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THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

(MONTAGE AS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY)

BY

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The history of the 20th century has been by all accounts a rather bloody one. In this century alone, humanity and primarily mankind have most likely succeeded in killing more of his fellow man and woman than in the combined millennia since the first aggressive act between one hunter\gatherer and another. This is a rather distressing state of affairs to find ourselves in. Many people have tried to come up with some explanation for this apparently compulsive need to do our neighbour in. Various grand solutions, always with a particular ideological bent, have been proposed to us ,so as to make us more humane and likable creatures.

Unfortunetly it is often these very ideological angles that cause the friction in the first place, and soon we are back to square one again, club in one hand and cracked skull in other. The histories of the various cultures and protagonists in the miasma of conflicts that have dogged us this century, can in themselves make quite interesting reading. What makes even more interesting reading is the history of the main cultural\art movements of the last 93 years, for these

reflect the societies that spawned them.People too often neatly divide the 20th century into marketable art history parcels, thus often ignoring or paying lip service to sometimes quite cataclysmic events that brought about their inception. In some educational institutions 20th century art history is often completely ignored, almost as if people had not quite made up their minds about the nature of things that went to forming a lot of the art and design images that play a relevant role in our lives today. Art and design play a much bigger and more important part in our lives today than they ever did in the 19th century.

Politics has always, down through the centuries, played a part in the production of art, usually in the maintenance and preservation of the then ruling status quo. An example of this would have been the neo-classical movement of the 18th century and its appropriation of a constructed past in order to draw ancient morals to reinforce modern circumstances. Paintings such as David's 'Oath of the Horatii'(1785) were executed to fulfill this role.

With the arrival of the 20th Century, part of its baggage was a sackful of strident ideologies, such as Marxism-Leninism, Fascism and its later mutation Nazism. People in Europe were by this stage, in general, educated enough not to be wowed by grand paintings. The libertarian message of a lot of these ideologies were to form the main arena in which a lot of the 'isms' of 20th century art were constructed, bauhaus, dadaism, suprematism, constructavism, surrealism, futurism, precisionism, vorticism etc.

However, one of the major creative elements in the important early formative ideological debates of the century was not an 'ism' at all. It was a simple yet ultimately enduring device, which had, and still has the power to mutate and adapt itself to any variety of art forms. In fact it has outlived all of its 'ism' masters, notably, the most enduring of all the 'isms' state socialism. Because of its extremely versatile form its major practitioners were and are still able to come up with differing styles, even when working in the same medium, ie film or popular music.

The argument that I am proposing is that montage as a creative device and product of the 20th century is one of the few mediums that actually allow us to trace the main social upheavals of the century. As well as actually offering us an alternative, or secret history of our era, that we would not be able to glean from any of our standard history texts. This is due to the fact that montage in its variety of guises has and still does act as a vehicle, mirror and commentator on the social conditions of its time.

It is often the case that when a device such as montage is pushed to its extreme, it reaches new levels of originality. As with any subject, it is only worth studying those, who in its continually developing forms brought and are still bringing it to new creative heights. It is ultimately these artists and their work that engender debate and argument over the merits of any artform. The monteurs who grappled with this new device in the early decades of the century and used it as an aid in the pursuance of their very definite goals, thereby irrevocably planting it in the subconscious of the population as

an ingenius method of enquiry need to be studied. Also those musicians who regenerated and mutated it, brought it up to date and redeveloped its razor sharp cutting edge. For this reason John Heartfield(1891-1969) his work in the development of the photomontage, along with Sergei Eisenstein(1898-1948) and Dziga Vertovs(1896-1954) work in the expansion of film montage, with what musicians today are doing with the likes of sampling, need to be examined and scrutinised in order to see what state of play and condition montage in its newer incarnation is in.

Chapter 1

Montage and the century of change

A history of change - a brief expose

Montage, modernity and its early acolytes

Montage - the new disciples

Humanity has always been searching for, and trying to create a more just and balanced world for us to live in. This idea has always been formed and tempered by local historical and societal factors. The history of his ideal can be traced back through various civilisations through the millenia. Each new stage of development in the advance of western European history and society has thrown up theoretical and practical examples. Among the earliest examples of this were the early Greek philosophers through to, Spartacus and the slave rebellions of the first century B.C. Rome. In the dark and middle ages a variety of religious heresies and peasant rebellions kept the ball of change rolling. These were followed by the renaissance which saw the arrival of new ideas from other cultures and as importantly the reformation and its use and democratization of the printing press which allowed the spread of new ideas Europe.

Scientific advances, new technology, an atmosphere of change and the widespread accessibility of printed material paved the way for even more dramatic shifts in societal priorities in the 18th and 19th centuries. The American and French revolutions of the late 18th century proposed and acted upon new humanitarian ideals for the hithertofore forgotten bulk of society. The seeds of modern republicanism had been sown and were to motivate people to take positive and affirmative action over the course of the next 200 years. Among the first adherent to these new ideals was Wolfe Tone(1763-1798), who was followed by countless others in the mid 19th century in the various revolutions of 1848 throughout Europe. Between 1843 and 1883 Karl Marx(1818-1883) was to produce a radical philosophical analysis of history, society and economics that was to (and still has) have a profound effect on the course and development of 20th century history.

Like the arrival of the renaissance before it, the arrival of the twentieth century saw a major and drastic shift in how we perceived our world. In the

continuous and changing patterns of history, a new society was emerging. This was the first time in the development of European urban culture that the divide between city and country was irreversibly set in advanced favour of the city. This combined with the nature of scientific discoveries and labour intensive industries led ultimately to the creation of a new urban dynamic that, until now, was completely unheard of. It was the dynamic that this created, that led to a fundamental re-evaluation of the relationship between humanity and its role and position in this new culture.

This dynamic was accelerated, as in earlier times, by the disruption to previously accepted ideas about the nature of reason, the universe and human consciousness. The old Newtonian ideas of what happened at subatomic level and the possibility of determining absolute motion were quickly being discarded. Quantom mechanical theory and Einstein's theory of relativity were asking basic questions as to the nature of the world in which we live. The idea of reality as it once was accepted was being drastically revised.

Other developments at the time, mostly in the field of physics reinforced this subversion of reality. Sigmund Freud (1873-1941), a Viennese psychiatrist put forward the idea of the subconscious; an unconscious mind existing alongside a conscious one that had little awareness of its existence. 'Rational' was substituted for 'reason', completely subverting the manner in which individuals regarded their apparent motives and decision making processes. As in physics, things no longer seemed the same. The assumptions of another era were brought under the critical eye of research and exposed as flawed.

Parallel to this, development in the field of the visual arts mirrored these questions about perception and reality. The emergence of Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Suprematism, Dadaism and Surrealism were symptomatic of the links forged between science, art, politics and society. The dynamism and energy created by this speculation led to a wealth of new ideas and approaches to the traditional concepts of presentation and the role of art.

Montage,modernity and its early acolytes

One of the major creations of the twentieth century has been the development of montage as an artistic and political entity. It has become completely absorbed in to our subconscious, so much so that as a method of creation and production it has become taken for granted. Its inception into popular culture and the mass media was to have, like the idea of quantum physics and the theory of relativity, a significant effect on how we perceive the world around us. As a medium it not only served as a new and innovative technique, that by its very nature provided a shared visual idiom. More than any other art form, it announced and symbolically heralded the'noisy' arrival of the fully urbanized and industrial culture. Montage was the medium that on a practical and symbolic level vigorously inquired into the workings of this new culture. It did this by applying to it the rigour and vibrancy of scientific analysis and critical enquiry into the contradictions that this new society threw up.

Montage, in the early stages of its development used and needed the vibrancy of popular culture to foster and maintain its position on the runnerboard of modernity. In its inception, its forms were constantly expanded and explored, through the use of the newest technological advances of the time. These advances in the media and creative arts allowed montage(in all its forms, mechanical, visual, verbal and written) to constantly adapt and upgrade itself.

A lot of the systems of thought and their practical applications, that the arrival of the 20th century brought with it, have either collapsed in their entirety or are now under severe scrutiny. Freuds theories of the unconscious workings of the mind are having their validity tested and questioned in todays fragmented society. Classical Marxism has had to adapt itself to an extremely complex world, simply due to its failure to stand up to the amorphous structures of capitalism in either its scientific socialist or social democratic forms.

Even Einsteins theories on the nature of the universe

have been expanded by the likes of Stephen Hawkings and as importantly by the numerous protagonists of the chaos theory. The basic tenet of which is that Newtons view of nature,the working clock idea (complicated but ultimately determinable and predictable) does not properly explain the basic working order of the universe. Chaos destroys the Newtonian fantasy of deterministic predictability. By its very nature it brings science down to a human level. It studies the reality that we see and touch, thereby putting forward the theory that nothing is simple or determined, and that everything is complex and non deterministic.

In the'teens and twenties however, questions like these did not arise. A glorious new Utopia was just around the corner, the original 'brave new world' was on the horizon. Together the proletariot would march arm in arm, men and women, alike and equal, into a new golden dawn of peace, harmony and justice. At least, that's what was meant to happen but somewhere along the line their future got cancelled. This was, however, not to be known at the time.

Weimar Germany embraced all the contradictions of this turbulent period. The avante garde(or the various nom de guerre that they adopted for themselves at various different times) in Weimar could be called the ultimate 'modernes'.Modernism, the cultural representation of modernity, was the signifier of a societies response to the momentous upheaval that was the combination of capitalism, urbanisation and industrialisation. Across Europe there was a selective embrace of modernity. Whilst on the one hand, the Italian futurists moaned about vegetating on the margins of Europe, the Irish on the other hand seemed to be quite happy to do just that. Germany was the height of industrialisation, but even here the embrace was also selective. There were big disparities, even though industrialisation was occurring on a massive scale, between urban and urban and urban and rural. The lives and incomes of the small businessman and farmer were often marginal. There still coexisted differing styles and methods of production. This was a constant source of friction and tension in the brief life of Weimar that was ultimately to see the rise of Hitler and the death of the Republic.

In this era the term moderne was associated with the technology of mass communication and the sociology of urbanism.In itself it was a sign of optimism tied in with the aspirations of new Utopian ideals that were prevalent at the time. By 1922, after the various members of the Berlin Dada had gone their separate ways, the main priority of the avante garde in general had shifted. No longer was the separation of art from art institutions the main burning issue as it had been during the immediate post war years. But more the question of how to merge art and mass culture, and how to interact with the institutions and forms of mass culture.

Different people had different approaches, Kurt Schwitters delved into his'merz'world , George Grosz got his prints published by the Malik verlag publishing house and on the other extreme Wassily Kandinsky wanted nothing at all to do with it.

In general, the avante garde reflected this new society in their work. There were certain similarities in the work of the avante garde, not only

in Germany but also around the world. A common thread running through a lot of work done in the 20's and 30's was the glorification of technology. Everybody from Marianetti and the Italian futurists to Gustav Klutsis(1895-1944) and his photomontage posters for Stalin to Hannah Hoch and her scrapbook of the Weimar years.

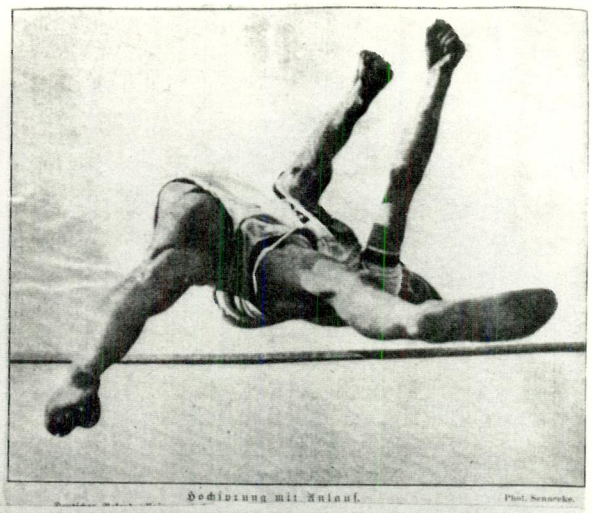
Hannah Hoch(1889-1978) is a very good example of what effect the modern era had on people and how it shaped their hopes, dreams and aspirations for a new world. As an employee of one of the largest mass media enterprises in Weimar, the Ullstein publishing house, she was perfectly positioned to observe and record the era in which she lived. Around 1933 she compiled a series of scrapbooks of mass media photographs and clippings that serve as a fascinating insight into the dreams and Utopias of the new Germany.

Her scrapbooks are particularly interesting because of her lack of comment on them. Unlike other artists of the time, she was not out to make grandiose public art

statements about society, politics and the coming world revolution. Her work was a more personal and private view of a fan and is thus more admiring of the mass media and less critical of the downside of consumer capitalism. Most of the contents of her scrapbooks were drawn from various Ullstein publications, such as the Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung(BIZ),Uhu and Die Dame(middle class women's publications something along the line of Hello). Her scrapbooks provide many examples of images glorifying machinery, technology, the incorporation of technology and nature, the unity and reconciliation of the sexes and the formation of the classless society. Her work can be seen as a mirror of the times and her photomontages and photographs capture the excitement and Utopianism of the time.

Maud Lavin says that Hoch's scrapbooks were about wonder and the images contained therein certainly do have an element of near childish awe at the world and what it has to offer. They also give an important insight into how the 'new' woman of Weimar saw herself amidst the confusing welter of contradictory feminine

56 Hannah Höch, *Scrapbook*, c. 1933, 36 × 28 cm., page 68, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

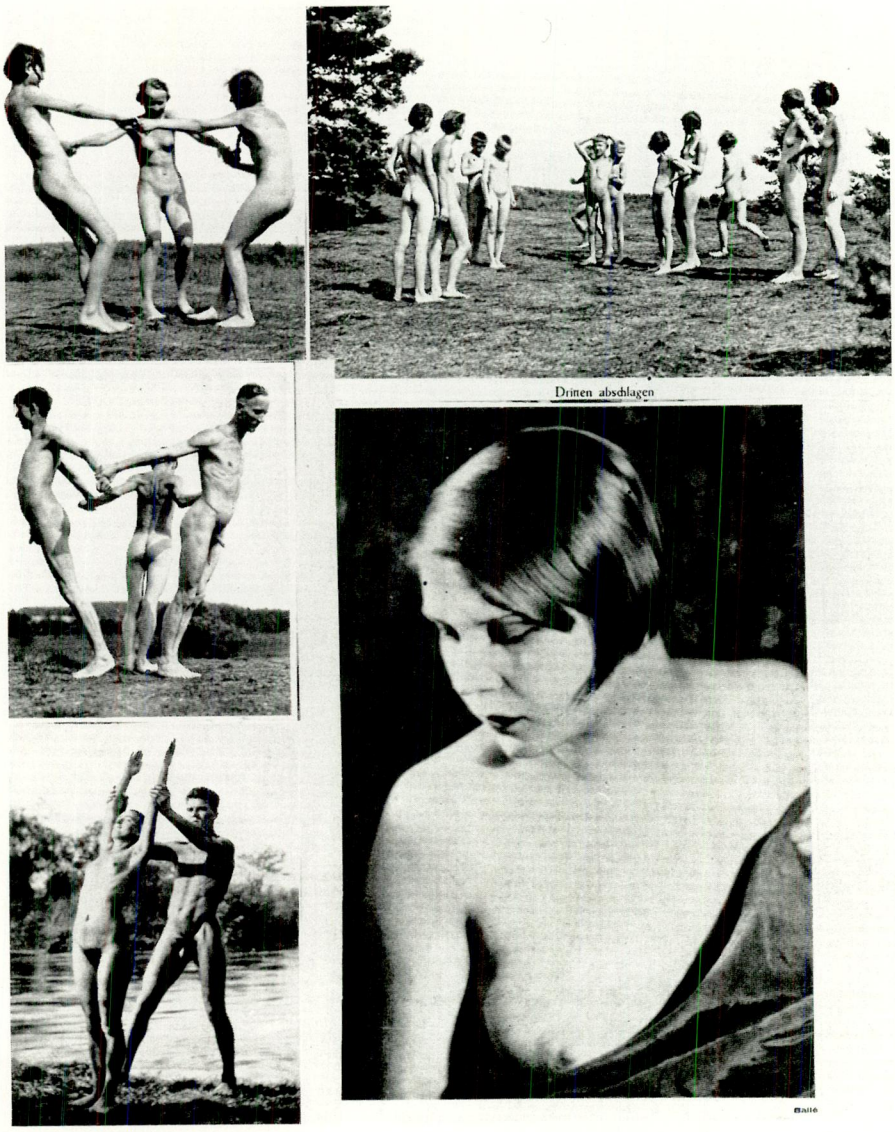


Hochsprung mit Anlauf.

Phot. Sennecke.

Starke Geste im modernen Ausdruckstanz
(Die Wigmanschülerin Vera Skoronel)
Phot. Suse Byk

45 Hannah Höch, *Scrapbook*, c. 1933, 36 × 28 cm., page 20, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin



59 Hannah Höch, *Scrapbook*, c. 1933, 36 × 28 cm., page 71, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

117 Hannah Höch, *Englische Tänzerin* (English Female Dancer), 1928, 23.7 × 18 cm., photomontage, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart

images and symbols that confronted women daily at that time. Throughout there is a continuous stream of images linking men and women, health and nature, women and technology(a lot of the photographs of women dancers and athletes would have been taken using the latest advanced photographic techniques-serial photography, aerial photography, low light shots, Leica 35mm film and lenses) ethnography, naturism,dance and mass ornament. despite the use of montage there is a continuity and fluidity to the images, as they followed the layout style of many of the publications that they came from.

Montage serves many different disciplines in many different ways. As a medium of creative production it has served many people working in many different fields. The scrapbooks of Hoch to the photomontages of John Heartfield, Gustav Klutsis(1894-1944), their many German and Russian contemporaries, to the editing techniques of Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann. For some of these people, especially the photomonteurs, montage was their medium, it was no less than the exclusive means, for a major part of

their creative career, by which they expressed their view of the world. For others it was a creative device to be incorporated into a larger body of work, this applied mostly to the film makers, but also to the later post WW II work of the likes of Heartfield. For all of these people however, it was a device to be used for propagandist and political ends.

