd omtrent 100.000 personer fordelt på fem tusen grupper. Navnet blå bluse siktet til typisk arbeiderpåkledning. Gruppene brukte enkle virkemidler som en flosshatt for å markere en kapitalist, et gevær som viste at en person var soldat osv., men skuespillerne hadde alltid sine blå klær på for å markere at de “tilhørte” arbeiderklassen og at framføringen inngikk i arbeiderklassens kamp. Framføringene

bestod av blandinger av sketsjer, sanger, direkte propaganda, dans, akrobatikk m.m. De sentrale budskapene ble gjentatt flere ganger og framhevet gjennom overdrivelser.

“With the help of the Comintern, Blue Blouse went on tour to Germany in 1927. During its four-month engagement, the group was met by enthusiastic crowds. Performances were hosted by local Communist Party cells and also by left-wing theater directors, including Piscator in Berlin. Following the Soviet example, German amateur theater groups organized mobile troupes with names like the Red Rockets and the Red Megaphone. They devised short sketches assessing the current state of German politics, assisting communist candidates in election campaigns, and spreading positive information about life in the Soviet Union. Through a variety of channels, Soviet agitprop methods also influenced leftist amateur groups in other capitalist countries. Editors of the American communist journal, *New Masses*, established ties with the Moscow Blue Blouse organization in 1930. The Workers Laboratory Theater of New York also entered into an extensive correspondence with Blue Blouse, which sent explanations of their method. Soon the United States had its own living newspaper groups, including the Chicago Blue Blouses, the Scandinavian Blue Blouses, and the Los Angeles Red Rockets. Workers’ theater groups in Great Britain also embraced this agitational style. In the words of the British communist leader, Tom Thomas, “Experience has shown that this flexible, vigorous, inexpensive form is the one best adapted to Workers’ Theaters in capitalist countries, if they wish to do their part in the class struggle.” There was even a living newspaper group called the Red Megaphone in Japan.” (Lynn Mally i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3185580.pdf>; lesedato 17.01.23)

“[T]he Blue Blouse found itself divided. A part of the group sided with the official critics who said that the time of simple agitation had ended and the group must involve itself only with grand political pieces – the kind of drama being produced after the Revolution by the professional theatrical groups. The other part of the group, however, believed that the Blue Blouse had to oppose the institutionalized forms of the professional theatre. The followers of this view said that the form which the Blue Blouse had adopted so far was an original experience and therefore they should remain attached to it. This faction of the Blue Blouse had the support of Futurists like O. Brik and S. Tretyakov and others, who, without formally taking part in the Blue Blouse performances, sympathized with the group and provided it with their texts.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 51)

Et agitprop-skuespill med tittelen *Lenin Calls* ble “translated from the German by B. Stern, a member of the Worker’s Laboratory Theatre of New York, and was published in the *Worker’s Theatre* of December 1931. Any number of performers can take part in performing this sketch.

Lenin Calls

- Listen to the call!
 - You who dwell in the depths, listen!
 All - You
 - In workshops
 - In mines
 - Above and below the earth
 - Are we nothing?
 All - Nothing?
 - We have built the world
 - We have clothed the world
 - We have housed the world
 - Are we nothing?
 All - No
 - We are all
 - The might of the masses lies in unity
 - You who work
 - Above and below the earth
 All - Unite
 - You who work
 - Above and below the earth
 All - Fight
 - Unite and fight
 - On the whole working front
 - Hear!
 - See!
 - Think!
 All - Awake!
 - Aircraft squadrons over the ocean!
 - Battleships swarm the seven seas!
 - Mobilize more men for the army
 - Build more ships, cannons, guns
 - Is the cry in each country
 All - Weapons for slaughtering workers
 - In times of peace prepare for war
 All - Prepare for war
 - Yet there are peace conferences
 - What means peace?
 - Is China greeted with peace?
 - Wall street sent Gun-Boats to Nicaragua and Java
 All - Was that peace?
 - Bulgaria hangs militant workers to the gallows
 All - Is that peace?
 - Workers are tortured by the Italian Fascists
 All - Is that peace?
 - No!

- Capitalist peace is WAR!
- War
- On the unemployed
- On the striking workers
- All - War on the workers!
- Hear!
- See!
- Think!
- Awake!
- The bugle will blow
- And drums will beat
- Blows and shots
- Factory whistles
- With cries
- Posters, banners, leaflets.
- On both sides of the ocean
- All - The world will re-echo with Lenin's step
- Germany hears his step
- All - Lenin
- Up and down the Yangtze he goes
- All - Lenin
- Over rivers and seas
- Through mighty winds and primeval forests
- Far over the cloud-topped Himalayas
- All - Lenin
- Mighty ... irresistible
- All - Lenin! Lenin! Lenin!" (siteret fra Tehranchian 1982 s. 142-144)

De sovjetrussiske regissørene Dziga Vertov og Elizaveta Svilovas *Mannen med et bevegelig kamera* (1929) har blitt oppfattet som en blanding av agitprop-film og avantgardefilm (Parkinson 2012 s. 165). Filmen *Jeg er Cuba* (1964) av den sovjetrussiske regissøren Mikhail Kalatozov "returned to the melodramatic agitprop and revolutionary monumentality of the early Soviet silent period" (Tim Harte i <http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/>; lesedato 03.11.17).

