

# REVOLUTION *for the* LIBERATION *of* ART

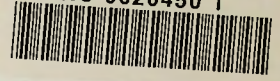


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NAME: *CATHY CALLAN*

DEPARTMENT: *FINE ART PAINTING*

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The growth of modernism was determined by the uneven and combined nature of capitalist development - the conflicting old and new co-existing. Modernist art tended to flourish precisely in those areas where rapid capitalist industrialisation took place against the background of feudal and agricultural society, Russia, Germany etc. The failure of both revolutions led to modernism being completely incorporated into capitalism after the 2nd World War where such conditions ceased to exist. The post-war settlement allowed for a restructuring of capital which led to an unprecedented boom.

Economic crisis re-entered the system in the late 1960s: the investment in modern technologies to increase competitiveness became essential as major economies weakened after years of directing huge amounts of capital into non-productive sectors of the economy i.e. the coal industry in Britain. The long boom provided a certain political stability however and the possibilities for revolutionary change that were ever present before the war were subsided. The once radical and innovative techniques of modernism were incorporated into the system. Modernist art became an eminently saleable commodity.

Capitalism is based on competition and on the accumulation of capital. Competitiveness, greed and selfishness are often viewed in society today as fundamental human characteristics. This suggests that everything is driven by material incentives or coercion. Engels when speaking about socialism believed it was the move from the realm of necessity to the realm of Freedom. If wealth is distributed evenly: put at the disposal of collective needs of humanity: then this will make the reasons for competition to disappear and create ideas based on co-operation, collective behaviour etc. The defeat of the 1917 Russian Revolution lay precisely in the level of relative scarcity which existed at the time in Russia. When Lenin said that without a revolution in Germany the Russian Revolution would perish he was pointing to the low level development of the productive forces of Russia.

The separation of workers from the product of their labour and the consequential alienation they suffer only serves to reinforce many of the more backward ideas and to increase the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the last capitalist machine. However as soon as there is any collective action - protests, strikes, campaign - then the alienation, backward ideas, feelings of powerlessness breakdown. When people engage collectively in such action they become much more open to ideas of solidarity and socialism than they are for most of the time and this is why socialist ideas are able to have a greater impact with workers when they are in struggle than when they are passive and atomised.

Karl Teige one of the Modernists, poet painter and designer believes that under the capitalist system art will not be given economic aid as art is unlike a subject such as science technology, business management etc. Art could not deliver that kind of competitive knowledge or innovation and therefore capitalist society reacted against it.

"The bourgeois society formed conditions for art and artists, that were fundamentally different from the conditions in which art had been produced for several centuries previously. Art and poetry were not given a place in the division of labour...(Karl Teige) Therefore in one sense artists were even farther alienated from their society than the ordinary worker. Teige argued that 'because of such isolation art would generate its own development and its own specific crises and that the curve of arts development is often broken and full of arbitrary turns.'"

The avant-garde emerging from Modernism as a cultural and political campaign may now seem notably out of date but the avant-garde political positions yet remain and it is these positions that I wish to emphasise throughout this essay. The ideal open market and the truly open society which is proposed by the new conservatives, Thatcher, Major & Aush remain familiar while looking back at long past events. Emphasis is still placed on the individual rather than the collective because the powers that be realise the importance of an alienated society.



Materialism dominates the art world as it does capitalist society. The avant-garde movements have been replaced by planned trading of spectacle. The visual arts including both the cinema and advertising have placed certain techniques which were once experimental and actual shocks as the working modes of a widely distributed commercial art. These are dominated by a few cultural centres, Hollywood etc. and many of the original works have passed into corporate trade. The art market requires products that can sell. Therefore even 'critical' art or art that avoids the museum and the gallery can alternatively be photographed and elevated to the status of the original art work. Similarly the same can be said for performance art etc. The art market is a very sophisticated business. Unfashionable work is unlikely to be shown and there will be no mention of quality where fashion or trend is concerned. Likewise patronage of the arts is not a matter of generosity. Companies subsidise the arts in order to foster their corporate image and also for the economic benefits of tax relief. Although certain artists refused to be placed with the capitalist machine, but this refusal also turned into a sellable commodity. As the 'uniqueness' of a painting etc. guaranteed its increasing market value.