As the great ideological debates and struggles raged throughout post WW I Europe, montage, as a device and a medium, was perfectly positioned to exploit, highlight and partake in these fracas. By its very nature and makeup, it disrupts and challenges the perception of the world around us. Visually, it disrupts many of the fethishising tendencies of photographic representation by allowing a fragment to have a multiplicity of meanings - dependent, merely upon the relationship between the fragment and its compositional counterparts. Cinematic montage allows a director\editor to carefully construct a sequence of shots so as to lead and guide an audience in any particular direction(ideological or otherwise) that he or she might choose. In more recent times, montage,

having regenerated itself in aural form, has done - through musical sampling, what photomontage did to photography.

Photography after its invention in the 1840's, quickly developed into roughly three main styles,(a) portraiture,(b)landscape and (c)social comment. Here was a medium that called into question the role of painting and also the nature of reality as it was perceived at the time. As the last of the romantics and the pre-raphelites painted saccharine and anodyne pictures of a constructed past, the early photographers were plodding around the east end of London and city slum areas in general, recording 'reality'. As a radical new medium it threatened the hegemony of the 'fine arts' and was thus quickly relegated to the ranks of craft. It was to play a major part in the development of what we know as modern art and by the end of the 19th century was completely absorbed into public consciousness.

Photography by the turn of the century had developed to such a degree, that it was the great democratizer,

in the sense that nearly everyone had their portrait taken. No more were the rich only able to afford their own likeness. But alongside this new freedom their also evolved a new way of maintaining the power of the status quo. Mass printing and distribution of certain individuals portraits, ie Queen Victoria or Kaiser Wilhelm led to the reinforcement of their respective positions through the fetishistic nature of photographic images. The idea that a population, can now put a face to the name of their respective monarch or leader, only serves to reinforce that persons authority in the eyes of a semi literate and barely educated populace. Photomontage being a natural evolution of photography provides its users, no matter their ideology, with a subversive tool with which to undermine the fetishistic and authoritarian uses to which photography had, was and still is being put to. It is hardly a coincidence that photomontage came into its own with the arrival of the modern era.

Late 20th century first world postmodern life, means, that we all can read and write, and that we may not be so easily fooled by such crude propagandist techniques. This, however has to be counterbalanced

by the fact that the world we now live in is a lot more complex than we could ever have imagined in 1900. In the face of this complexity and rapid technological advance most of us find ourselves ignorant and barely literate in the new technologies and complexities that govern our lives. Humanity is now at a stage in its development that equals and far outstrips the position our counterparts found themselves in, at the turn and early parts of this century.

Looking back on the early 20th century with the benefit of hindsight, the ideas of the time appear as the ideas of what went before did - flawed. The basis of modernist logic was the belief in the values of labour, production, and the apparently liberating utopian ideals of the new machine age and its accompanying technology. The global recession that the world has been suffering since the oil crisis in the seventies, has shown the fallibility of these ideals. Is a recession that has been in place for 20 years, still a recession, or is it the new order of things?. The world in which we live in now, is no longer based on production and labour, but instead on

the visual and aural. The media and the control of information is now the source of power and wealth in the late 20th century.

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution in the mid 18th century, the dominant factor in the production of wealth and therefore (in capitalist terms) the evolution of society has been labour. However in the last 15 to 20 years, this has shifted, labour no longer holds sway, the new power is information and its attendant technology. This is the brave new world that we live in now. Brave and dangerous. As the certainties and monoliths of the old order collapse, so the uncertainties of the still forming and unshaped new order present themselves.

The alienation that the industrial revolution fostered and that the developing urban society of the time reinforced was in some sense counterbalanced by the creation of a sense of belonging by the status quo at the time. This sense of belonging operated on different levels, whether it was physical and geographical, i.e. England and Empire or the Reich and

the Kaiser. Another level was up front ideological beliefs i.e. Imperialist, fascist, Communist, or a mixture of both i.e. Russian and Communist or Fascist and Italian, etc. Basically the creation of groups that people could identify with at a level slightly higher than the local football team.

However, the days of simplistically lining up behind behind the relevant belief of your choice are no longer with us. Our idea of community and belonging has been totally transformed. The technology that brought about the information revolution, like in previous transitional periods, has altered our very perception of the surrounding world. Living in a geographic area, close to others, no longer necessitates communication, living a great distance from someone does not mean that they are out of reach. Access to non local people is often easier than it is to physical neighbors.

One of the paradoxes of postmodern western society as David Morley puts it is the 'homogenisation and fragmentation' of society. In his article 'Where the global meets the local' he gives a good example of the

effects of information technology. The example he gives is of the video recorder and the role it plays in the maintenance of the cultural and ethnic traditions of the Asian community in Britain. A whole network of ethnic films, programmes and other material that mainstream society does not cater for is maintained between the various communities in their relevant locations. Even though the community is a long way from their cultural roots, splintered and separated from each other and in a minority, there is a definite sense of community among them due to these networks that they set up. These networks go beyond any simple definition of locality and place.

However the downside of the replacement of labour is exactly that - the lack of it. As before, a whole host of social, political, economic and environmental problems accompany it. Alongside these localized 1st world problems, there is also the political instability of the former U.S.S.R. and eastern Europe that is a major factor in the decidedly uneasy frame of mind that the emerging post cold war world finds itself in.

It can be argued, that through the misinterpretation of the modern ideal, humanity in the late 20th century is still dealing with the nationalist problems of the late 19th century. The rise of nationalist leaders in the former eastern bloc with what are basically medieval views on the issues of race, nationality and religion along with the artificial suppression of these questions by the rise of Stalinism, Fascism and the cold war has led to a revival of old hatreds and enmities on a scale that dwarfs their seriousness a hundred years ago. This is simply due to the fact that we now have a killing technology that is far more destructive than anything posed in world war one. We are now once again in the age of deconstruction and uncertainty.

This combined with the breakdown of urban culture in the 1st world with the ensuing social disorder(Los Angeles in the 90's, Liverpool, Bristol and London in the 80's) has given people a rather paranoid frame of mind. Montage today plays the same role that it played in the early part of the century. That of a mirror to and reflector of the motivating arguments and conditions that make society tick.

Montage - the new disciples

As in the past, montage works through the latest technology to reaffirm its primary role, that of cultural commentator. Today, montage has latched on to the latest developments in technology. Computers have revolutionized the role that montage plays in the mass media. The Apple Macintosh with programs at its disposal like photoshop have opened up new avenues of work not only for graphic designers, but also for all disciplines in the visual, aural and performing arts. In the popular music sphere, montage has through the use of sampling made huge inroads in the regeneration and rejuvenation of an extremely jaded musical scene. Like photomontage and photography before it, sampling and the like have transformed and revolutionized popular music.

Montage like its modernist creator was, and is, an extremely versatile and adaptable medium\device and can, like its former creator, serve any number of ideological masters, be they right or left.It can, for

example in the music industry, be used on the one hand, to make vacuous and pleasant sounding music that's destined to be a surefire hit. On the other hand, and this is where it has always reached its heights of originality and effectiveness, it can be used, when tied in with the structures of the mass media, as an extremely powerful and direct tool of social comment and propaganda.

When music and culture in the 20's and 30's was referred to as popular, it had a reasonably large audience. When music and culture in the nineties is referred to as popular, it means that it has a potential catchment of billions of people. Popular music has outstripped cinema and journalism as the most accessible mode of popular culture. It is no wonder then that montage has latched itself on to this medium.

Sampling and musical montage came into its own in the eighties. This was the time of Reaganism\Thatcherism and the decline of the U.S.S.R.. The recession was biting deep and the political right was running riot

over peoples lives and jobs. The scenario looked(and still does) bleak, the simple choices of yesteryear were no longer valid, communism and capitalism are both equally destructive of the human spirit. Popular culture and the mass media have always been in a position to criticize and analyse society(or other peoples societies). The cinema of Eisenstein, Hollywood and the Photomontages of Heartfield, Klutsis and their right wing counterparts served this function admirably.

So, How does someone of a critical leftwing bent, who is involved in the recording\media industry make any kind of political observation through their work today. The answer is, that there are many ways, however, one of the more powerful and nondeterministic ways is sampling. Sampling offers to music, what photomontage offered to photography - a way out of the hole that it had dug for itself. Just as photomontage, splintered and demolished the fetishistic nature of photography, so, sampling does the same to music. A photomontage artist can destroy the inbuilt meanings and signifiers inherent in an

image by cutting it up and placing it against any other cut\uncut image\images. A musician can do likewise with sampling, he\she can literally pick any aural reference, be it film, music,conversation, animal sounds etc., take them out of their specific environment, sample that sound\section of music etc into their own song\beat and completely invert and corrupt its original meaning. The political and propagandist ramifications of this when it is properly tied in with good marketing and distribution facilities are mind boggling.

The idea of sampling first came to the fore in a noticeable way in the Eighties with the now defunct rave scene. It is no coincidence that its beginnings came from the home counties and the Tory dominated south of England. By the whole scene's initial illegality, it acquired a subversive edge, disaffected richkids taking drugs instead of becoming city stockbrokers, business people and the like. The music was equally subversive on a cultural level. In a way vaguely reminiscent of Dadaism, the music used montage in its most eclectic sense yet. Nothing was above or

below it, definitions of high and low culture went out the window. All to be replaced by an ephemeral 'mass' culture, scumbags and richkids united by and in Ecstacy. Nothing was above or below it, in a continuous frenzied search for the creation of new sounds, classical, jazz, rock, reggae were all mercilessly mixed in with a backing track in an attempt to create a radical new redefinition of what music was and what it could be.

The rave scene is still with us in sorts, but the sanitized efforts of 2 unlimited in a place like Nightowls in Ranelagh, differs somewhat from the energy and vibrancy of the late eighties scene. Montage has through sampling filtered down through all forms of popular music. Even that monolith heavy metal has been stirred out of its slumber by bands such as therapy? and Ministry. As the subversity of the rave scene deteriorated, so new musical forms took its place. Among these was rap, which had in itself been using sampling for a while. It now took off commercially and had a lot to offer. There are various dates on offer for the beginning of rap,

however the use of sampling definitely did not occur until the early 70's. An electronics student by the name(tag) of Grandmaster Flash, built a twin turntable on which he could spin two discs at the same time. At this stage disco was going through its most baroque phase, with artists using up to ten and even more musicians to record in the studio. The chances of any young artist being able to afford such extravagances were very slim. So what the likes of Grandmaster Flash and others such as Afrika Bambata did was to take one of these songs, find the musical bridge(where everything slows down so for example only the base and hi-hat cymbals are still playing), get another copy of the song in question and between the two versions keep playing the bridge and use it as a backing track to rap over.

This was the equivalent to disco as punk was to Prog\Pomp\AOR stadia music, rap like punk quickly cleared the air and stripped the over indulgent disco formula down to its absolute basics. This quickly developed into D.J. battles, with the D.J.'s trying to outplay each other on stage, in front of their

respective crews. The crews were rival gangs of supporters who followed one D.J. over another, however there was no violence involved, they would just try to outdance each other. The D.J.'s themselves developed their own style and would include all sorts of strange additions to their live repertoire. One might throw in T.V. theme tunes another might be really good at getting his mixer(twin decks) to make all manner of bizarre sounds. This then quickly became involved in the subway graffitti scene in places like New York and other big cities in the States.

This idea of sampling peoples work, originally came from Jamaica, where people bought singles and would sing their own songs over the instrumental B-side, an early form of karoake. The political ramifications of this are obvious and in the 1980's bands like Public Enemy arrived on the scene with a very up front aggressive political message. In the late 80's, the rap scene exploded, and today Rap is one of the largest and most popular forms of music in the States. Sampling and rap are incredibly democratic forms of music. Anyone who has the ability can be a rapper,and true to its early roots as protest music, its appeal

has spread the world over. There are now American, black, hispanic, Salvadoran, Cuban, English, Indian, Japanese and even Irish rappers.

The role of the D.J. is not as central as it used to be, due to the inroads made by technology, increasingly complex sets of samples can now be recorded and interwoven and played as a backing track to complement what the D.J. is already mixing.As sampling is such an open device, it is no wonder that different groups have used the same sample recorded at different speeds in completely different contexts. Groups such as Cypress Hill in the song 'kill a man',De La Soul with'The Magic Number' and Gangstarr withThe Meaning of the Name' . Public Enemy use Queens theme tune to the film 'Flash Gordon' on their track 'Terminator X to the edge of panic' and have even sampled their own previous songs on to new ones ie 'Bring the Noise' partly sampled on to a new track recorded 5 years later, 'Lost at Birth'. The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy take a whole selection of T.V. and advert samples and incorporate them into their excellent critique of network T.V. in the U.S.A.

'Television(Drug of the Nation)'. Anglo-Irish rappers Marxman raise the whole issue of the North, with the help of a soulful sixties melody, 'Sad affair' in the song 'Sad Affair'.

One can cast a jaundiced eye over the likes of Ice T, Ice Cube, and Vanilla Ice, but if one chooses to go beyond the camp 'Spinal Tappishness' and Uzi toting machismo of fragile male egos, then one would see that rap has a lot of pertinent things to say about the society, culture and world that we live in. The view from the bottom up is always more interesting, especially when its not too clouded by ignorance and violence.

Rap, like rave is subversive, unlike rave in its heyday it does'nt have to rely on the mystique of illegality to frighten the life out of all god fearing and decent people. Most of its practitioners actually have at one stage or another experienced what they sing about. Rappers are often at the forefront of causes that at the moment are untouchable by mainstream politics, i.e. The legalization of drugs, the demand for better opportunities for the inner

cities, and simply the highlighting of many aspects of life that mainstream middle class life would rather pretend did not exist. These new artists and their use of sampling indicate the wide and varied uses of montage as an agent of criticism of todays culture.

The status quo, like history itself is constantly shifting and altering, recent history highlights the fallibility of the idea of stasis. However this does not mean that we have to throw the baby out with the bath water, so to speak and and automatically condemn anything that came from these now discredited versions of Marxist and Scientific thought. The earlier generation of monetarists such as the likes of Heartfield, Vertov and Eisenstein genuinely, if rather niavely, believed in the causes that they championed, and as such should be sympathetically viewed in the light of what we now know.

To look at the role montage played in the struggle for ideological supremacy in the early 20th century, it is necessary to study the work of these men, the most radical of the proponents of any art form usually blaze the trail that others follow

Chapter 2: Laboratory Conditions

Revolutionary Cinema

Revolutionary Montage

Eisenstein, Japanese aestheticism and the filmic fourth dimension

Vertov, agitator with a cause

Vertov under Attack

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 was to be one of the most influential events in the shaping of Modern Twentieth century history. It was the culmination of a series of events that led to the formation of a new system of Government. The application of a radically different set of economic and social theories have irrevocably influenced the course of modern 20 th century history. This new young state was a power-house of new ideas and innovative techniques. The October Revolution not only swept away the old social, economic and political order, but it also initially disposed of the more traditional notions of art, and its function in the new order of things.

The development and control of the media was regarded as one of the critical factors in the consolidation of the power in the new Soviet state. One of the more powerful tools of the media in a semi literate country was the cinema. To this end, the Film

Committee of the Peoples Commissariat of Public Education was formed and it commissioned film makers to record and publicise the new political order. It was the rapid reorganisation and consolidation of the film industry that acted as a powerful stimulus to innovative and creative young filmmakers.

Both were driven and motivated by a similar ideal. The realisation that the world had at its disposal, a new and powerful medium gave it a clearer view to the understanding and decoding of the role of humanity and its place in the world. Both were involved in the transformation of the human condition. One, through the arrival of communism and imminent collapse (or so it was thought) of world capitalism, the other, through the focusing of the human faculties by cinematic means and the ultimate inculcation of the proletariat in the communist ideal.

Cinema's route towards the realisation of this ideal was aided by the help of some of the brightest and most innovative minds of the Twentieth Century. The goal was the achievement of 'intellectual' cinema, and this was reached by the application and use of montage.

> "The strength of montage resides in this, that it involves the creative process, the emotions and the mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along the self-same creative path that the author travelled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and assembly of the image, just as it was experienced by the author."
> (Eisenstein, 1942, p.32)

Montage is simply the editing of raw footage, the idea that adjacent shots should relate to each other in such a way that shots A and B, combine to produce another meaning C, which is not actually recorded on the film. The Soviet film industry was to develop the use and theory of montage (though they were by no means the originators of the technique), and take its use into new and unexplained directions. It was at this time, that the major theoretical systems of modernity were increasingly coming under the lens of

cinematic inquiry - Marxism, historical materialism,

psychoanalysis and the recently proposed theory of relativity.

Two pioneering Soviet Directors, Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), were to push the idea of montage to its limits. These two men came up with much of the ground-breaking work of the silent era in Soviet cinema. Both developed, along different lines, their separate ideas on the theory and use of montage, which were to rank among the major achievements of Soviet filmmaking. The expansion of their respective approaches to the theory of montage, can be mainly found in their theoretical writings.

Their respective stances taken in regards to the application of the theory led to an abrasive and confrontational attitude on the part of Eisenstein to Vertov and vice-versa. This was more than the mere echo of egos clashing, but was indicative of a deeper and more fundamental difference in the attitudes and approaches adopted towards the theory, practice and role of the cinema in post-revolutionary Russia. Both were imbued with the modernist ideals of the time and both tried to show in their differing approaches, and

their experiments in sound and film, the rationality of scientific socialism. This they tried to do by using the metaphor of Einsteins theory of relativity, as applied to film, as symbolic of, the ultimate rationality and truth of communism. Vertov tried to show films ability to conquer time and space through the development of his unique approach to the making, editing and presentation of his docu\drama style of work. Eisenstein on the other hand, wanted to show films ability, through the process of time, to present a whole new set of visual(and later with the development of the talkies, aural)overtones, that could onlybe represented through time, ie at the projection stage.