"The numbers of Agitprop troupes belonging to the Young Communist League, particularly, increased after the visit of the Soviet Blue Blouse to Berlin in 1927. According to Jonny Ebstein, there were scarcely 50 troupes in 1928, but in 1929 the number reached 120, and in 1930 there were more than 200 troupes. [...] One of the purposes of the communist Agitprop troupes was to attract and recruit new members. On March 21, 1928 The Red Megaphone performed *Hello, Colleague, Young Worker*, which was written collectively by young communists; its purpose was to attract new members. According to a report by the police of Essen, an Agitprop troupe of young communists toured the Ruhr district in July and August of 1929. This troupe did more than fifty performances aimed at recruiting new

members. More than 20,000 spectators watched their works in seven weeks; they were able to sell more than 40,000 brochures containing agitational materials. Another purpose of Agitprop troupes was to encourage young people to produce auto-active theatre. *Solidarity*, for example, was the name of the agitational sketches written by some young communists in order to show other groups how to prepare plays and performances.” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 105-106)

“The communist troupes, in order to attract people, went everywhere. Bernard Lupi gives us examples of the troupes which were at work in different places: The Red Forge in the Leuna factory, The Red Wedding in Wedding – the working-class section of Berlin – the Gray Caps and the Red Scythe in the East region, among agricultural workers. There were also Agitprop troupes belonging to proletarian organizations: The troupes which had liaison with RFMB (The Red Union of Women and Young Females), troupes of IAH (International Worker Relief), troupes of RFB (Association of the Fighters of the Red Front), troupes of the *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag, the daily communist paper).” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 106-107)

I Europa fikk teaterformen best fotfeste i Tyskland, der Bertolt Brecht ble påvirket av den. Brechts *Moren* (1931) “var en mellomting mellom teaterstykke og lærestykke, framført i samarbeid mellom profesjonelle skuespillere og radikale amatørteatergrupper (såkalte agitprop-grupper).” (Lars Mjøset i *Samtiden* nr. 4 i 1984 s. 24) Tyskeren Erwin Piscators teater viste agitprop, det samme gjorde den franske teatergruppa Oktober i perioden 1932-36, med bl.a. Jacques Prévert, Roger Blin, Yves Allégret og Jean-Louis Barrault (Denis 2000 s. 81).

“The main stimulus for the development of Agitprop theatre after 1925 in Germany was the German Communist Party. The Party, because of the country’s relative economic stability, was losing ground among the people. The membership of the Party had decreased from 300,000 in September of 1923 to 95,000 in 1924. The Communist presses were hardly read, and political gatherings, meetings and demonstrations were less and less frequent. In the Tenth Congress of the Party in Essen, it was said: “Bourgeois ideology impregnates all the sectors of the society. Such is the importance of the brain washing machine of the bourgeoisie. How to act, given that it is unthinkable to oppose such an important numerical force? It is by quality of agitation and propaganda that one can hope to balance off the confrontation.” Thus, the German Communist Party used agitation and propaganda as the main tool for approaching people from every angle of their life – political, economic, social, and cultural. In 1927 some communist militants, including Maxim Vallentin, founded a collective group of agitation and propaganda which took the name of *Das Rote Sprachrohr* (The Red Megaphone).” (Tehranchian 1982 s. 102-103)

“One theoretician of Agitprop theatre in the Young Communist League was Edwin Hoernle, who from 1922 to 1932, edited the Young Communist League’s two important magazines: *Das Proletarische Kind* (The Proletarian Infant) and *Der*

Junge Genosse (The Young Comrade). [...] Hoernle had written the first Agitprop play for young communists in 1921. The play was called *Worker, Peasant and Spartacus* and was published in *Mit Hammer und Sichel*. The second number of *Mit Hammer und Sichel* contained an Agitprop puppet show sketch by Otto Muller entitled *The Chariot*. *Punch Spies* by Kasper Hauser and *Punch Strikes* by Herman Homann are other plays written for the *Proletarian Puppet Theatre* and *The Red Punch*. School, police, church, and the relation between the capitalist and worker, worker and peasant, soldier and proletariat were the subjects of this simple theatre. However, the extent of the production of these plays and their influence is not clear.” (Tehranian 1982 s. 104-105)

I mellomkrigstidens USA brukte den politiske venstresiden teater “for radical purposes. In its simplest form, such “workers’ theatre” was practiced in the form of short “agit-prop” skits derived from Russian revolutionary theatre and performed, often by amateurs, at street corners, factory gates, or political meetings” (Ro 1997 s. 204).