Marx once said;

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour, because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves but between products of their labour....(Karl Marx).

Marx argued that commodity production and exchange are two primary factors in the debasement of human life and modern society. Marx demonstrates that commodity production forms the centre core of capitalism.

The mercy of art to the stock exchange demonstrates the need for revolutionary unity against the capitalist system. The crises in art cannot be changed under the capitalist system, neither can art solve its own crises because art reflects and moulds society, art alone cannot change societies economic base. The capitalist system stresses the role of the 'individual'. It strengthens the myth that under socialism everyone will be the same and uses this order to prevent people from becoming organised to revolt.....

I believe that art under socialism will unleash all creativity that is constrained beneath capitalism by rules of accumulation. Consequently under socialism people will no longer be constrained by material means. The capitalist separation of artists from workers and workers from artists will cease to exist as art will become the means to organise life. I will conclude this essay by arguing the necessity for social and political revolution in society today. The ruling class will not give their power away - the working class must take it from them.





Bolshevism as an organised democratic centralist movement emerged in Russia as the events of 1905 deepened into urban and rural violence. Its leading members were Krasin, Bogalanois, Lenin and Trotsky. Lenin has stressed the need for a lightly knit revolutionary party in his 1903 pamphlet "What is to be done". When he argued that while capitalism creates the forces of its own destruction i.e. large proletariat masse's united in daily struggle for immediate economic gains, it also divides them by ideas of sexism and racism. This contradiction creates the need for a revolutionary party, a vanguard with a clear ideology and discipline.

"The party must be only the vanguard, the leader of the masses of the working class, the whole of which works under the control and direction of the party organisations, but the whole of which does not and should not belong to a party." (Lenin 1903). This does not mean that Lenins idea of the part was elitist or a substitution for the self-activity of the working class but it the uneven consciousness of the workers that disrupts the unity of the class and it is this that creates the need for the vanguard party according to Lenin. There was a need for an organisation that leads workers, not tames or strangles them.

The activists of the 1905 revolution proved that they were capable of destabilishing the old regime and this doctrine was grasped by individualist styled 'avant-gardes' of different ideological beliefs whose invitation to destroy tradition could easily overlap with the desire to destroy the entire social and cultural order. Modernism emerged in the late 19th century. It was most apparent in the countries experiencing the rapid and uneven development of industrial capitalism - Russia, Germany, Italy, Austria and Hungary. It involved a general fragmentation which led art to the isolation of a distinct apparently autonomous social practice.

As a result, artists alienated from the rest of social life focused on art and its process of artistic creation as the sole objective of art. Art became a refuge from a social world dominated by art as commodity. Modernism however, contained a radical potential, it implicated the breakdown between art and life. This potential became self conscious in the avant-garde movements. They wanted art to take a part in the more general struggle, to revolutionise society. The avant-garde movements flourished in both the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the German Revolution of 1918 - 1923. Historical circumstances made it possible to link together social and artistic revolution. The Russian Constructivists in particular - Mayakovsky, Eisenstein, Rodchenko, Tatlin etc. - three their art into the revolution for the transformation of everyday life. Both revolutions (1905 & 1917) in Russia provided new opportunities for the artist, the provincial, women etc. Revolution bred innovation, all rules were there to be broken not just in the social world but in the artistic world as well.

Although the Bolshevik revolution created favourable conditions for artistic experimentation it failed to convert many of the avant-gardists and members of the Russian intelligentsia to its side. The cultural upheaval became different from the social and political upheaval coosing to ignore its social and economic background. Revolution through innovation became a distant object of the avant-garde; art for arts sake became popular. This gave artists a 'separatist' authority, artists needed only to become involved in their own cultural crusade not as bolsheviks in the revolution. The early Modernist artists emphasized innovation, they were divided between politics and art, Marxism and idealism, the traditional critical thinking of the intelligentsia and the new European movements of Symbolism and art for arts' sake. They believed in a general revolt against bourgeois society. They wished to transcend society through new values of truth and to create art that would enable a select few to see behind material reality. They were either terrified by the events of 1905 and sought parisian exile or were radicalised and stayed to witness the 1917 revolution. They sought a style akin to Art Nouveau a Jugendstil - decorative and delicate, sensuous and stylised. This, however, was also suitable for the new market provided by the well-to-do. Such artists were preoccupied with the symbolic, the religious and the mystical in both art and life. They sought the religious aspects they believed inherent in Marxism. They were called 'God-seekers' and 'builders' Lenin. He vilified the God-construction; Marxism is a scientific truth not religious myth.