Eisenstein: Japanese aestheticism and the filmic fourth dimension

Eisensteins influences were varied and many. Among the more important were the editing techniques of D.W. Griffith. It was he who actually developed the technique of montage, through the rapid intercutting of parallel actions in his films 'Intolerance'(1916)

and 'Birth of a Nation'(1915). This technique of parallel action, he apparently got from the literary style of Charles Dickens. Another major influence on his work was the general atmosphere of artistic freedom and experimentation that existed immediately before and after the revolution. Cubist and Futurist principles were fused in the Suprematist and Constructavist art of Kazimir Malevich(1878-1935) and Vladimir Tatlin(1895-1953). The radical advances in montage technique achieved by the likes of Eisenstein and Vertov during this period were in themselves influenced by the development of photomontage based on Cubist\Futurist experiments with collage.

The early editing\montage techniques developed by Griffith, and the influences of Cubo-Futurist\Suprematist-Constructavist ideas were important in the development of Eisensteins early montage style. However, an equally important development was to have a profound effect on his later editing style.This was the idea of synaesthetic cinema, or, the fusing together of the senses, in a multisensory experience, through the use of montage. This first really came to light with the visit of a

Japanese Kabuki theatre company to Moscow in 1928. The visit was the first ever of a Kabuki troupe to Europe, and they included Moscow and Leningrad on their itinerary. The visit itself, brought about relatively bland praise from the various Moscow theatre critics. Praise was given to the exquisite craftsmanship and skill of the play (The Forty Seven Samurai), its musicality and handling of objects. The general conclusions drawn, however, is that there was nothing particularly new to be learned. An interesting cultural exchange, no more, no less.

Eisenstein obviously saw more than this, however, it was this, that gave him a critical insight into his own style of work. This ultimately led to the construction of new and radical styles of montage in his later films. What he took from the play was its form and method of production. He comments:

> "The clearest distinction between the Kabuki and our own theatres is, if I may use the expression,a monism of ensemble ... The Japanese have shown us a different and interesting form of ensemble,the monistic

> ensemble. Sound, movement, space and voice do not accompany (or even parallel) one another, but are treated as equivalent elements ... The Japanese regards each theoretical element not as an incommensurable unit of the various categories of affect (on the various sensual organs), but as a single unit of theatre".
> (Eisenstein,p.118,1928)

Eisenstein saw in the Kabuki theatre a montage effect produced by the equivalent treatment of space, colour, movement,and sound, all resulting in the impression of receding distance. One can gauge the effect that this had upon him from the following remarks,

> "An example: Yuranosuke leaves the surrendered castle, and moves from the depth of the stage to the extreme foreground. Suddenly the background screen with its gate painted in natural dimensions(close-up)is folded away. In its place is seen a second screen, with a tiny gate painted on it(long shot). This means that he has moved even further away. Yuranosuke continues on.

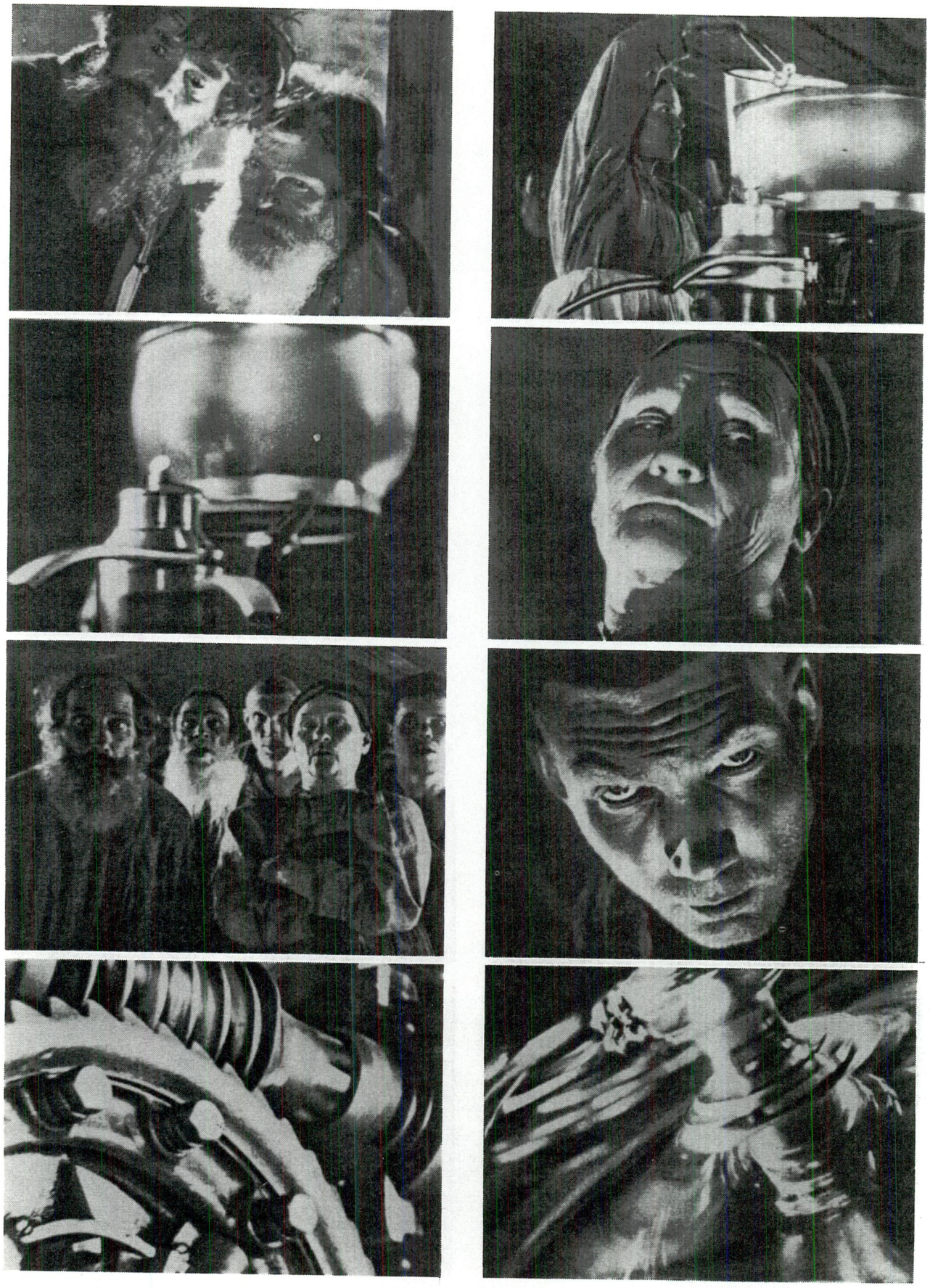
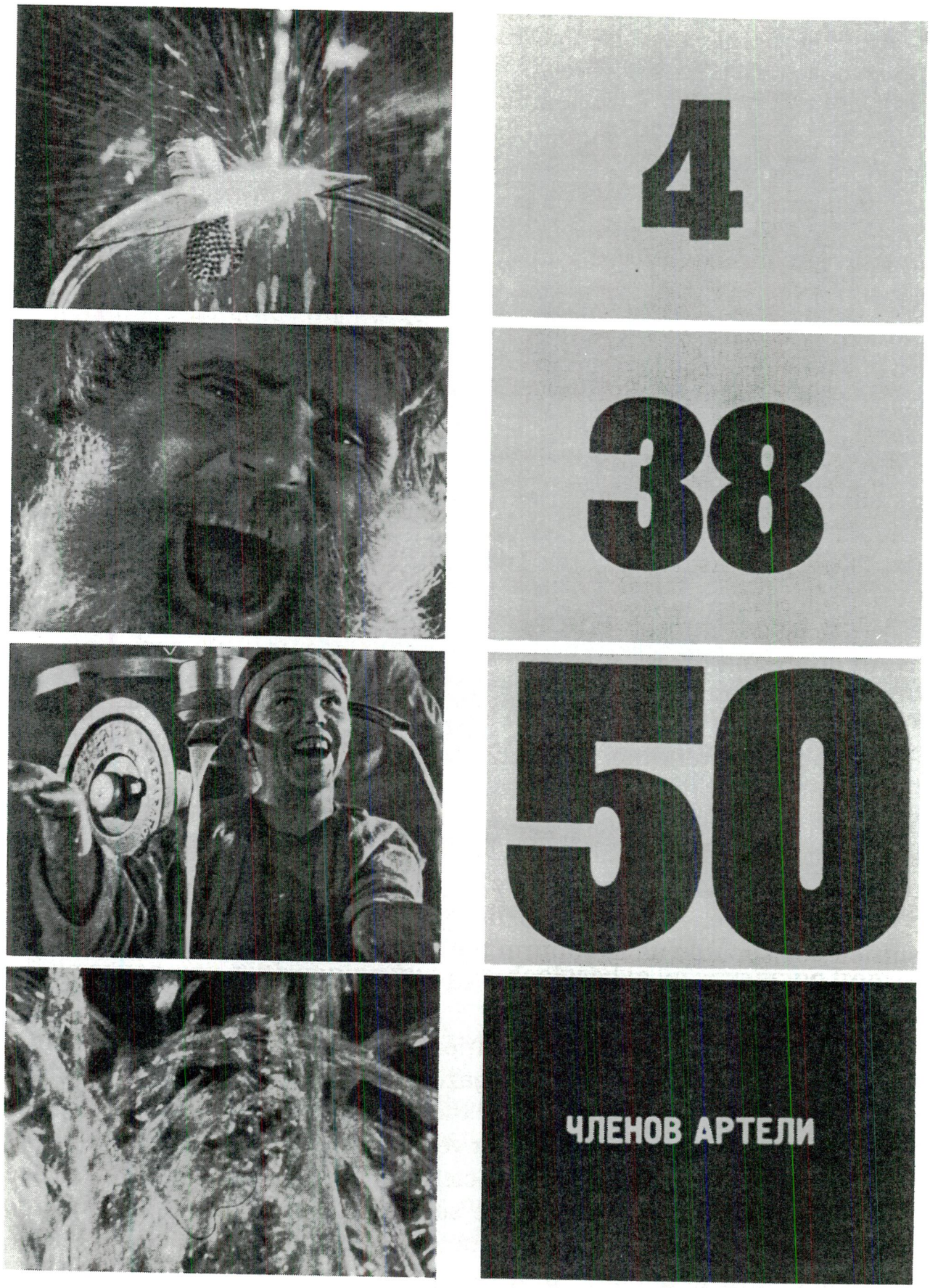


Figure 3. The "Separator (Milk Churn)" sequence from Eisenstein's film *The Old and the New* (also known as *The General Line*). The immobile numerals ("4–38–50–CHLENOV ARTEL") become dynamic with increasing size and speed of cutting, graphically demonstrating the increasing numbers of collective farm members.

> Across the background is drawn a brown-green-black curtain, indicating: the castle is now hidden from his sight. More steps. Yuranosuke now moves hidden from its sight.....This further removal is emphasised by.... the samisen, that is by sound!!."
> (Eisenstein,p.119,1928)

Another development in the Kabuki theatre was the revolving stage. Properly used, the whole stage can quickly rotate from one setting to another. The juxtaposition thus created of separate scenes represents an approximation of the montage effects made possible by modern cinematography. Kabuki theatre achieved synaesthesia through its fusing together of all ones senses, into a intersensory experience that for Eisenstein predicted colour and sound cinema. But this was 1928 and sound and colour had not been developed as yet in the Soviet cinema industry. The combining of what he already knew, with the insights he had gained from his observation of the Kabuki company, was to make his next film the 'General Line' the most important one to date on a technical and creative level.



Caption to Figure 3 (*cont.*)

Up until now Eisenstein had worked with the idea of orthodox montage, this was the idea of montage by dominants, ie the combination of shots, according to their principle sign. The dominant signs of two shots, side by side, resulted in a particular conflicting relationship that provided the desired expressive effect. The idea of the dominant as the principle signifier of each shot, he took from music. Instead, now each montage sequence took its meaning from a general signifier shot that immediately christened the whole series of shots with a particular sign.

> ".... the characteristics depend on the actual combination of shots for whose combination it is in itself the condition. A circle?, an equation with two unknown quantities. A dog chasing its own tail? No, simply a precise definition of what is. In fact, even if we have a series of montage shots (1) A grey haired old man (2) A grey haired old woman (3) A white horse (4) A snow covered roof, it is far from clear whether this series works as an old age or 'whiteness'. This series might continue for a very long time before we

> finally come upon the singpost shot that immediately christens the whole series with a particular 'sign'.
> (Eisenstein,p.182,1928)

He took from his experience of acoustics, the idea of secondary resonances that would otherwise be normally classified as interference. By applying this idea to what he already knew of music, he came across an entire range of new undertones and overtones that accompanied each other, and expanded and enveloped the dominant tone. This, in turn, created a set of variations that mutated the basic tone into a combination of stimulants that enchanced the range and timbre of the original sound.

Applying this idea to optics, Eisenstein found that aberrations, distortions and defects that normally one could do little about due to their inherent position in the actual process of filming, could, beside their normal correction with different lenses and the like, "if calculatedly composed, produce a whole series of compositional effects"(Eisenstein,p.183,1929). These new discoveries on his part combined with the actual

working out of both the optical and aural (musical scores etc) led to the construction of the overtonal conflict of a sequence of montage. No longer is montage constructed around the individual dominant in any one piece. But it is the sum of all the stimulants in any one piece that make up the dominant, the whole shot now becomes the 'signpost'. This is in marked contrast to his previous methods of work.

It was this, that had so fascinated him a year earlier at the Kabuki performance. For it was the realisation of a different, more layered, subtle and complex way of seeing, and the practical application of this realisation, that enabled him to gain further and deeper insight into the way people look at the world. It was the discovery that normal editing techniques no longer adequately applied to these new visual and aural discoveries, and that the emergence of these only became visible at the projection stage, led Eisenstein to reflect on the actual connection to what he called the filmic fourth dimension.

The implementation of the idea of the dropping of single signifiers - leading the viewer to come to a

certain point of conclusion through 'an aristocracy of ambiguous dominants'(Eisenstein,p.182,1929) led to a fuller, deeper, more fluid view through transition from one movement to another by the discovery of visual and aural overtones and their emergence in the fourth dimension - time. This was directly linked to his assimilation of what he had seen at the Kabuki performance and his adoption of the idea of "democratically equal rights for all stimulants, viewed together as a complex" (Eisenstein,p.182,1929). In his nineteen twenty nine essay 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema', Eisenstein rather humourously puts it...

> "The visual overtone proves to be a real piece, a real element...of the fourth dimension. Of what is spatially unrepresentable in three dimensional space and only emerges and exists in the fourth dimension (3 plus time). The fourth dimension ?! Einstein ? Mysticism ? It is time to stop being frightened of this 'beast', the fourth dimension. Einstein himself assures us 'The non-mathemathician is seized by a mysterious shuddering, when he hears

of four dimensional things, by a feeling not unlike that awakened by thoughts of the occult. And yet there is no more commonplace statement than that world in which we live is a four dimensional space-time continuum.' With such an excellent instrument of cognition as cinema, even its primitive form- the sensation of movement is resolved by the fourth dimension. We shall soon acquire a concrete orientation in this fourth dimension and feel just as much at home as if we were in our bedsocks". (Eisenstein,p.185,1929)

Vertov, agitator with a cause

Dziga Vertov (real name Denis Kaufman), a contemporary of Eisenstein, worked towards the same aesthetic principle as Eisenstein. The notion of the film as the finished piece, and like Eisenstein was inquiring into the idea of the totality of Einstein's fourth dimension. However, he based his work in the grounding of physics and mathematics more so than Eisenstein's ideas of music and theatre. To him cinema represented...

"The art of inventing things in space in response to the demands of science: it embodies the inventors dream - be he the scholar, artist, engineer or carpenter - it is the realisation by Kinochestvo (cinematacity) of that which cannot be realised in life. Drawings in motion, blueprints in motion, Plans for the future. The Theory of Relativity on the screen. We greet the ordered fantasy of movement".
(Vertov, p.9,1922)

His programme of work, despite the differences of priority is not dissimilar to Eisenstein's ideas on the extension of the concept of montage. Vertov published his ideas on the role of cinema and montage at the beginning of and throughout his period of work with silent film (unlike Eisenstein, who wrote most of his major ideas on montage towards the end of the silent era).

Whereas Eisenstein's notion of the fourth dimension in relation to his enquiries into the nature and production of the fusion of sound and vision have at

times a shaky grounding in science. Vertov's work, on the other hand, in this direction had a much more solid basis in maths and physics. Throughout the twenties, he expanded his theoretical background through his notebooks, and developed his theory of the interval. Vertov relates his ideas on the use of the interval in relation to movement and rates of change. His scientism and theory of intervallic montage appear as a response to contemporary scientific thought. In his early theoretical writings he states that intervals, which he specifies as "the transition from one movement to another" (Vertov, p.8, 1922)are the elements of movement and they are by no means the movements themselves ....

> "it is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution. The organisation of movement is the organisation of the elements or its intervals into phrases....a composition is made of phrases just as a phrase is made of intervals of movement."
> (Vertov, p.8, 1922).

Vertov's ideas on the notion of montage and the

interval also involves the displacement of the principle of montage. He extends it beyond merely the editing desk, and it now extends into every aspect of the process of film production. As a constructivist, he redefines montage and promotes the idea of a rationalised scientific approach to cinema in the conception of the theme and idea of the work. In the shooting phase and editing stage, montage is no longer restricted to the construction of the visual image. Now montage applies to every angle and stage of production, within the parameters of the aesthetic notion of the finished piece.