Den russiske teaterregissøren Vsevolod Meyerhold ville endre det russiske teateret til et kunstnerisk kreativt propagandamiddel for det kommunistiske samfunnet. Men Meyerhold ønsket også en avantgardistisk eksperimentering som ble umulig etter at Stalin i 1936 strammet inn retningslinjene for kulturlivet.

“Considered both as a mode of artistic production and a set of formal characteristics, agitprop had an immense impact on modernist cultural practice, particularly in graphic design, visual art, and theater. In the theater, agitprop developed in Russia and Germany as a mobile form of exhortative revolutionary theater designed for quick outdoor performance. It was adaptive to location, audience, and cast, and suited the sightlines and acoustics of outdoor performance in found spaces. Short phrases, heavy cadence, and repetition allowed performance to project through noisy and unruly audiences. The form achieved widespread popularity in the brief period between the mid-1920s and the coalescence of the Popular Front in 1934, when artistic and political radicalisms aligned in a vision of an artistic practice mobilized by international proletarian modernity; in this, agitprop was theorized as the theatricalization of modernity.” (<https://www.routledge.com/articles/agitprop-theatre>; lesedato 28.05.22)

Agitprop-teateret har ifølge Denis (2000 s. 81) fått en avlegger i “de undertryktes teater”. Den brasilianske dramatiker Augusto Pinto Boal lagde sammen med Gianfrancesco Guarnieri agitprop-stykker som *Spill for skuespillere og ikke-skuespillere* (1978) og *Stopp! Det er magisk* (1980) (Demougin 1985 s. 215). Teaterformen levde videre i bl.a. Armand Gattis “intervensjonsteater”. “Gatti’s theater [...] is a thematic and socially oriented theater with roots in the work-a-day world.” (<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/md.12.1.57?journalCode=md>; lesedato 06.03.22)

“Agitprop is also deeply rooted in North Korea. The posters and statues produced by North Korea’s government look like something straight out of a 1950s-era Soviet propaganda department.” (Taegan D. Goddard m.fl. i <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/agitprop/>; lesedato 17.01.23)

“An example of early and experimental feminist drama is the work of the New York-based It’s All Right to Be a Woman Theatre, which used agit-prop techniques and street theatre to politicize their art and make it an effective tool of female consciousness-raising.” (Ro 1997 s. 242)

The Red Ladder Theatre Company i Leeds ble “founded in 1968. What makes Red Ladder unique is the sheer fact of its continued survival; among the large number of agit prop theatre companies that mushroomed in Britain in 1968 – such as CAST (Cartoon Archetypal Slogan Theatre), The General Will, Belt and Braces, Foco Novo, and the North West Spanner – Red Ladder is the only company to withstand the test of time and survive today [i 2010]. Though not quite the same as it was when it began, it still attempts to impact people and their lives as directly as possible. In many senses, it is perhaps far more evolved as a theatre company now than it set out to be. [...] one of its earliest plays, *The Cake Play* [...] constructively challenged perceived negative aspects of British society and attempted to arrive at possible alternatives [...] the broader means by which Red Ladder reaches out to its audiences. These include, in particular, the use of certain kinds of performance spaces, fanzines and magazines, pre- and post-production rituals, and many other forms of paraphernalia. [...] these continue to be viable and provocative methods for agit prop theatre, even in the changing historical climate. It has been said that theatre does not cause revolution but rather is a rehearsal for revolution; agit prop theatre, and indeed any artistic form that seeks to ‘disturb the air’ (as the late playwright, Noël Greig once remarked), has a symbiotic bond with people that cannot be simply dismissed.” (Pal 2010)

“Originally, Red Ladder was simply called The Agit Prop Street Players – a name that clearly spells out the aim/venue/methodology of the company – and it emerged when a group from a socialist information service performed a play at the Trafalgar Square Festival of 1968. Prior to *A Woman’s Work is Never Done*, which was the first full-length play produced by Red Ladder, we learn from a 1972-73 leaflet that the earlier plays were actually small units that: “... take as their subject’s vital issues such as unemployment, rents, the Industrial Relations Act (...) that are the immediate concern of the audiences involved.” The plays are designed to lead into a discussion of the issues raised; they aim not just to provide a forum in which experienced Trade Unionists can air their views, but to provoke even the most reticent members of an audience into participating. Under the heading “How do you use the Plays?” the same leaflet describes the plays as: “... short, about 30 minutes each, which can be shown together, separately, or in twos, depending on the time available. A typical ‘evening’ would consist of the Housing Play, followed by a discussion, followed by the Women’s Play (...) and another discussion (...) and