The futurists were more politically involved than the earlier artists and less so than the Soviet constructivists that would follow. They broke rules of poetic rhythm and rhyme, visual line and colour but rarely broke societal rules. The futurists were preoccupied with the modern, criticized bourgeois society and the Academy but also sought a new market and audience for abstract painting, nonsense poetry and atonal music. They didn't join the Bolsheviks because for them art was revolution. They proved to be elitist believing in their superior innovative rebellion which would conflict with revolutionary unity.

The constructivists represented the shift from innovation to complete revolution. They believed in art for social need and that art should serve the people. They wanted art to construct the new society. They espoused collectivism because artistically it meant the disappearance of the 'bourgeois' individual in favour of the proletariat 'whole'. They were the most involved in the Bolshevik revolution. The defeat of the German and Russian revolutions undercut the base of the avant-garde and constructivism.

All three stages of artists coexisted during the 1917 revolution: Their different positions lead eventually to oppositional politics; conservatism and the cult of excellence, Stalinism, Facism and Social Democracy.

In 1942 Trotsky in his book 'Literature and Revolution' criticized the artists of the 1920s as not being revolutionary but middle aged products of their social class, the bourgeoisie who hopped on the Bolshevik bandwagon but only to take them on their own individualistic way. They were destroyed by Facism and Stalinism. The avant-garde aided this destruction. They defied Marx and Lenin and in doing so helped prepare the way for Stalin's rise to power. Their shared belief in the religious aspects of Marxism, their belief that man could become God helped provide the technique and the philosophy that would support Stalin in the crushing of his enemies including themselves as artists and intellectuals.



ТЫ

PROLETARIAN  
CULTURE

ЗАПИСАЛСЯ  
ДОБРОВОЛЬЦЕМ?



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# ТЫ



## ЗАПИСАЛСЯ ДОБРОВОЛЬЦЕМ?



The class struggle will make class boundaries disappear and then under socialism class struggle will take the form of debate over technique, art, style, and education. Lenin and Trotsky argued that one must master the art of the past before rejecting, Lenin wanted not to restore or imitate art from previous epochs but to use it as a means in achieving a new contemporary art. Lenin did not believe in a passive acceptance of the old culture, he merely wanted to reshape that culture in the interests of the new classless society out of whose structure new art would evolve naturally.

The new art which emerged for the revolution had to be accessible to the ordinary Russian. It had to be capable of popular appreciation. It had to be revolutionary in the sense of not replicating outworn forms and appropriate for the socialist struggle. Art and leisure both had to be seen as constructive.

Art for the revolution and revolutionary art are different in ideals although sharing a point in common. Art for the revolution would need to be accessible to the masses of uneducated Russians but this would be separate from the art that the revolution would release. Trotsky believed that the existing culture must be used to educate the proletariat, pre-revolutionary art therefore would be the art of the revolution (as this would combine the artists and revolutionary aims) whereas revolutionary art could only evolve properly after the revolution when art would cease to act as commodity.

There was an international growing concern of both culture and art in the mass industrial society. In England William Morris believed that art's function as a source of decoration was not enough the arts themselves needed to be functional. Artistic creation should be an act of production and in this way the artist would become worker and the worker would become artist. The Werkbund in Germany in 1907 (a forerunner of the Bauhaus) believed that their work should be functional rather than decorative and in doing so provide objects for both living and working. They produced silverware, streetlamps, sewing machines etc. They also designed factories the A.E.G. Turbine Plant in Berlin (1908) and the Fagus Shoe Factory in Alfeld (1911-1913)

The workers culture grew in importance especially in Russia as Socialism anticipated a highly cultured society. Many theories were proposed on the workers culture. It might entail the system of movement, decoration and organisation within the factory walls. It might mean the entertainment provided to workers by artists. In 1917 Russia the socialist ideal was a culture created by the worker for the worker.

Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Gorky were the first to introduce the term proletarian culture in 1909. Their view of a proletarian culture echoed Auguste Comte's 19th century philosophical system, which had flourished as a religion of science since the 1830s. It also resulted from a collection of other intellectual influences; European positivism, Marxism, the experience of 1905 and the workers schools of Capri and Bologna. Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Gorky wanted to bridge the gap between the Intellectuals and the Bolsheviks, the politically revolutionary and the artistically creative, however, their views suggested intellectualism as an elitist form and involved a religious dimension - they believed that man would become God under Socialism. In doing so they would serve to undermine the progress and political direction of the various Bolshevik groups under Bolshevik leadership.

The theory of proletarian culture was put into practice by Bogdanov and his cultural organisation proletkul't. Proletkul't leadership was maintained by veterans of Capri, Bologna and Paris (all three were attempts in revolutionary culture). Proletkul't held its first national conference on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power. In the spring of 1919 Proletkul't claimed a membership even greater than the ranks of the Bolsheviks numbers ranging in the tens of thousands. Most members were ordinary workers and not artists. They performed plays, wrote poetry etc. edited journals and organised revolutionary festivals. Bogdanov believed that the worker was most important, the

artist simply the organiser of the collective mass. But the Socialist ideal was that the worker would become artist by being in control of his own life. Lenin was critical of Proletkult, he disliked Bogdanov's religious and intellectual views. Lenin favoured class struggle as the revolutionary means of transforming a society. Lenin's criticism was not heeded and by the 1921 Proletkult leaders often used the worker and peasant organisations as a convenient way of developing their own personal ideals in philosophy and culture.