Vertov's programme was "to aid each oppressed individual and the proletariat as a whole in their effort to understand the phenomena of life around them" (Vertov,p.49,1925). He believed that cinema's role was to capture the feel of the world through the exchange of the human eye (with all of its failings), with the 'mechanical eye'- the camera. He called himself and his cameramen 'Kinoks' (cinema eye - men) and his work 'Kino pravda' (cinema-truth), his style was Kinoglaz (life caught unawares). The Kino-eye movement deliberately sidelined what they called Art

and Theatre, because according to Vertov, people were influenced by fact and not by acting,dance or verse.By the recording of life, one was capturing the historical process, an observation of society's economic structure and how ultimately everything was structured. Kino-eye offered to the Kinoks, a scientifically experimental method of exploring the material and visible world, through the recording on film of facts and events.

The recording and systematic organisation of documentary material offered to Vertov, the rational thinker and creator a chance to make "the invisible, visible, the unclear, clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt, the acted nonacted, making falsehood into truth".(Vertov,p.41,1924). Space was conquered by the visual linkage offered by different people in different places (Vertov had Kinoks operating in the various regions of the U.S.S.R. on a voluntary basis). Most importantly it offered a chance of seeing life in any temporal order or at any speed inaccessible to the human eye.

Vertov felt much more at ease with film over any other

medium of communication, he once remarked in his diary.....

> "I've forgotten how to write, ever since I noticed that words do not express my thoughts at all.. my thoughts are most easily conveyed in film, through montage... I could think on celluloid".
> (Vertov,p.175,1934).

As his work was subject to montage from the moment the theme of the piece was made known, until the moment the film was released in its completed form, this led to the construction of a definite style of work. According to Vertov, there were three main stages in this continuous editing process: the first was the editing and making of an inventory of all the documentary material relating to the given theme, this resulted in the emergence of more valuable material and a further refining of the theme of the work. The second stage involved the conclusions drawn on any observations made in the assemblage of documentary related material on the piece. The final stage was:

> "The summary of observations recorded on film by Kino-eye. In numerical calculation of the montage

> groupings. The combining (additional, subtraction, multiplication, division and factoring out) of related pieces. The continuous shifting of the pieces until all are placed in a rhythmical order are such that all links of meaning coincide with visual linkage. As a final result of all these mixes, shifts and cancellations, we obtain a visual equation, a visual formula, as it were. This formula, this equation, obtained as a result of the general montage of the recorded film documents is a 100% film object, the concentrated essence of 'I see'- I Kino-see".
> (Vertov,p.90,1929).

The film object was the finished piece, and this object was constructed upon the idea of the interval, or to put it another way "upon the movement between shots, upon the visual correlation of shots with one and other, upon transitions from one visual stimulus to another" (Vertov,p.90,1929). The comparing and connecting of material that created movement and connection between shots was a difficult and complex

problem. The creation of the interval, that would assure fluidity of movement and direction in the film as a whole brought together various elements, these included:

> " 1.) The correlation of planes (close up, long shot etc.) 2.) The correlation of foreshortening; 3.) The correlation of movements within the frame: 4.) The correlation of light and shadow; 5.) The correlation of recording speeds."
> (Vertov,p.90,1929).

The role of author/editor, after determining the order of change, the length of film required, the relationship of adjacent and individual shots, is to find the safest and most stimulating path for the viewer. This was done, on Vertov's part, in the hope that the revision of the standard laws of perception and the complacent acceptance of reality would lead to the questioning and the ultimate revelation of the new order of the revolution for the viewer.

Vertov under Attack

Eisenstein criticised Vertov and the Cine-eyes as a mere montage of separate sequences. Eisenstein denied a conflict of interest between form and content, but argued instead that revolutionary form would derive from a revolutionary ideology. The decisive factor for "art in general and revolutionary art in particular" was the....

> "maximum intensification of the emotional seizure of the audience and a formal approach that is correctly conducted in Marxist terms and that results in an ideologically valuable and socially useful product".
> (Taylor,p.5,1988).

Eisenstein argued that formal effectiveness was important if it was not thematically effective. In this context, he renewed his attack on the work of Vertov and the Cine-eyes as 'primitive impressionism'. He compared a 'tractor ploughing over the audiences psyche' with Vertov's position, the "reductio ad absurdom of the technical methods that are valid for

the newsreel" (Taylor,p.5,1988). Eisenstein's method of work was to take ....

> "fragments from our surroundings according to a conscious and predetermined plan, calculated to launch them at the audience in the appropriate combination to subjugate it to the appropriate association with the obvious final ideological motivation".
> (Taylor,p.5.1988).

that the role of the camera and the essence of the cinema was the capturing of life unawares. This would lead to no more than the brief fixing of the audience's attention rather than 'ploughing their psyche'. This kind of criticism predates a lot of similar criticism that Vertov would get later on,over his work.

Vertov was bewildered by the onslaught of official criticism launched against him from the end of the twenties on. In his manifestos, speeches and diaries of the twenties and thirties, he constantly expresse's surprise and frustration at official

indifference and neglect of his work. Part of the answer to Vertov's increasing isolation can be seen in the tightening of power under Stalin. Vertov on numerous occasions had warned about the increasing bureaucracy of the Communist Party and Government. Throughout his filmmaking life, he constantly pushed for a radical overhaul of the increasingly restrictive film industry. As a result of this, his work was reviewed with increasing suspicion after the expulsion or imprisonment of the remnants of opposition to Stalin in the party. The expulsion of Trotsky in 1928, effectively put an end to the ideal of World Revolution and saw the entrenchment and increasing isolationism that was the hallmark of Stalin's vision of socialism in one country.

The great intellectual experiments in production and theory of filmmaking in the early twenties came to an end with the increasingly brutal and ignorant hands of Stalinist socialist realism. There was no more need for creative input and new and exciting ways of putting across the hope and the idealism that the

revolution had created. No more looking to the future, what was now needed was the simplistic propaganda for the affirmation of the arrival of isolationism, and the death of internationalism. The message was no longer of hope, idealism and exuberance, but one of consolidation and looking to the past, for example, the film Alexander Nevsky.

Karl Radek wrote, in criticism of Vertov's 'Symphony of the Donbas'(1931)...

> "In what does cinematic propaganda for the struggle for the five year plan consist?. The film should have exposed the conditions under which the masses lived under capitalism and demonstrated the way which leads to industrialisation and to Socialist Collectivisation, it should have shown the difficulties to be surmounted, the levers of command which will help us win ... Now, this film in which real dynamic force is replaced by the mere movement of trains and machines represents a step backward in Soviet cinematography. Above

> all, it must be said that no one in the audience was moved by it, despite the perpetual cheering and brandishing of red flags. It is the very model of how not to make propaganda".
> (Michelson, p. lviii, 1984)

Vertov was, by now an unwanted figure in the Soviet film industry. His work was consciously associated with an earlier era, an era in which a lot of dangerous heretics had power - Trotsky, Bukarin, Zinoviev, Kamenov and the other internationalists. Vertov was obviously considered to be infected with the disease of the period (mildly it might be added, for he was not shot or imprisoned during the purges of the mid and late thirties), that dangerous optimism that disqualified him from being sound in the eyes of the authorities.

In a diary entry dated Christmas day 1939, he sums up his problems with the bureaucracy of the Stalinist regime. Which, like an amoeba splitting in two had directly copied itself in to the film industry.

"Lenin said that you have to write about what you know well. I proposed: Let me make a film for you about Bialystok, my home town. 'No' said Saakov(7) "We're thinking about assigning you a sketch on the Carpathians" - that is a region I know nothing about. I could make a much deeper and more interesting report on the place I was born and grew up. But Saakov threatens: 'You'll do what you're told, or you won't work in cinema at all'..Everything is slowly becoming clear. Saakov said 'The studio can't risk it, you could do a sketch for an anthology, but not for a full length film'. In other words, everything I did 'til now, I did in vain? Before people used to direct solo, now its different. For one violin there are a hundred conductors".

(Vertov,p.226,1939).

Vertov and Eisenstein, for all their differences did have a lot in common. Both men were committed Marxists, both toed Stalins line on socialism in one country. They also shared a scientific background, Eisenstein an engineer, Vertov a medical student. A

major difference between their alternative styles and the Hollywood system was their spurning of the cult of the movie star. In both of their films, their is a focusing on the crowd, the collective heroes in the respective films. In Eisensteins 1924 film 'Strike', the striking workers and the protesting proletariat are the heroes, in fact the enemy is signified by the lone machine gunner.

Vertov, like Eisenstein despised the cult of the individual, but he also despised Eisensteins use of linear narrative. In his films, Vertov deliberately revealed the workings of the mechanics of filmmaking. At the start of 'The Man with the Movie Camera'(1929), he shows a reel of film being loaded in the projector. This is followed by people entering the cinema, milling about, looking for their seats, then it cuts to a row of seats automatically lowering themselves in preparation for the punters to sit on. Thus Vertov lets his audience know that the film is about and for them. The film itself is about a day in the life of Moscow, filmed in his automatically recognisable style, as with Eisenstein, the citizens of Moscow are the anonymous stars.

In one dramatic accident scene, the accident itself is never actually seen, but instead it is given to us from a variety of angles, especially the victims. This he achieves by assembling a series of shots, that generate a sense of disorder and confusion - eyes quickly looking in a variety of directions, dramatic and unusual camera angles, approaching cars trams and people all rapidly intercut to give a disorientating effect. This then quickly cuts to a phone and an ambulance. Once the ambulance has been called, Vertov

is literally the man with the movie camera, as the scene cuts to the ambulance departing for the scene of the accident, a car pulls out with a camera mounted on the back, following it at high speed. The ambulance is seen rushing through downtown traffic, and then as rapidly returning with the bloodied and bruised victim. All of this is superbly shot in rapid motion sequence which perfectly puts across the panic, fear and speed with which such incidents occur and have to be dealt with.

Man with a Movie Camera

Throughout the accident scene, it can be gauged that Vertov is not merely interested in simply showing us an unfortunate everyday occurrence in a big city. But that he is showing us the everyday and familiar in an unfamiliar way - thus highlighting the difference between the mechanical and human eye, the obvious conclusion being the superiority of the camera.

Chapter 3: John Heartfield

Heartfield - Illuminator of the darker side of Weimar culture

Heartfield, Munzenberg and the A-I-Z(Arbeitre-Illustreierte-Zeitung,Workers Illustrated Newspaper)

The idea of the 'day in the life of' was picked up by other directors besides Vertov. A Brazilian emigre in Paris, Alberto Cavalcanti, made one of the earliest films of this genre, 'Rien que les heures'(1926), a dawn to dusk expose of Paris. However, the main figure who predates Vertov outside the Soviet Union is the German filmmaker Walter Ruttmann. His film, 'Berlin 1927, Symphonie einer GroBstadt'(Berlin1927, Big city Symphony) was made 2years before Vertovs 'The Man with the Movie Camera'. Ruttmann was working from a different social and political context than his Soviet counterparts.

Like his Russian colleagues, he shared their fascination with modernity and city life, 'Symphonie...' is similar to Vertovs work in the sense that it too is a documentary. Structurally and contents wise it differs dramatically. Like Vertov and Eisenstein, there are no filmstars(although Charlie Chaplins legs do make a brief appearance towards the end of the film), only the anonymous inhabitants. The day starts with the city coming to life, shops opening and shutters being raised, Berlin

is seen as a city of economic good health and pre depression prosperity. Office workers are seen scurrying up steps. Ruttmann often uses legs rapidly ascending\descending steps etc, this is used to imply rapid movement and is quickly followed on by desks being sat at, filing cabinets being opened and other typical clerical\office work.

Criticism was levelled at Ruttmann by many of his colleagues about the lack of political comment in his portrayal of Berliner life. Ruttmann defended himself by saying that he was merely a neutral observer of city life and he was not involved in political and social analysis. This seems particularly true in 'Symphonie...', he does not commit himself to any particular angle. He does include however contrasting shots of the like of beggars and jewelry shops, even a successful suicide bid, none of these however draw any comment from Ruttmann. All he does is link the series of shots that these two sequences are in with a formal linking device, a vortex\circular movement. At the end of the day, these two events in themselves are just subsumed into the patchwork of personal events that go to make a day in the life of '...einer GroBstadt.'

Film historian Briony Fer in the B.B.C. Open University programme 'Montage and Modernity' says of the end of Ruttmanns 'Symphonie...' that it is a...

> "Eulogy to artifice and the spectacle of neon, to the images of display and consumption... but it is still a collective fantasy lived out in public, not only with people but often with the spaces of the city itself, and it was through montage, the way film was assembled that this image of modernity was projected."

It is here that comparisons can be drawn with the notebooks of Hannah Hoch that were discussed in chapter one. The formal analogies that Ruttmann draws, in the latter stage of 'Symphonie..' between the long row of dancers and the earlier shots of industrial machinery was common throughout Weimar at the time. The critic Siegfried Kracauer referred to these large scale dances as 'mass ornament' and saw in them the reflection of industrial rationalisation that was occurring at this time. These mass ornament

spectacles derived their name from the elaborate geometric patterns that the dancers formed and the synchronization with which this was achieved. In a 1927 essay for the Frankfurter Zeitung, Kracauer puts forward the idea that these were an "aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system"(Lavin,p.84,'93).

In her scrapbooks, Hoch reflects and echoes these popular concerns with numerous depictions of people arranged in patterns. These dance groups were given a name - 'Tiller girls', after a British dance group of that name. They all wore the same outfit, did not have names and were completely interchangeable, hence the industrial analogy. They were so popular, that their name was used to indicate Americanism and Taylorism(the idea of dividing labour into small repeatable tasks, so as to save time).

Ruttmann gives a literal vision to the awe that overtook both Hoch, Ruttmann and many others during the turbulent and exciting era that was Weimar Germany. The Berlin Ruttmann and Hoch show us

however, is also the Berlin of violent demonstrations and ideological warfare, fed by a constant undercurrent of political struggle and violence. Their apparent unwillingness to show the seamier side of life and the looming threat of Nazism, that was to engulf Germany within 6 years and later Europe, was left to other people. Among these was John Heartfield(1891-1969), the man who was to develop and raise the levels of photomontage to new and more dangerous heights. Heartfield also lived in the Berlin of Hoch and Ruttmann, and the era he records, shows exactly the darkness at the edge of town, that the two of them did not see, or perhaps chose to ignore.

Heartfield - Illuminator of the darker side of Weimar culture

It was precisely the 'darkness at the edge of town' element in John Heartfield's work that made it so unique. As previously mentioned, montage and photomontage were symbolic of the new modern era that had immersed Weimar Germany. But it must also be

remembered that the modern embrace was selective, and that many people were left behind. These combined with the virulent nationalism of the pre-war Reich that was re-emerging combined to create a dangerous friction. It was this that Heartfield in his variety of differing media commentated on.

John Heartfield was to go on to become one of the most famous and innovative artists of the Weimar Republic. His use and development of photomontage as a weapon of satire was to distinguish him from all others working in the field in the 20's and 30's. His most memorable work was created for the independent communist publication A-I-Z(Arbeitre Illustrierte Zeitung, Workers Illustrated Newspaper), later to become VI(Volks Illustrierte, Peoples illustrated). It was for these publications that he honed his style of work and created some of the most memorable images of the 20's and 30's. However these were the tip of a prolific career that stretched from as far back as 1912.

This was the year that he got his first job as a

graphic artist in Mannheim. At the outset of the great war in 1914, Helmut Herzfeld, along with his brother Wieland were called up for active service. Wieland was posted to the Western front and Helmut was posted to Berlin for Guard duty. In 1915, he managed to get himself pronounced unfit for military duty and was discharged from the army. That year he and his brother met Georg GroB, and the meeting must have had a strong effect on them for Helmut anglicised his name to John Heartfield, Georg GroB became George Grosz and Wieland Herzfeld feminised his name to Wieland Herzfelde. These name changes occurred as a protest to the rampant German nationalism and anglophobia that was prevalent at the time.

Grosz was to have a major effect on Heartfield, after seeing his work, he proceeded to burn and destroy most of his earlier romantically inspired oil and tempera based work. His brother Wieland was to remark on the occasion....

> "Grosz suddenly made us stop seeing the everyday world as dry, dull and boring

IM JUNI 1917

NEUE JUGEND

PREIS 20 PF.

PROSPEKT
zur Kleinen Grosz Mappe.
Der Malik-Verlag, Berlin-Südende

Prospekt zur Kleinen Grosz Mappe. *34, Steglitzer Strasse, Südende.*

CHRONIK Friedrich Adler ist zum Tode verurteilt, Stockholm-Getöne gegen internationale Teuerung - das Leben weiterhin billiger, Lebensmittel bleiben in Cornerstimmung. Nach Reuter verhungern in Ovamboland die Ovambos, keine Kaffern - in den European Dominions niemand! Verhungert doch - Steigerung!! Spinoza ist eingestampft für Bedarf diplomatischer Sendschreiben - Liberia, Pseudoliberia - Molière verrieselt in Sternheim (Zukunft vom 26. 5. 1917), Umfassungsmanöver gegen Wallner in Wien, Durst! - das Aktionsbuch ist erschienen. Frühlingswende fiebert Sexualität, Heufieber. Liebeloch-la-l'au! Sich hinzu-schmeissen! Lichtmord!! — unsere Seelen sind so wund. **Amokläufer** . . . . . Die Messer raus!!!

Man muß Kautschukmann sein!

Ja, Kautschukmann sein — eventuell den Kopf zwischen die Beine stecken oder durchs Faß springen — und spiralig in die Luft schnellen! sieh, ein Paragraph rempelt Dich an,

eine Affiche,
ein Floherzirkus . . .
. . . . . .
(sämtliche Flöhe liegen an Schlingen — desertieren ausgeschlossen — Springen von Flöhen auf Kommando, Parademarsch der Flöhe . . . . . .)

Immerhin wichtig ist, das Gleichgewichtzu behalten!
Wo vordem die gotische Kirche,
messelt sich heute das Warenhaus hoch — !