so on.” The leaflet continues by noting that, although there were only a limited range of plays to choose from at the time (namely the ones listed in the leaflet), future plays on ‘Collective Bargaining’, Ireland, Apprenticeship and ‘Racialism’ were to come. The leaflet also points at the company’s simple scenic requirements when it explains that the plays could be performed in a hall or large room without a special stage or curtains, “only a floor 20x20 and a ceiling height of 15 ft.” Apart from these indoor plays, the leaflet adds the availability of outdoor plays, noting that these are: designed – unlike the indoor plays – for specific performance outdoors – on demonstration, picket lines, factory gates, etc. As well as dealing with crucial issues they add pageant and spectacle to outdoor events. Gradually the basis of the work broadened and plays were developed that fed directly into particular struggles and issues, such as *The Big Con* (responding to the Industrial Relations Act) and *The Cake Play* (dealing with issues of productivity bargaining and worker’s compensation). By 1971, the company was renamed Red Ladder after its much loved and used prop. A policy emerged of taking theatre to ‘working class’ audiences in places where working class people usually find their entertainment, such as in ‘trade union clubs’. In 1973, the commitment of the company was recognized with an Arts Council grant of four thousand pounds and, in 1976, the company moved from London to Leeds, Yorkshire where it is still located (although it continues to tour on a national basis).” (Pal 2010)

“A reading of *The Cake Play*’s historical background is vital, not only to observe the machinations of various political leaders like Wilson and Heath, but also to interpret the contemporary sociopolitical struggle in which Red Ladder took part. (Colin Leys, in his 1983 book *Politics in Britain*, provides excellent political background for this period.) If one examines the vocabulary of *The Cake Play*, one finds key terms around which the play appears to revolve: ‘Inflation’, ‘Pay’, ‘Profit’, ‘Wages’, ‘Price Controls’, ‘Rent Freeze’, ‘Depression’, ‘Slump’, ‘Doom’, ‘Social Contract’, ‘IRA’, ‘Tax Concessions’, ‘Income Policy’, and others in a similar vein. These terms make it rather transparent that the political struggle in Britain from 1960 onwards was primarily seen by the left as a struggle between the interests of labour and capital. The political system was perceived by the left to be shaped by the needs of capital in the latter’s effort to constrain, deflect or absorb the political power of the working class. By the early 1960s, the rest of the world had altered radically post-World War II with the roll-back of colonialism and increased social mobility in most industrialised countries. In Britain, however, nothing essential seemed to have changed at all, and the class system was still firmly entrenched. Hence, whether it was Labour leader Harold Wilson’s comprehensive reforms that were designed to modernize the structure of the state, or Conservative leader Edward Heath’s dismantling of the apparatus of state economic intervention created during the Wilson’s years, no initiative whatsoever seemed to change the situation in Britain. Thus, appropriate ingredients were available to Red Ladder for the remaking of *The Cake Play*. For example, when W1 (all the characters playing the role of Workers were given names like W1, W2, etc.) says about the ‘Boss’, “We’ve had this bugger on our backs for the last 200 years,

and it's time we got him off," he is, in effect, spelling out the recurrent historical crisis riding on Britain's back while also declaring that it is high time the cause (here, the Boss – a symbol of capitalist forces) was summarily dealt with." (Pal 2010)

"In the west, the term "agitprop" is usually associated with artist and left-wing causes. The work of street artists like Banksy is often described as agitprop. Certain conservative pundits argue that the entire output of Hollywood amount to "pro-communist" agitprop. But the term isn't restricted to the left. It's also thrown around – usually in a derogatory sense – to describe anyone who tries to push a strong ideology. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, the freshman congressman from New York, has often been described as a master of agitprop. Ocasio Cortez is widely acclaimed for her use of social media and her ability to stir people with slogans and imagery. Her critics, though, complain that Ocasio Cortez veers to close to Soviet-style propaganda. Conservatives said that a series of posters that Ocasio Cortez produced in 2019 looked "like something the Soviet Union would post throughout the Red Square." (The posters were produced to highlight Ocasio Cortez's proposals for a "Green New Deal." Ocasio Cortez's staff has said that their retro style was inspired by New Deal-era artwork.) President Trump's former adviser, Steve Bannon, is also seen as a master of agitprop. Bannon was at the helm of the conservative Breitbart Media, but he also spent many years working in Hollywood, as a producer and a director. Bannon directed a series of documentaries, including one about the Tea Party movement ("Battle for America") and another about the Occupy movement ("Occupy Unmasked"). Bannon himself once said that his goal was to "overwhelm" his audience. Bannon's critics wrote that watching the documentaries was like being in an "agitprop fever-dream." " (Taegan D. Goddard m.fl. i <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/agitprop/>; lesedato 17.01.23)

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