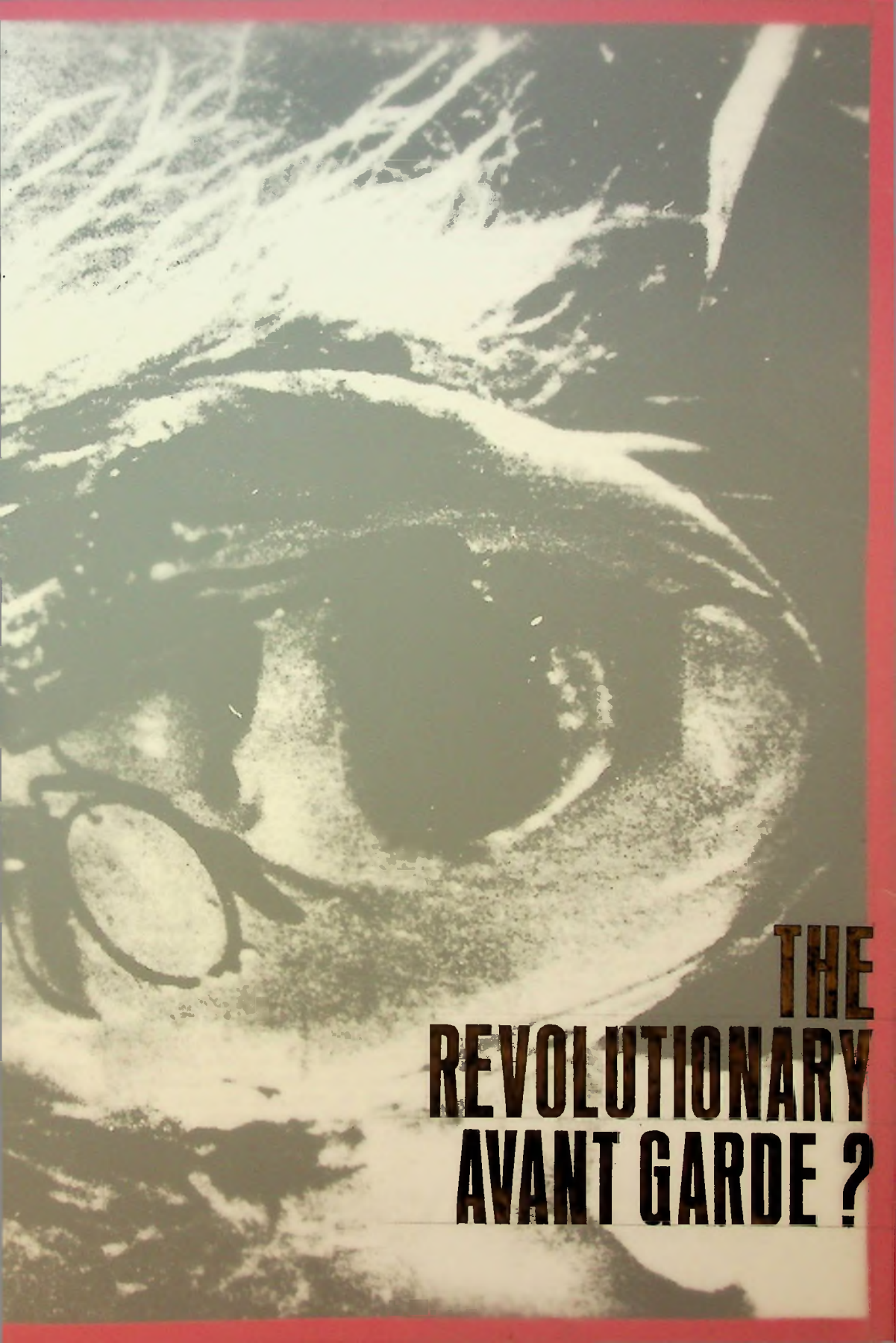
Proletkul't was subordinated to Lunacharsky's Narcompros. Lunacharsky became the dominant figure in education and the arts in Russia; he was head of a sprawling bureaucracy and his vision of a proletarian culture was more than the unification of workers and artists. He believed that man collectively would lead him to immortality, to man becoming God, and this is against revolutionary socialist doctrine. Symbolism appealed to Lunacharsky. His vision of a proletarian culture would be proletarian and the socialist doctrine would suffice religious needs and beliefs. The legacy of positivism was to prove more profound than Plekhanov's views on art as a product of their social class. Lunacharsky would have been the most important link between Bolshevik and artists in the early days of Soviet rule.

Trotsky, Lenin's aid in gaining revolutionary power for the Petersburg Soviet and overthrowing Kerensky's provisional government in 1917, was unwilling to allow party dictatorship of the arts but he did support Lenin's policy of massive state intervention and encouragement of the arts in general and with this the appointment of Lunacharsky for Education and Culture and setting up of organisations such as Proletkult, Lunacharsky, however, created his own theory of a future proletarian which would later be called God-Construction by Lenin.

Lenin wanted to pull down the distasteful traces of Tsarist past and retain those which had either artistic or historic interest. Before the revolution there were thirty museums, by 1918 there were 87 and by 1920 550 old museums and 1,000 private collections of art had been registered. The people's museum would enable the people to view artifacts which were used for private luxury or symbolic power. It could also mean however, that art could be toned down or curbed i.e. futurists, Constructivists etc. to suit the taste of the proletariat. For a while Lenin wanted to discourage excessive innovation but it was under Stalin that the museum would become most oppressive by only allowing traditional or conformist art.