EIN „MARSIAS" INTERESSENT

— Die Fahrstühle sausen . . . Eisenbahnunglücks, Explosionskatastrophen . . .
— quer durchrast der Balkanzug Mitteleuropa,
doch gibts auch Baumblüte und Edelmarmelandenrationierung . . . .
Wie gesagt, Kautschukmann sein
beweglich in allen Knochen
nicht blos im Dichter-Sessel düsen
oder vor der Staffelei schön getönte Bildchen pinseln.

Den Bequemen gilts zu stören
beim Verdauungsschläfchen
ihm den pazifistischen Popo zu kitzeln,
rumort! explodiert! zerplatzt! — oder hängt euch ans Fensterkreuz . . . . . .
Laßt euren Kadaver in die Branntweingasse baumeln!
Ja! Wieder elastisch werden, nach allen Seiten höchst federnd — sich verbiegen — anboxen! Kinn- oder Herzgrubenhieb!

Ladies and gentlemen!!
jeder hat Zutritt!

Nur nähertreten!! . . . nur nähertreten!! . . .
Schon beuten sie den Weihrauchkessel ein.
Nervös rutscht das weiche Gesäß hin und her!
. . . . . .
Ja! Wenn nicht sämtliche Flöhe an Schlingen liegen! . . . . . .

Dieses Blatt ist der

PROSPEKT
ZUR
KLEINEN
GROSZ-MAPPE

Die Sekte 1917

Die Sekte Neunzehn Siebzehn wächst aus dem Intellekt der umstehenden Zuhörer empor und zwingt ihre Mitglieder gegen den Block der Überzeugten. Die ohnmächtige Wut unsererLeser verpflichtet, einen bereits in Schwingung umgesetzten Glauben wieder zu fixieren, um mit den Gläubigen von neuem dagegen loszugehen. Die Leute wollen halt nichts alleine tun.

Sekten. Mehr Sekten. Noch mehr Sekten.

Das Wunder der Christian Science ist über unseren kürzlich veranstalteten Werbe-Abend gerauscht und schüttet Glück aus über diejenigen, die uns lieben, um uns hinterrücks zu erdolchen.

Darum muss Einer seine Stimme erheben: Nicht mehr glauben, überhaupt nicht glauben. Sich selbst. (Sich und selbst) Beten.

Wenngleich jeder schuldig ist an der Unfähigkeit der andern, Feind zu sein, sondern schlotternder Neidhammel, soll keiner an dieser Schuld sich selbst beruhigt genug sein lassen. Nicht das Peinliche dieser Schuld schmatzend zu fressen, soll es ankommen, sondern Genuss auch noch auszukotzen — und wiederum zu fressen und wiederum!

Es ist in jeder Sekunde, die ein hundertmalverfluchtes Leben schenkt (unsägliche Wonne durstend das galizische Petroleumgebiet zu durchfahren, die Gestänge der Bohrtürme verrusst!) so unendlich vieles zu tun.

Betet mit dem Schädel gegen die Wand!!

Wir — aha! — wir treten gegen die Menschen nicht auf. Wir treten geduldig noch mit den Menschen auf. Die Sekte Neunzehn Siebzehn schlägt gegeneinander, Sturmflut aus unseren Gebeten, die aus der Ohnmacht der Gläubigen emporgewachsen sind. Unsere Mitglieder verrecken, weil die Sekte sie nicht mehr locker lässt. Betet aus unseren Gebeten zu diesem Ende. Damit ihr endlich in die Schlinge kommt. Es ist ein so ungleiches Spiel mit diesen Sanften, Zappelnden. Der Magen der **Neunzehn Siebzehn** will das alles nicht mehr verdauen, immer wieder dasselbe, die Ohnmacht der Gläubigen, der Block der Ueberzeugten, das Einfangen, Verarbeiten, Auskotzen, Fressen,

das Ich triumphierend über Puntas Arenas, Michigan See, Sachalin bis Sorau. Dort wurde der Dichter Heinrich Steinhausen geboren, steht in der Zeitung.

Halt dich, Junge.

Die Frist ist um. Her die neue Ladung. Sektierer, los! Wieviel zappeln schon wieder?

Die Arbeit Arbeit Arbeit Arbeit: Triumph der Christian Science. **Das Wunder der Sekte Neunzehn Siebzehn.**

1917.

SCHREIT!!

Kannst du radfahren ?

Zu den reinsten unverbildeten Erklärungen und Dokumenten unseres Lebens gehören jene Bilder auf den Rückfronten der Häuser, diese Erlasse des Kaufmanns (des wahren Herrn dieser Zeit) — von unerhörter Sachlichkeit vorgetragen, gigantisch eingeätzt wie auf alten Pyramiden, pressen sie das psychologische und formale Erleben des in knallendem Stadtbahnzug Dahinrollenden. Fabelhaft bunt und klar, wie ein Tafelbildchen, — von kosmischer Komik, brutal, materiell, bleichsüchtig, verwaschen — drohend und mahnend gleich Ragtimestepptanzmelodie immer wieder sich ins Gehirn bohrend —

Das gröhlt in einem fort!

Zwingt uns zum prallenden Marineblau, zu Grellrots (ganze Straßen Buchstaben), Varietégrün, Spezialitätengelb, Wollwarengraus, und listelndes Rosa —

Moziationen tauchen auf . . . . . .

Champagner-Flasche — der Korken knallt davon, ho! ho!

Sekt Schloss Vaux.

Ich, Dannemann-Zigarre schief im Maul, Zeitung — vor mir knerzen die Knattermotore — hart überholt nach Backbord der rote Autobus!

Ho! ho! schon wieder brüllen die Häuserwände:

Regie-Zigaretten, *Salrap*, **Palast-Hotel**, Teppich-Thomas, **bade zu Hause**, **Steiners Paradiesbett** . . . . . ho! . . . . . *Sarg's Kalodont* . . . . . *Passage-Café* . . . . . **AEG** . . . . . Ceresit.

z. B., vom Training kommend, am Punching Ball . . . . Den Joe hiebst Du nieder.

z. B., Du segeltest fabelhaft in die Chausseen, eben noch flog Dir der Fußball an die klemmerlose Nase, Du hingst oben im Aeroplan unter der Bergsonne — zwischen den Stämmen knalte Deine Winchesterbüchse (Gott ließ ja Eisen wachsen, bravo)

Abends in deu Asphaltbrüchen, in Geidsack-Hills, zwischen Porter-Bierplakaten, oder an der Bar bei Kantorowicz, in Zooquellen oder piklein mit steifem Hemd aalglatt bei Adlon, strömendes **Pils Coctails Ersatz** und Agoston, **Apollotheater** und Kinohäuser . . . . . und dem Treiben der beiden Herzfelder! . . . . . .

Sag mal? — . . . . . **graults Dir** da **nicht** in den Kunstsalons? in den Ölgemäldegalerien . . . . . ?
in den literarische Soiréen . . . . . ?

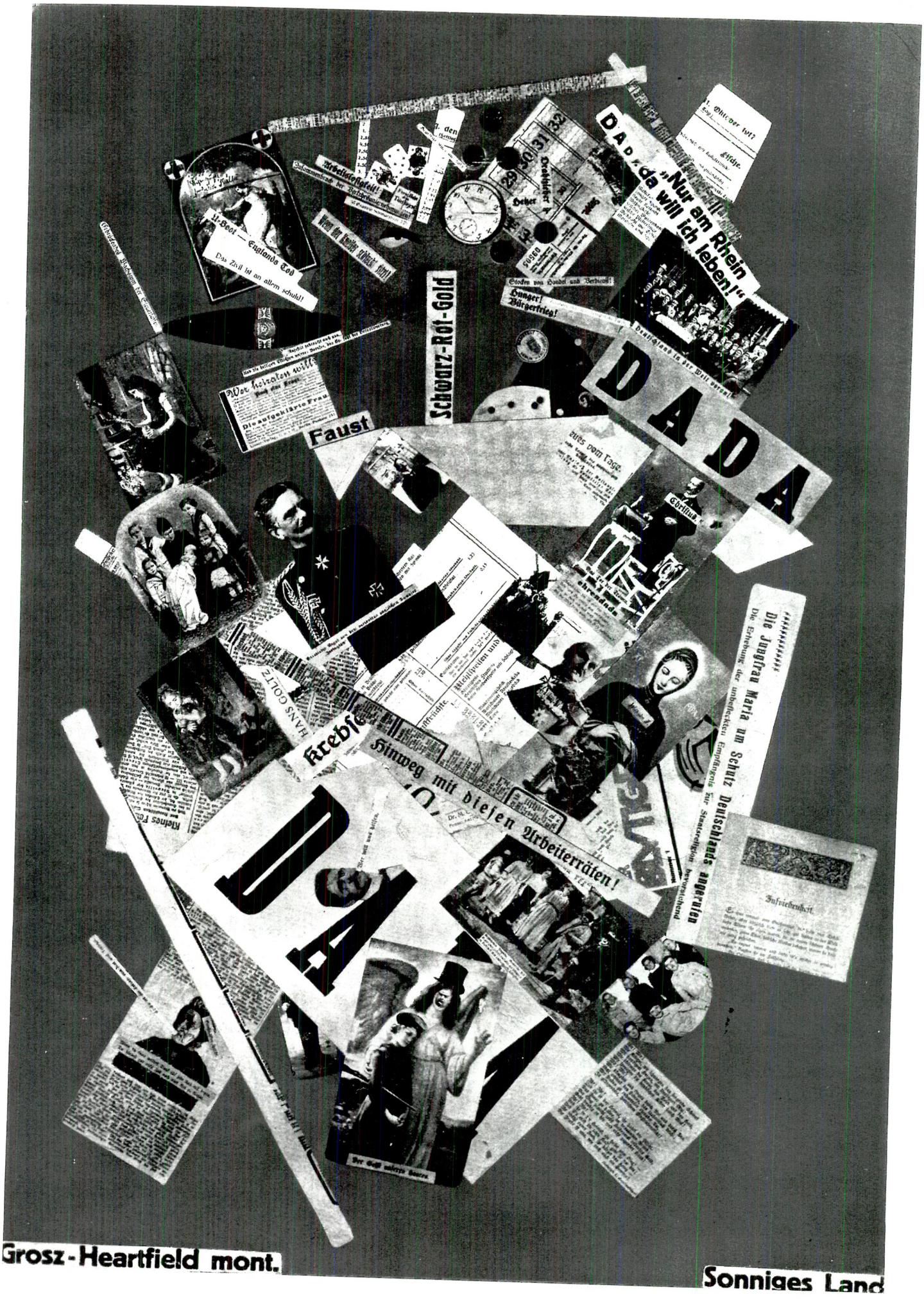
Lieber Leser! Ein guter Fußballspieler enthält immerhin eine ganze Menge Wert — obwohl er nicht dichtet, malt und Töne setzt!

Bleibt die Frage?
Kennst Du Schiller und Goethe — ? — ja!

Aber kannst Du radfahren?

Weitere Marsyas-Interessenten wollen sich noch melden

5a *Neue Jugend* [*New Youth*], June 1917, front page. Cat. no. 62



1 *Grosz-Heartfield mont.*, "Sonniges Land" [*The Sunny Land*]. Collage, 1919. Cat. no. 302

> and start seeing it as a drama in which stupidity, crudity and sloth played the starring roles. He awakened in us a new highly critical attitude toward our previous efforts of the artistic sort: Helmut burned everything he had made in charcoal,pencil, chalk, ink, tempera, and oil up to that time." (Nancy Roth,p.18,1992)

In 1916 and 1917,Grosz, Heartfield and Herzfelde published Neue Jugend(New Youth), a publication that allowed them to air their antiwar and pacifist views. This also allowed them to experiment with new typefaces. The following year they set up the publishing house Malik Verlag,and one of their first publications was, Kleine-Grosz-Mappe(Little Grosz Folio). This was a collection of 20 lithographs, and the type face was revolutionary in form and context. A leading graphic designer of the 20's Jan Tschichold was to comment on the contents as "one of the most important documents of the newtypography" (Evans,p.6,1992). The inspiration for the bold new typefaces came mainly from American broadsheet

journals. It was Heartfield's chaotic reinterpretation of them that was to lead to their to their influential role in the development in the 20's by others of new advertising styles.

In 1915, the Caberet Voltaire in Zurich saw the arrival of the short lived dada movement. In the 5 to 6 years of its existence it spread to Paris, New York, Barcelona, Koln and Berlin. The Heartfield brothers and Grosz were key players in the setting up of the Berlin wing of the movement. The Berlin dada was to be the most socially involved critical and militant of the various Dada groupings. Dada provided a forum for the various members to become involved in the state of near civil war that existed in Berlin in 1917/18/19. The early photomontages that Heartfield and Grosz created have all been lost, however their later collaborations, during their dada era still survive. These splintered, fractured and hectic montages illustrate the equally hectic and splintered world that the Dadaists found themselves in.

One can nearly judge, see and feel the actual state

6a *Der dada 3* [*The dada 3*], 1920, brochure cover. Cat. no. 64

that Berlin was in by the visual viciousness of the splintered images that are presented to us. These are the images of a city in strife, they are unclear, almost like an unfinished work, waiting for the right group or faction to win the day and mould the image in the reflection of their Utopian ideal.

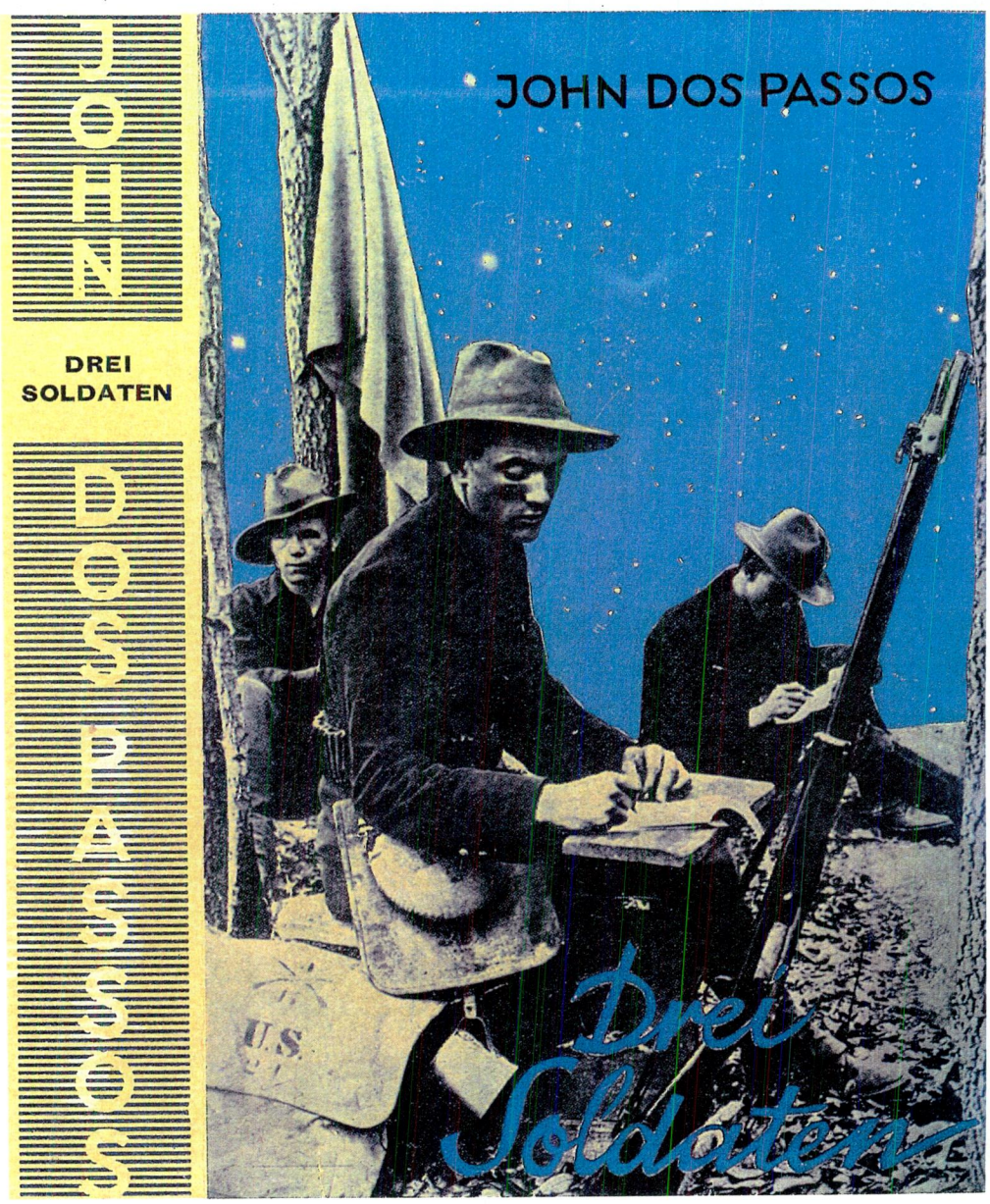
The Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, provided an impetus to communists and left wing activists the world over. On the 31st of December, 1918 Heartfield, Herzfelde, Grosz and the playwrite\theatre director Erwin Piscator joined the newly formed German Communist Party(KPD). It was in these ideological parameters that they all worked in the 20's. Heartfield said of the changeover from dadaism to communism that it acted as a change from"protest against everything" to a "systematic and consciously guided art propaganda in the service of the working class.