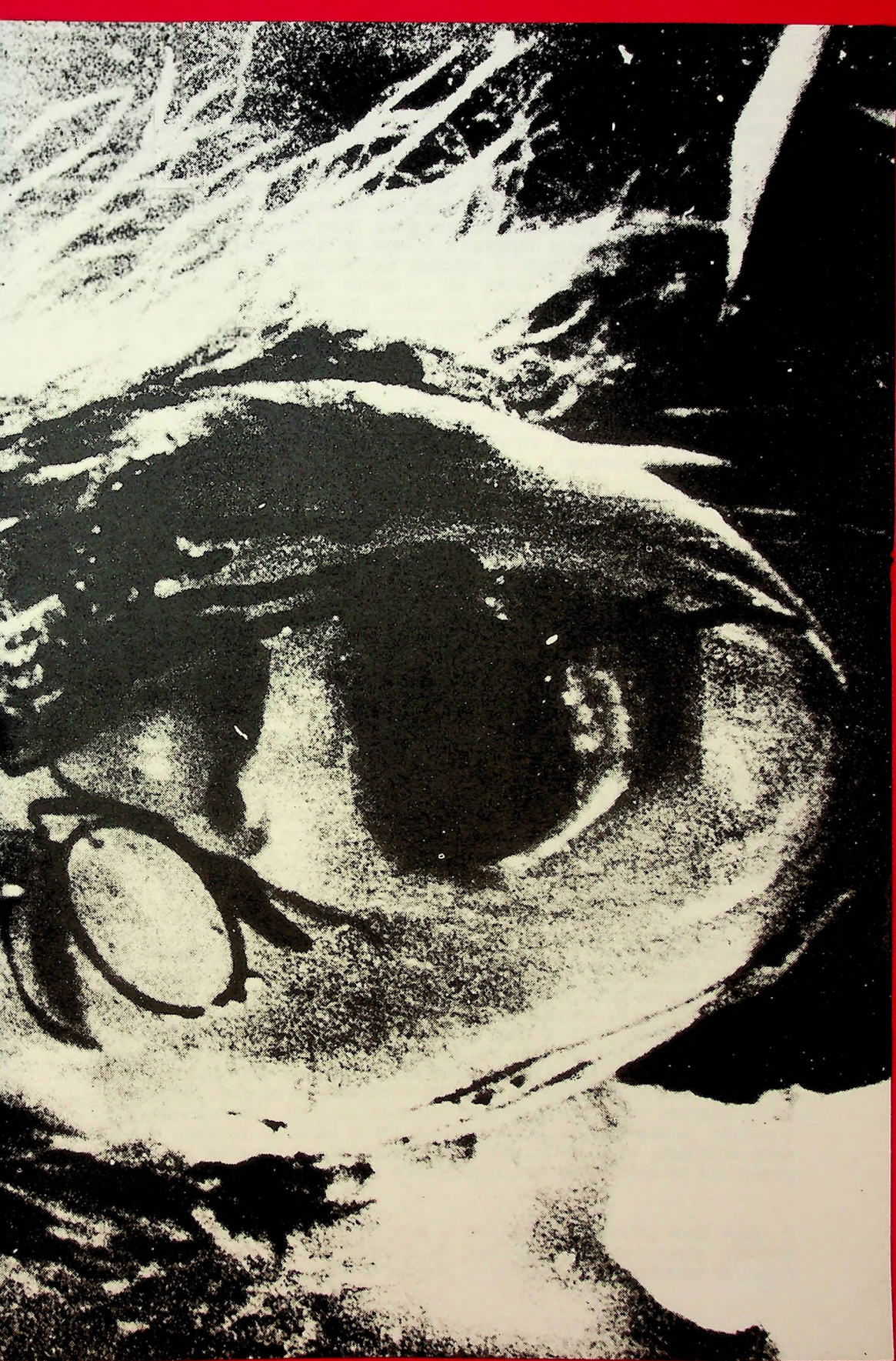
After the Revolution of 1917 Lenin envisaged the revolutionary movement in terms of construction as the new society was not yet socialist but moving in that immediate direction. Socialism advocated a highly cultured society and definitely not a 'proletarian' culture as socialism advocated a classless society. It was necessary therefore to construct this culture, but the Bolshevik party had been forced to use thousands of members of the Old Tsarist bureaucracy in order to maintain a functioning governmental machine and it was this, in conjunction with the concessions it made to the peasants in the New Economic Policy, that ended in the destruction of the Socialist ideal. Trotsky was exiled by Stalin in 1929 and Stalin's suppression of both artistic and political differences put an end to the pretension by Stalinism and Facism to encourage social and cultural life. Lenin's anticipated cultural revolution had nothing in connection with the politics - cultural witch-hunt that Stalin sponsored under the name of 'cultural revolution' in 1928 - 1931. Similarly, Stalin's terroristic collectivization of the peasants had nothing in connection with the 'co-operating of Russia' envisaged by Lenin.