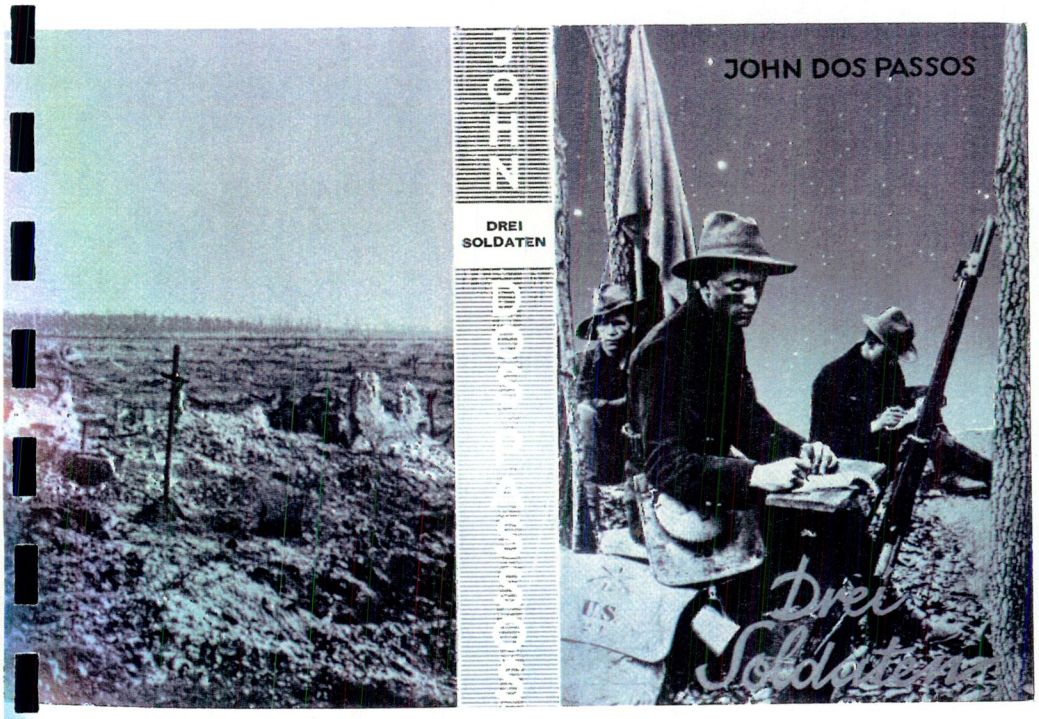
Throughout his career, he was constantly soaking up new sources of inspiration and diversifying his style. Elias Canetti remarked that Heartfield "could only

learn aggressively"(Pachnicke,p.38,1992) and this is reflected in his various methods of presentation. All of his work now served the communist movement, in an either official or unofficial capacity. His background in advertising proved invaluable to his work for the Malik Verlag and it was with his brother that he revolutionised the design of the book covers that they produced. His use of photography and photomontage increased the selling potential of what had previously been a very limited market, left wing literature. Simple things such as developing a technique of varnishing book covers so as they did'nt get dirty,thereby leading the way in which the use of photomontage and photography could be used on a cover(the use of which had been curtailed by the tendency of the previously unvarnished book covers to get filthy from handling).

Another simple yet effective idea was the introduction of photographs on the spine of the books, thereby increasing the amount of space available for advertising and also enabling them to be stacked spine out, while still showing extra information. Also the

John Dos Passos, *Drei Soldaten* [*Three Soldiers*].
Dust jacket (second version), 1929 (11th–17th thousand). Cat. no. 314





20b John Dos Passos, *Drei Soldaten*. Dust jacket (second version), 1929 (11th–17th thousand). Cat. no. 314

37 Ludwig Turek, *Ein Prolet erzählt* [*A Worker Narrates*]. Dust jacket, 1930. Cat. no. 337

38 Michael Gold, *Juden ohne Geld* [*Jews Whithout Money*]. Dust jacket, 1931. Cat. no. 340

idea of using two different pictures simultaneously, one on the front, a different one on the back and possibly a third on the spine. These ideas may seem blindingly obvious to us today, but at the time they were revolutionary in their originality.

Heartfield's collaboration with Erwin Piscator on the play 'Trotz Allendem'(In Spite of Everything,1925) is a good example of the originality with which he approached his work. The confrontational approach that he adopted could be seen, and also his willingness to try new and innovative techniques.For the play, after having to scrap the idea of a mock up sixty five foot British battle cruiser for an outdoor production of the play, he came up with an indoor compromise that turned out to be far more effective than the original idea. The play now had no scenery and instead, Heartfield built an abstract construction for the stage and projected film and photo stills on to it. The finished piece was highly innovative and disturbing.

The play ran through a sequence of scenes, starting

with Karl Liebknectd as the only SPD deputy in the Reichstag voting against the war in 1914, and then to his and Rosa Luxembourg's death at the hands of the SPD in 1919. This was then followed by sequences showing the SPD voting for the war and pictures of the first dead. Heartfield said about it.

> "We used authentic shots of the war, of the demobilization, of a parade of all crowned heads of Europe, and the like (obtained from a contact in Government archives). These shots brutally demonstrated the horror of war: flame thrower attacks, piles of mutilated bodies, burning cities. War films had not yet come into 'fashion' so these pictures were bound to have a more striking impact on the masses of the proletariat than a hundred lectures".
> (Heartfield quoted in Douglas Kahn,p.47-48,1985).

'Trotz allendem' was to become the first anti-war documentary/drama piece to be devised with the underlying ideal that by depicting 'reality', people could be won to your cause. By the placing of a

'factual' interpretation of economic and political history that directly interfaced and affected the audience, it was hoped that they would be converted. A battle for the soul of the German proletariat was being waged, and the stage was overflowing with political zealots of all shades and hues. The struggle that was going on needed to be able to catch and hold the audience's attention, in Eisenstein's words 'to plough their psyche'. No doubt, his time spent at the UFA film studios in Berlin between 1916 and 1918, stood to him.

The left has always had a notoriously bad reputation both in its handling and involvement with the media. It is significant, that Heartfield's better work comes from his association with independent left wing publishers and that the work he did for the KPD's papers 'Die Rote Fahne' (The Red Front) and 'Der Knuppel'is not as well known. This is because,the hard left had through its insistence on acceptance of dogma, effectively choked off creative individual thought and relied on naive and crude propaganda to win popular support. These strictures, no doubt,

applied to Heartfield when he worked for them. What did make Heartfield's work so effective, was not only his unerring ability to create viciously satirical and visually stimulating work in these conditions, but also his advantageous use of KPD's utter ignorance and unwillingness towards the formation of a party cultural policy.

Its official line was that the true proletarian art would only come about after the proletariat had their shackles removed. As the young and inexperienced (nobody was ever found to match the abilities of the party's founders, Karl Liebknecdt and Rosa Luxembourg) party leadership had more urgent and pressing matters to deal with than the cultural well being of the masses. Most communist artists were tolerated more through ignorance of what it was they were actually up to, rather than any coherent party cultural framework. It was his skillful avoidance of party imposed democratic centralism, that allowed him to develop and diversify his style.

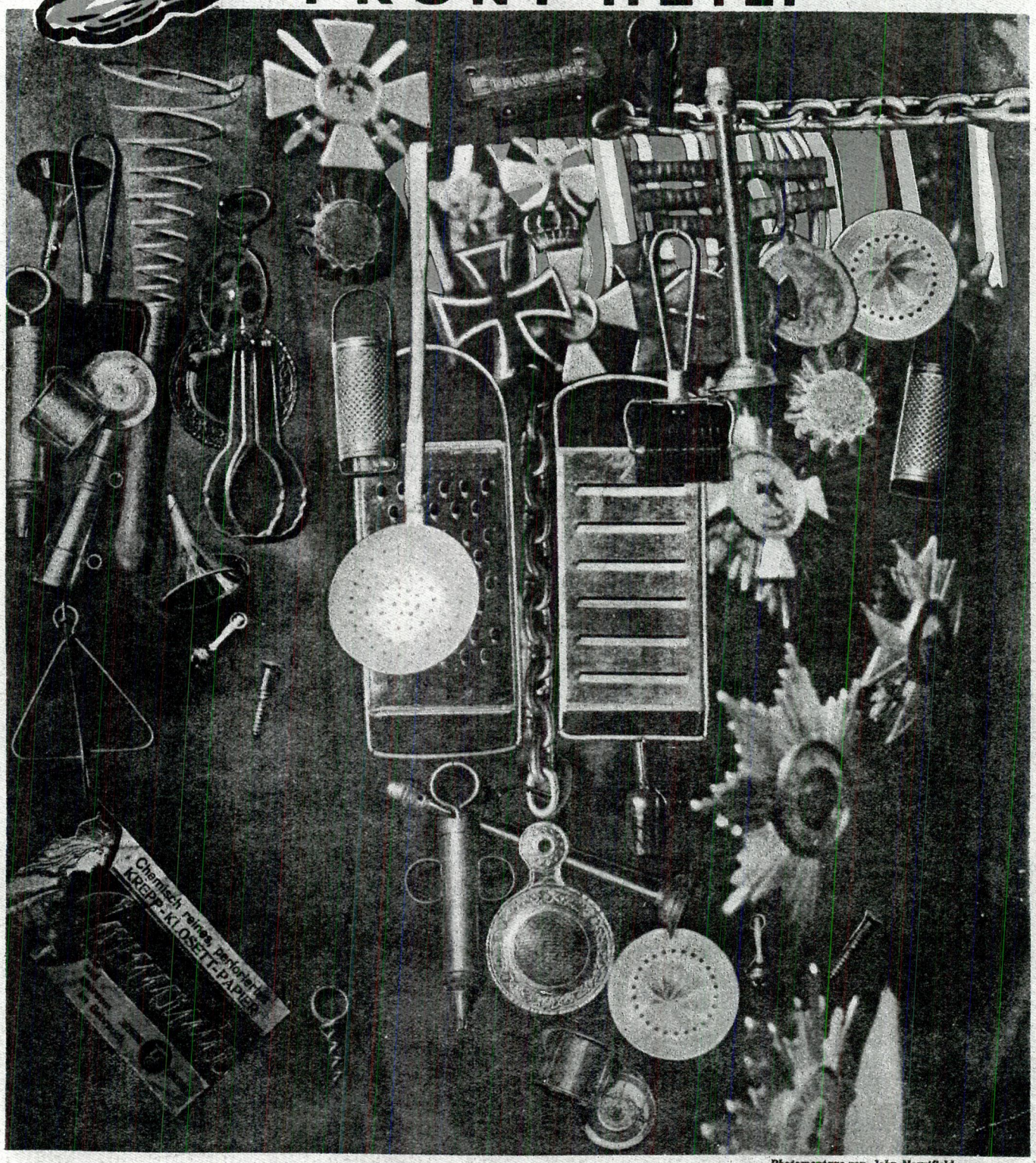
This skirting around and between party rules and dogma

SONDERNUMMER: DER KLEMPNERLADEN

Der Knüppel

SATIRISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT
Jahrgang V. Nr. 4
Berlin, Juni 1927.
Preis 25 Pfg.

FRONT HEIL!

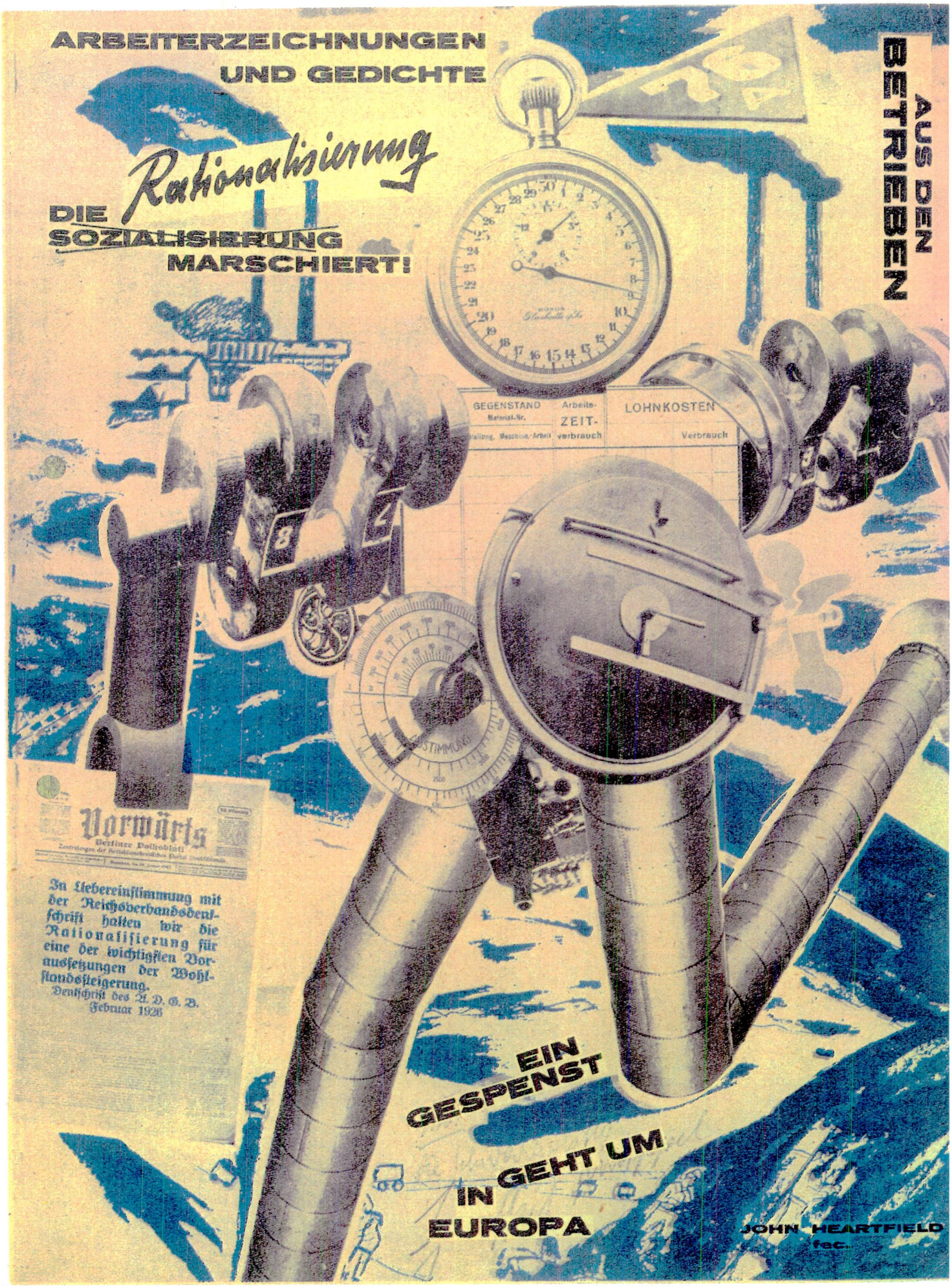


Photomontage von John Heartfield

Das ist es was den Menschen zieret
Und dazu ward ihm der Verstand.

Daß er die Heldenbrust frisieret
Für KAISER, GOTT und VATERLAND!

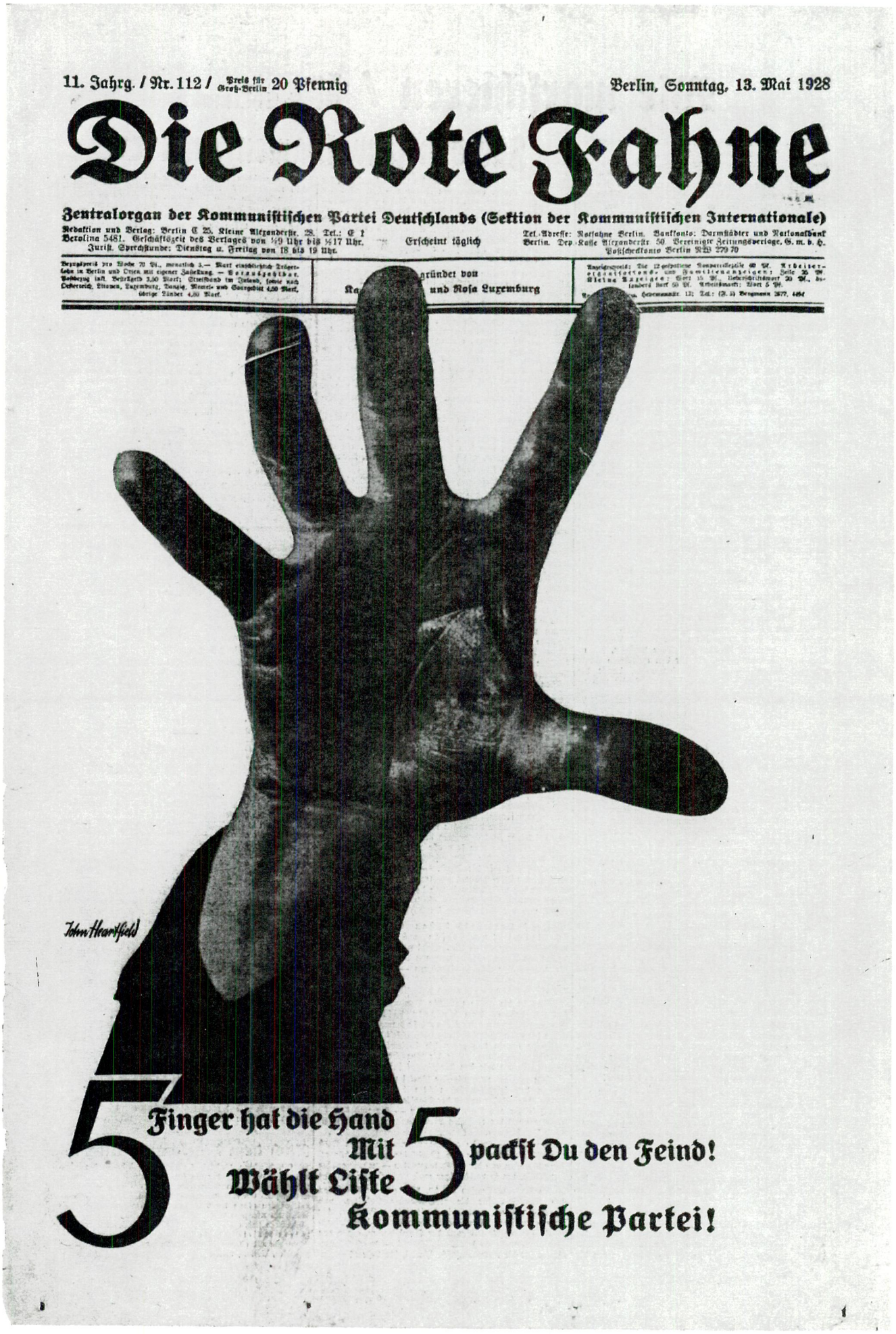
44 "Front Heil!." *Der Knüppel* [*The Club*], no. 4, June 1927, front page. Cat. no. 148



47a "Rationalization is on the March!." *Der Knüppel*, no. 2, February 1927, p. 5. Cat. no. 138

in no way put Heartfield under any suspicion of ideological dodginess, first and foremost he was a party man. He had been one of the first people in Germany to sign up, and throughout the 20's he took an active role in party affairs. From 1923 to 1927, George Grosz and himself, edited and contributed to the KPD's satirical paper 'Der Knuppel'(The Cudgel). When 'Der Knuppel' ceased publication in 1927, he went on to work for the party's mainstream newspaper 'Die Rote Fahne'. All the while managing to hone his skill at photomontage, continuously developing a leaner and more streamlined finished product. A lot of the work that he did for the party involved the production of election posters and front covers for 'Die Rote Fahne'. One of these in particular led to a flurry of job offers from the big ad agencies in Berlin and Germany. This was the '5 Finger hat die hand' election cover for 'Die Rote Fahne' in May 1928.

Throughout the 20's he helped to co-ordinate and direct communist art and graphic work, through his setting up and involvement with the 'Rote Gruppe'(Red Group) in 1924. This became the ASSO(Association of



11. Jahrg. / Nr. 112 / Preis für Groß-Berlin 20 Pfennig

Berlin, Sonntag, 13. Mai 1928

Die Rote Fahne

Zentralorgan der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale)

Redaktion und Verlag: Berlin C 25, Kleine Alexanderstr. 28. Tel.: E 1 Berolina 5481. Geschäftszeit des Verlages von ½9 Uhr bis ½17 Uhr. Jurist. Sprechstunde: Dienstag u. Freitag von 18 bis 19 Uhr. Erscheint täglich

Tel.-Adresse: Rotfahne Berlin. Bankkonto: Darmstädter und Nationalbank Berlin. Dep.-Kasse Alexanderstr. 50. Vereinigte Zeitungsverlage, G. m. b. H. Postscheckkonto Berlin NW 379 70

Bezugspreis pro Woche 70 Pf., monatlich 3.— Mark einschließlich Trägerlohn in Berlin und Orten mit eigener Zustellung. — Postabonnement, Postbezug inkl. Postgebühr 3,50 Mark; Streifband im Inland, sowie nach Oesterreich, Litauen, Luxemburg, Danzig, Memel- und Saargebiet 4,50 Mark, übrige Länder 4,80 Mark.

gründet von Ka[illegible] und Rosa Luxemburg

Anzeigenpreis: Die 12-gespaltene Nonpareillezeile 40 Pf. Arbeiter-Gewerkschafts- und Familienanzeigen: Zeile 36 Pf. Kleine Anzeigen: Wort 15 Pf., Stellenschlüsselwort 20 Pf., besonders fett 50 Pf. Arbeitsmarkt: Wort 5 Pf. [illegible] Hedemannstr. 13; Tel.: (Z. 3) Bergmann 277, 4561

John Heartfield

5 Finger hat die Hand
Mit 5 packst Du den Feind!
Wählt Liste
Kommunistische Partei!

53 "The Hand Has 5 Fingers . . ." *Die Rote Fahne* [*The Red Flag*], May 13, 1928, front page.
Cat. no. 192

Revolutionary Artists) in 1928 and through this organization a large number of international exchanges ochered. These mainly were with the U.S.S.R., however other European countries took part also.

All of this work helped to build up a very high profile for Heartfield the man of many talents, and in 1929 he was asked to exhibit in the prestigious Film und Foto exhibition in Stuttgat in 1929. It was more due to his ground breaking design work in the field of bookjacket design that got him a place in the exhibition than his party political work. In recognition of his standing in his field of work, he was given a room of his own. Over the entrance to his room at the exhibition he placed the words "USE PHOTOGRAPHY AS A WEAPON".

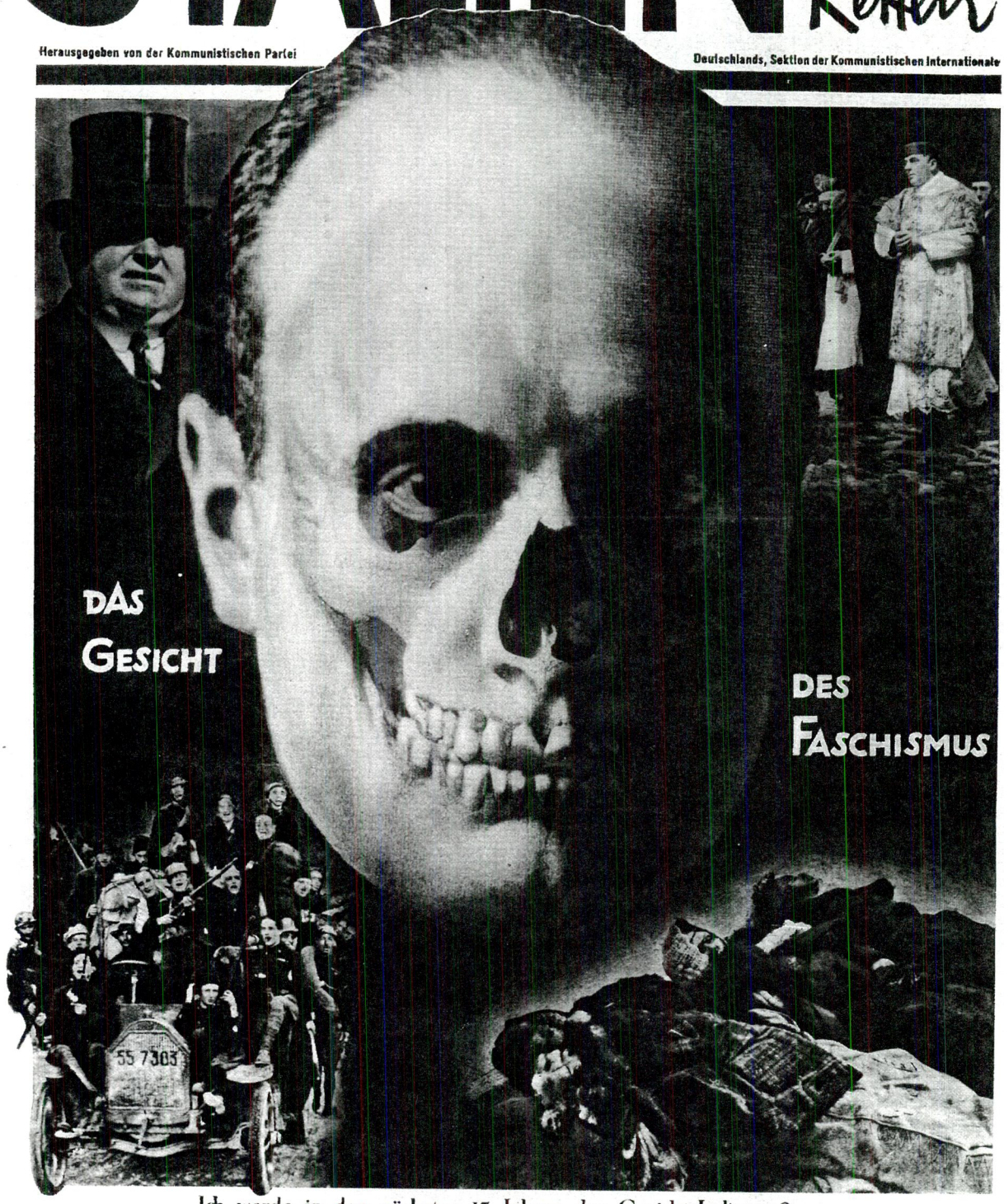
It was exactly his use of his art as a weapon that separated him from his many fellow designers and photomonteurs. There were plenty of other people working in photomontage in the 20's and montage was the mirror of modernity and urban life. The critic Alfred Kemeny(1895-1945) writing in the 30's said of

PREIS 20 PFENNIG / FÜR DIE SCHWEIZ 20 RAPPEN

ITALIEN in Ketten

Die ersten Originalphotos der Verbannten auf Lipari

Herausgegeben von der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands, Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale



„Ich werde in den nächsten 15 Jahren das Gesicht Italiens so verändern, daß es niemand wieder erkennt."

Mussolini

57 "The Face of Fascism." *Italien in Ketten* [*Italy in Chains*], 1928, front page. Cat. no. 105

59 "Capitalism is Robbing Them of Their Last Piece of Bread . . ." Election poster, 1932. Cat. no. 226

the popularity of montage, that the "technically up to date medium of photomontage"was "already in danger of becoming a mere vogue"and that the "seemingly apolitical appeal" of the photomontages"being turned out by the hundreds for advertising purposes" could turn"only too easily into outright propaganda for the capitalist system". This was already the case with a lot of photomontage which like modernism itself, as easily served masters of any, none or polar political outlooks.

An example of this was the 'Ring neuer Werbergestalter'(Circle of New Advertising Designers), started in 1927 by the Hamburg based ex-dada man, Kurt Schwitters(1887-1948). Its raison-d'etre was the exchange of ideas and styles of work between avante-garde advertisers and artists. Among its associates were such people as Laslo Moholy-Nagy(1895-1946), Herbert Bayer(1900-) and prominent German designers such as Jan Tschicold(1902-1974). In 1931, a member of the group, Cesar Domela-Niewenhuis(1900-) curated a Fotomontage exhibition in Berlin. In it he included work by the 'Ring..'members including the above, but

also included was work by the members of the ASSO, including Heartfield, and members of their Soviet counterpart, the October group.

Among the Soviet exhibitors were such prominent names as El Lissitzky(1890-1941), Alexander Rodchenko(1891-1956)and Gustav Klutsis, in all 15 Soviet artists took part. The whole idea of the exhibition was to link the common abstract background, the Bauhaus of Bayer and Nagy to the constructivism of Rodchenko and El Lissitzky to the dada of Heartfield and Schwitters, to the photomontage of them all. The exhibition was a sort of propaganda exercise for photomontage, extolling the virtues of its propagandist and commercial nature. After all, every one of the exhibitors were involved in the advertising and marketing of either ideas, products and ideologies. Capitalist, Communist or Social Democrat, photomontage served them all as well as they wanted it to.

61 "German Sports." Photomontage for Kurt Tucholsky's *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, 1929, p. 109.
Cat. no. 319

Heartfield, Munzenberg and the A-I-Z(Arbeitre-Illustreirte-Zeitung, Workers Illustrated Newspaper)

One of the reasons for Heartfield's success at what he did was his ability to surround and place himself in the orbit of equally serious and talented professional colleagues. Ever since his first meeting with Grosz in 1915, he managed to work with some of the most creative and talented people in Germany. These were not all artists either, the person that enabled him to finally achieve his goal of being able to apply all that he knew about the mass media and advertising and successfully reach a truly mass audience was the independent communist publisher,Willi Munzenberg (1889-1940). Heartfield began working for Munzenbergs A-I-Z in 1930 and stayed with it in its two incarnations(VI-1937 on) for 8 years. This was the longest single period that he worked on any one publication. In total he produced 237 photomontages in A-I-Z and among these can be found the best examples of his unique style of photomontage that placed him head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

A year later he was exhibiting in the Fotomontage exhibition alongside many of his colleagues and as mentioned earlier, many of them worked in the publishing and advertising industry. However, Heartfield was interested in using the mass media as a vehicle of satire aiming at the politicisation of his audience through humour. He created a new style relying on the use of photomontage,the latest photographic and printing technologies combined with the much older tradition of satire based on such publications as 'Simpliccimus'(the Phoenix of its day) and 'Der Wahre Jacob'(The Real McCoy).

A-I-Z was set up by Munzenberg in 1925 as a serious attempt to rival the major publishing magnates in the picture periodical market working on the premise that a leftwing illustrated periodical is far more interesting and useful than the serious left wing broadsheets. Munzenberg was a unique figure in the Weimar scene. In the 20's he managed to build up something that was basically unique, a communist media empire in a capitalist country that was independent of the local communist party. The person needed to get

72 "German Natural History." *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*, Prague), August 16, 1934, p. 536.
Cat. no. 266

such a bizarre scenario up and running had to be an extremely talented and capable individual, he was all these and more.

In 1921, Willi Munzenberg was head of the Communist Youth International and in response to Lenins request for aid to help in the procuring of relief for the famine in the Volga basin. He was sanctioned to set up the charity organisation IAH(Workers International relief) to funnel aid to the fledgling U.S.S.R.. As a result of the fact that he was answerable directly to the Communist International in Moscow and not to the local organization - the KPD, he had considerable leeway and independence. This was later to be of great help to Heartfield in his interpretation of party cultural dogma. The IAH was not strictly a communist organisation, its aim, however was to show the Soviet Union in a positive light.

The IAH thrived (one of the few enterprises that did) and after the famine continued to raise money, this it ploughed into itself and within a few years, its going concerns included books, films, newspapers,

Zum Krisen-Parteitag der SPD

Die Sozialdemokratie will nicht den Zusammenbruch des Kapitalismus. Sie will wie ein Arzt zu heilen und zu bessern versuchen (Fritz Tarnow, Vorsitzender des Holzarbeiterverbandes)

FOTO-MONTAGE: JOHN HEARTFIELD

Die Tierärzte von Leipzig: „Selbstverständlich werden wir dem Tiger die Zähne ausbrechen, aber zunächst einmal müssen wir ihn gesundpflegen und herausfüttern."

73 "On the Crisis Party Congress of the SPD [German Social Democratic Party]." *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*, Berlin), no. 24, 1931, p. 477. Cat. no. 207

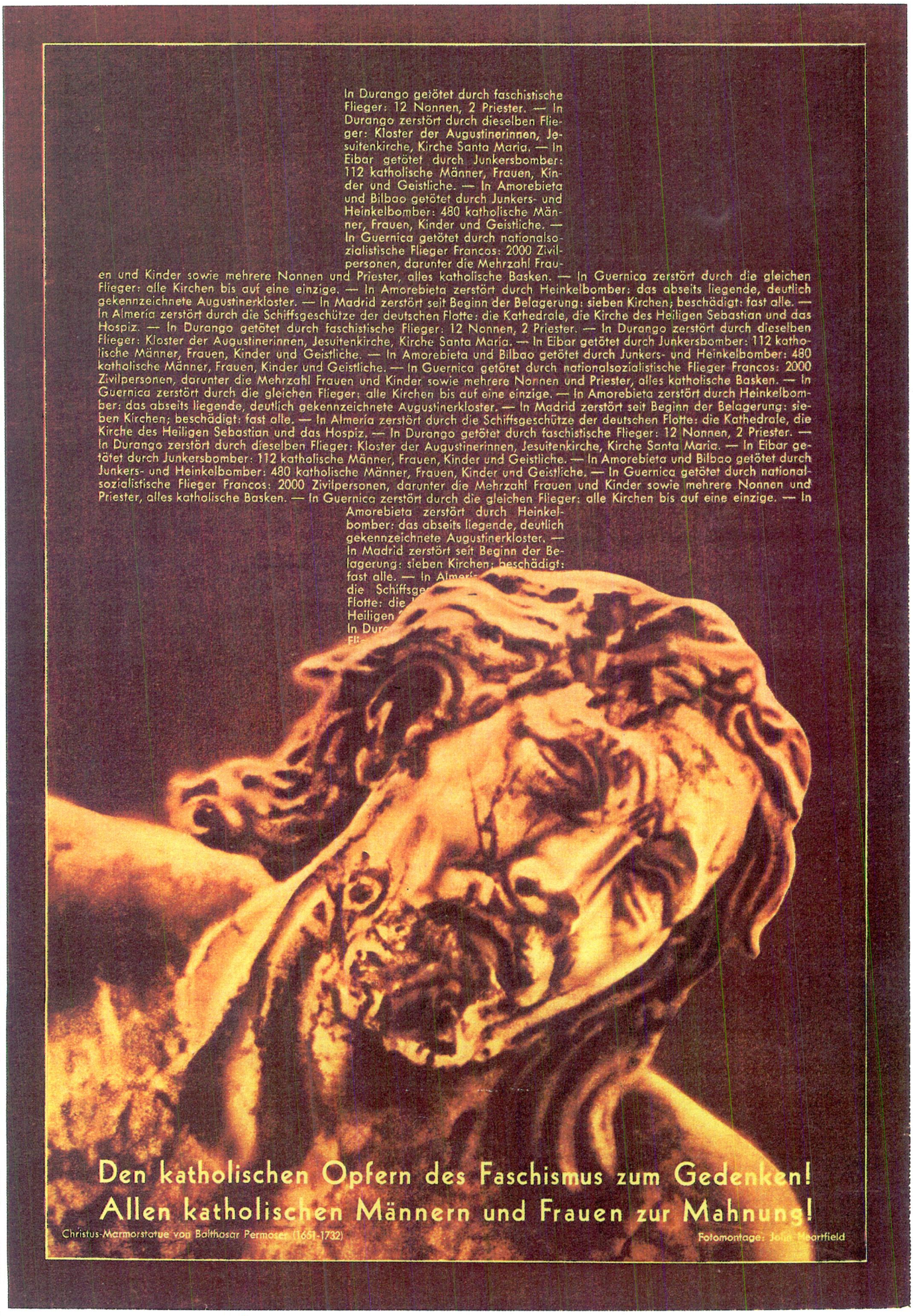
periodicals and even a cigarette factory in Berlin. Heartfield and Munzenberg complemented each other perfectly, despite their idealism and loyalty, they also shared a hard headed streak. This enabled them to be able to carry on their evangelising in the capitalist world with the hard sell tactics of their capitalist opponents.

During Heartfield's stay of residence at the paper its sales reached the 500,000 mark, however, with Hitler taking power in 1933, A-I-Z was quickly forced to flee Berlin. Munzenberg and most of his IAH concerns followed him to Paris, A-I-Z however set up shop in Prague and continued to publish. Soon though its circulation had dropped from the heady figure of 1/2 million to the 12,500 mark, deprived of its audience it was successfully sidelined by the Nazis in Germany. However, it was still a popular magazine among the emigre communities that had sprung up in various European capitals after Hitler's taking office.

The Heartfield brothers knew great hardship and deprivation as children having been abandoned by their

parents as when they were young. It was Helmut, who had to take charge of them and bring the family to relatives in southern Germany. From there he had a strict and austere monastery education. The memories of his childhood did give him definite characteristics, they turned him into a romantic and an idealist. As importantly he was to grow up and foster a deeply aggressive moral sense of justice. According to Oskar Maria Graf, he was "a fanatical moralist and Don Quixote rolled into one" (Pachnicke,p.32,1992). His dealings in the world of the commercial arts gave him a hard headed practical streak. He never let his childhood embitter him. Instead he used one of his more cutting attributes with a vicious intensity to target and dismantle his victims - humour.

In western society, the role of the cartoonist and caricaturist had never really gained much status on the hierarchical ladder of the fine arts. This can be seen in the nineteen century tradition that set out the role of art as idealisation, the exalting of beauty, sacrifice, stoic virtues and other such



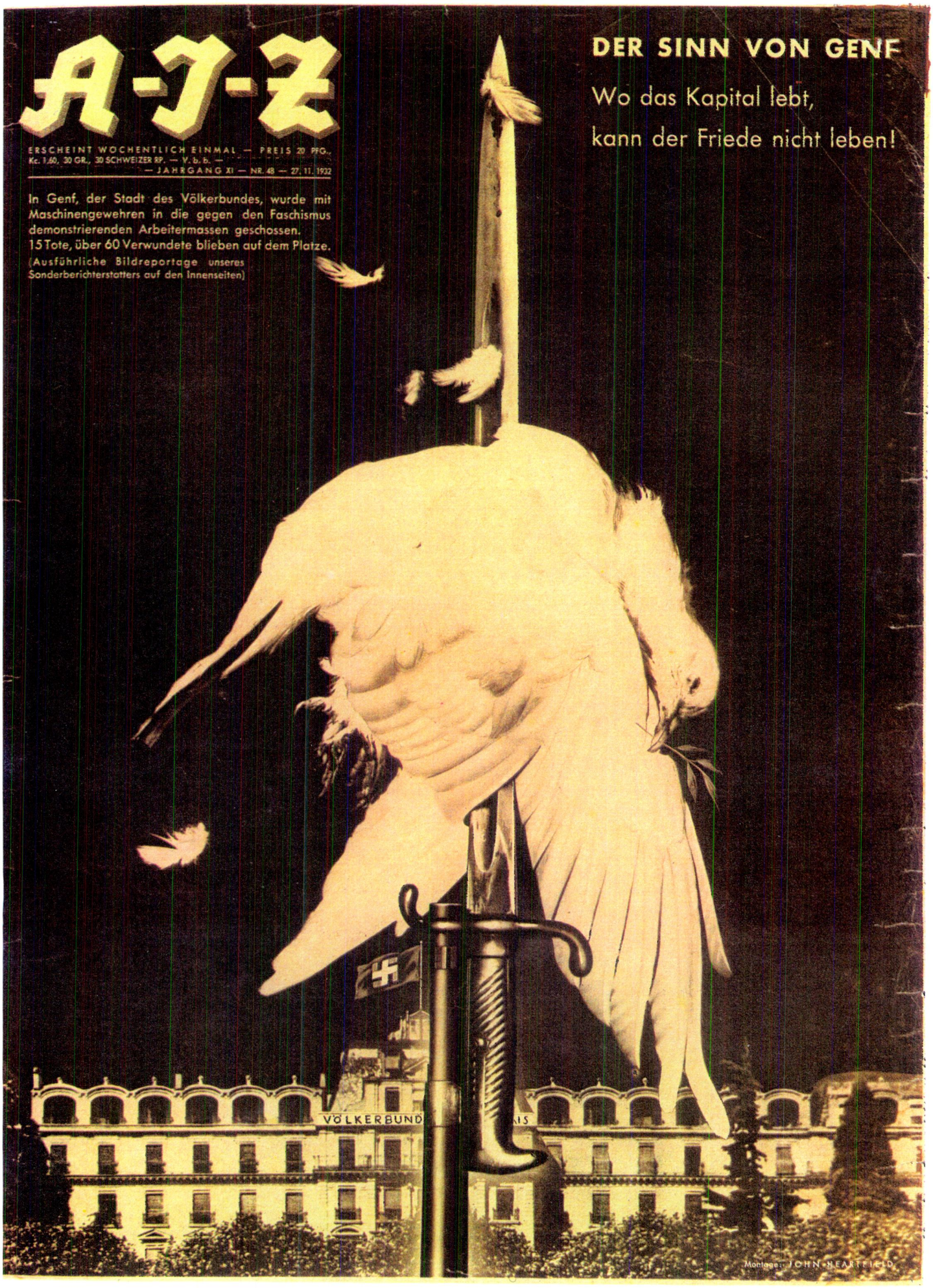
84 "In Memory of the Catholic Victims of Fascism!..." *Volks-Illustrierte* (*VI*, Prague), June 9, 1937, p. 369.
Cat. no. 288

establishment ideals. The role of the caricaturist on the other hand, was to point out, the stupidity of this false idealisation and to show an alternative reality that was often more real than the ideal. Heartfield wholeheartedly adopted this role, donning the jester's coxcomb and savagely attacking and lashing out at society around him.

He was never bothered by the idea of rooting through what were considered low forms of art, in fact he was extremely eclectic in his use of materials and sources. From his early inspirations in the form of Beardsley, Japanese ornamental art, Turkish folk art and mass circulation satirical publications such as 'Simplicimuss' and 'Der Wahre Jacob'(The Real McCoy), American broadsheet publications and experimentation with new type faces. These were just some of the elements, that he adopted, used and threw away again in his search for a personal definition of a style that he could claim as his own.

He through his work constantly exalted the German working class, the U.S.S.R., Stalin, the Comintern,the

85 "Illustration for Grimm's Fairy Tale of the Cat and the Mouse." *Volks-Illustrierte* (*VI*, Prague), March 2, 1938, unpag. Cat. no. 291



88a "The Meaning of Geneva." *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*, Berlin), November 27, 1932, front page.
Cat. no. 219

88b "The Meaning of Geneva." Photomontage for the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*, Berlin), November 27, 1932, front page. Cat. no. 220

KPD, its leader Ernst Thalmann. The bourgeoisie, the military, big business, Adolf Hitler, Goering, Goebells, Himmler, the Nazi Party, bankers, war and poverty, all came under, vicious, satirical attack. A constant frame of reference for Heartfield was that war equalled capitalism, and that the Great War was a desperate solution to capitalism in crisis. Once again in the depressionary and unstable times of the late twenties and early thirties, capitalism was again in crisis. Peace was under threat from fascism. Hope for peace lay in the direction of the Soviet Union and communism was something that should be aspired to because the Soviet Union provided a peaceful and stable alternative (or so it was thought at the time). It must be protected from fascist aggressors at all times. These ideas and themes were the driving force behind most of his work.

D.Evans in Heartfield A-I-Z\V-I,30-38, states that his use of type was uninteresting and limited due to the nature of the work that he carried out the magazine. This he says is not the case in respect to his bookcovers, as they were not limited by the

restrictions of the magazine format. This is not really fair on Heartfield, even though,Evans goes on to admit that a lot of his earlier typographical work is of great importance. Instead he goes on to talk about Heartfield's love of language, his use of various techniques, such as Metamorphosis, hybridization, anthropomorphism, and metaphors of scale. These in themselves are very true, however their very effectiveness as images often hinges on the very use of text, the amount or lack of it as the case may be.

Heartfield loved language, but his inventiveness with its use could only come to fruition if it was placed in a visual format. This format was of course text. In most instances it is the visual that is the most striking. But in a number of instances, text formed the main backdrop and also the only element in a cover. Evans goes on to use the Ernsdt Moritz Arndt piece((3\1935), as an example of Heartfields unadventurous use of type. The poem itself was written at the time of the Napoleanic invasion, but Heartfield adapts it for more a more contemporary topic - Hitler's attempt to influence the Saar

Ernst Moritz Arndt,

der deutsche Freiheitsdichter, spricht:

Krieg und Zerstörung wird nicht mangeln,
solange dieser lebt, der mordet, wann er schmeichelt,
lügt, wann er schwört,
Verderben meint, wann er von Frieden klingt,
auf Vernichtung sinnt, wann er von Freundschaft
und Bundesgenossenschaft spricht.
Er hat bis jetzt gespielt, zweideutig und zweifelhaft vielen,
er wird hinfort offener spielen müssen —
seine Larve ist fast zerrissen —
aber desto blutiger und verderblicher wird er spielen.
Er ist Werkzeug der Zerstörung, nicht der Gründung.

Darum stimmt die Saar
für status quo!

Montierte John Heartfield.

91a "Ernst Moritz Arndt, the German Freedom Poet, Speaks . . ." *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (*AIZ*, Prague), January 17, 1935, p. 48. Cat. no. 277

As stated in the introduction, montage has outlived many of its 'ism' masters, not only outlived, but also to survive, prosper and flourish right into the present day. The adaptability of montage is the key to its survival, this is in stark contrast to many of the systems of thought that it represented. The systems of thought that Heartfield, Vertov and Eisenstein were prepared to dedicate so much of their careers and lives to, now seem in our cynical 90's postmodern world as occupants of Jurassic Park along with the rest of the dinosaurs of 20th century life.

Was the arrival of the modern era at the turn of the century, really an arrival at all, or was the confusion and change that it generated, a foretaste of what was to come at the end of that same century. Heartfield, Vertov and Eisenstein made one crucial mistake in their interpretation of Marxist thought, that was to colour the very premise of their work throughout their lives. This same mistake was made by the majority of communists throughout the world in the early part of the 20th century. Their definition of late\advanced capitalism was seriously flawed.

As we know now, capitalism is still with us and has triumphed over these peoples works and visions. Heartfield and his contemporaries would no doubt be horrified at the thought of their work as just another commodity to be marketed, bought and sold, ie the idea that pre finished photograph pasteups of his more famous photomontages now are sought after by collectors who are willing to pay large sums of money for them. This is just like the hammer and sickle logo that they so proudly supported and devoted their considerable talents to (it just so happens that the brand name of the jeans that I,m wearing at the moment are called Red Square and when I bought them for the vast sum of 7.99 in Dunnes, they were marketed as Cool Cut Communist Casuals).

These people thought that the collapse of international capitalism was just around the corner and that a new age of equality would overtake the world. The very basis of their beliefs, the power of labour has lost its dominant place and in the meantime the world has become a meaner, dirtier, smellier and generally nastier place to live in. Information

technology is now king and we still don't know for sure if we are at the stage of advanced capitalism, or merely at another stage in the development of said condition.

These days one of the many definitions of the term postmodern is that as a movement it represents the fracturing and the sweeping away of boundaries and sacred conventions about all manner of things, among these, art. As a loose reference, by no means set in concrete, it could be considered applicable to the splintered and fractured state of our collective existence. This would imply that the old certainties that our forebears could rely on are no longer at our disposal.The truth of this is not very palatable at times and the knowledge of no longer having the naive belief and certainty of the truth of any one ideology over another can be depressing, its rather like someone telling you Santa does,nt exist.

Just as it was born out of the confusion that was generated at the beginning of the century, montage by its very nature fits in with the new turmoil and

confusion generated by the collapse of the certainties that evolved out of melting pot of the 'teens and twenties. For in the past the monteur has always been in the position to show us the not so nice side of our society, like a gatecrasher at a party. This is probably why in a democratic western society the monteur is never really too popular with the powers that be. In a totalitarian society, the monteur does what their told, if not, in Vertovs case, they just don't get much work, in Klutsis's case, they get taken out and shot!.

The only threat to the present pole position of montage in our culture is that if one day, somebody blows up the world or for some reason popular culture ceases to exist. This unlikely state of affairs would be the only surefire way to topple montage. In its myriad forms, montage is one of the few success stories of this century. On one level its like a talisman given to us by history as we enter the biggest era of change ever to affect us. The good luck element in montage is that it knows no bounds, manners or political correctness, and therefore can

never be completely taken over by any one faction over, or used like religion to claim a monopoly on truth and goodness. As long as montage is used as a vehicle of protest and has the fuel of mass culture to feed it, then it continues to serve the function of holding up a mirror to our crummy world and reminding us things are far from perfect, this in itself is by no means a bad thing!.

Endnotes

Chapter One

1.- Freud's theories on the workings of the unconscious mind have recently come in for a lot of flack. Their credence and supremacy are being challenged on a number of fronts. Various people have queried their basis and lack of foundation in any empirical research. Also the spate of lawsuits against parents by their children, who under 'regression' therapy(going back through the persons subconscious with the aid of hypnosis) have claimed that they were abused by parents involved in Black Magic and other such outlandish, unprovable but equally un-unprovable charges. Good general background and individual case study articles and programmes include, 'The trouble with Donna', p.10-16, Independent on Sunday review supplement dated 24 Oct. 1993, or Time International magazine, 'Is Freud Dead?' p. 50-64, Nov. 29, 1993, Vol.142, No.23. The Without walls programme, 'Good and Bad ideas of the 20th Century, Freud, gives a good

Century, Freud, gives a good if biased overview of the pros and cons of the mans ideas.

2.- For a good survey of the new sciences of Chaos theory and Complexity theory, read James Gleick's Chaos - making a new science, as science books go its very readable and was a big bestseller in the states!, forpublisher details etc see selected Bibliography

3.- Hannah Hoch did make some overtly political photomontages, but they were never really aimed at the mass media market. See 'Cut with the kitchen knife', p.69, 'Geld', and p.162, 'High Finance'. Her work however consistently refers to the gender issues facing the 'new woman' of the Weimar period and the inherent contradictions therein.

4.- However, the fact that certain rightwing groupings such as the P.M.R.C. are on a crusade to try and get rap banned on various grounds of obscenity, and incitement to violence does indicate that its anti establishment message is getting through and worrying elements of the status quo. The fact that Heavy Metal

was and still is to a certain degree as misogynistic and violent as Rap could ever be, seems to a large degree to have been ignored by the powers that be. This is probably due to the fact that no matter how outrageous Heavy Metal(I use the term in its narrowest meaning) may get, and no matter how many half hearted condemnations may issue forth from concerned parents , the music at the end of the day remains male, white, conservative middle America and ultimately poses no real threat to the order of things.

Chapter Two

1.- For a really good explanatory article on the condition of Synaesthesia, or the people who taste in shapes, hear colours or feel sounds, read the Independent on Sunday supplement dated 13 Feb. 1994, science section p.52-5.(It should be in the Library).

2.-Eisenstein had a theatrical background and prior to his moviemaking he was involved in stage design and

he designed massive backdrops for a number of plays, Vertov despised this and disapproved of the trickery and deceit of theatre coming into his filmmaking, preferring instead the ultimate truth of camera.

3.- Karl Radek was a prominent member of the Left Opposition up to 1928, when he publically broke with Trotsky and went on to become an ardent Stalinist and supporter of the 'Socialism in One Country' idea.

Chapter Three

1.- The rival claims of Heartfield, Grosz, Huelsenbeck and Klutsis to the title of originator of the Photomontage technique, all seem to be nullified, because Douglas Kahn states in 'John Heartfield, Art and Mass Media' on page 25 that "One reason these postcards(the early photomontages of Heartfield and Grosz) could pass through the mail was that they resembled photomontaged postcards and carte vistas circulating during that time, usually reminding soldiers that they were fighting for the wife and kids and country back home.

2.-A good example of the naiviety and innocence of Heartfield and the KPD was their slavish loyalty to Moscow, along with the majority of communists worldwide. Moscow definitely did not show any gratitude to its junior partners. In fact if one studies the history of the era carefully, one would see that it was a litany of contempt for its supposed internationalist comrades.The KPD's ignorance of what their mentor's were up to is best highlighted by the fact that in contravention to the Versailles Treaty, by 1926 the Soviet army was supplying the wehrmacht with arms and training them in their use. Stalin according to D.Evans also ordered the assassination of Willie Munzenberg in Paris in 1940.

3.- Heartfield when he was eight was abandoned with his brothers and sisters by his parents, though not the youngest in the family he had to take charge of them and bring them to his uncle's outside Salzburg. His brother Wieland was later to comment "For four days he searched for his mother,knowing that we, his younger brothers and sisters were alone in the cottage... Time and time again he ran into the woods,

full of fear and helplessness and with despair that increased from hour to hour, from day to day, kept calling and screaming only one word: 'Mother!' Those four days and four nights of forsakenness have been indelibly etched in my brothers character." (pachnicke,p.47,1992) Woods and Forests must have implied a deep subconscious unease in Heartfield. If one looks at his use of them in 'The Fox and the Hedgehog' and 'Grimm's Tale of the Cat and the Mouse', they must indeed be laden with unease as he foresee's the inevitability of the Second World War and the even greater potential slaughter of it than anything the Great War could throw up.

4.- After an introduction by Munzenberg Heartfield managed to work with Kurt Tucholsky on his book 'Deutchland, Deuthchland, uber alles', a satirical look at the collective German psyche, this seems to be the only period that he actually worked in book illustration, over bookcover or magazine format. The book was a surprising success, shifting more than 50,000 copies.(see illustration).

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