**THE  
REVOLUTIONARY  
AVANT GARDE ?**







There were many difficulties in achieving a cultural revolution, as the revolutionaries would have looked to the material base and have been alienated from society for so long that they would have disregarded the existing culture. Iconoclasm can be defined as either the destruction of hated images or idols or a deep antipathy of a given cultural order. Iconoclasm had always been involved in the social struggles of Russia as in the great peasant revolts of the 17th and 18th century, the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 were accompanied by iconoclasm and vandalism for iconoclasm could be subdivided into mindless destruction which would usually have been associated with peasants in a rural area. This destruction would be more of a vandalistic nature. Iconoclasm in its proper context could be the self-conscious demolition of objects of the old regime. Closely following iconoclasm was nihilism - the hatred of the old culture art and intellectualism. Nihilism not only invoked the hatred of the past culture but also of the intelligentsia. All these currents merged against the existing culture.

The anti-intellectual movement aided Lenin, as a Marxist revolutionary, to draw all strata of society into the revolutionary movement. There were angry artists, students, employees, members of various religious sects, teachers etc. each one subjected to the Tsarist horrendous regime - brutality of the police, outrageous censorship, persecution of different religious sects; public flogging and People from the bourgeois, proletarian and peasant classes in society all shared the regime of oppression. Artists too had as much to gain from the overthrowing of the feudal society as the masses. For it was not only the individual bourgeois (into this bracket the artists so often fell) with his comfort and self-interested morality that needed to be overthrown but even more importantly the smashing of the bourgeoisie as a class of employers and controllers of money and the old Tsarist regime.

I would argue that the avant-garde was individualistic and passive and therefore inhibited the revolutionary ideal. The avant-garde was not really revolutionary, although both modernism and the avant-garde rejected the existing social order they had no solid political ideology behind them. Although left wing in context they held onto arts autonomy, presupposing existence in a vacuum. Art does not exist in a vacuum because of its social economic and political influences. The bourgeois liberation is retained through individualism. The capitalist system stresses the individual role whereas the socialist system bases itself on collective creative labour.

In Marx's analysis of capitalism he proposed that capitalism produces the forces of its own destruction. The assumption by the social democratic party that the counter forces would triumph before capitalism's own catastrophic collapse made it possible to evolve the theory of the peaceful because automatic transformation of capitalism into socialism. This theory could be designed to still the active fight against feudal and bourgeois imperialism and it would seem that the avant-garde played a major role in the attempt of this passive transition of society contrary to the revolution and active fight of the Bolsheviks.

Arts submission to the ruling class and its function as ideologically reinforcing a full society was found in arts autonomy. Bourgeois society had rendered art with no valid social connection by defining and institutionalizing it as separate from life. The avant-garde movements e.g. Dadaism, Futurism, Surrealism, all wanted to reintegrate art and life as they believed this eventually lead to radical social change. They wanted to change society by aesthetic means and what they failed to realise was that this society was dominated by technical rationality and by an ideal of progress which concentrated wholly on the development of science and technology in order to maximize exploitation for profit. Many art movements claiming to be against bourgeois society actually reinforced the order of the day by pursuing their authentically autonomous project and reinforcing the 'individual'. And because of this many avant-garde artists became successful bourgeois; they controlled their own production unlike the ordinary worker.

Art helps to structure the consciousness of the people by reflecting social values. It can contribute to the reinforcement of social order by perpetuating traditional attitudes within the society or it can help to sharpen the contradictions of society



through satire and criticism but art alone can never change society. The idea that art can exist for arts' sake alone was scorned both by the Bolsheviks and other Russian Social Democrats. Art that can exist for arts' sake alone chooses to ignore arts economic and social background.

All cultural forms must in some way reflect their economic background. As people rise on the economic scale in a class based society their appreciation for art grows as economic improvements increases the cultural needs and demands of humanity. It brings about a wider demand for objects of culture and art stimulates mass activity and interest in the practice of art.

Therefore it is necessary to understand the evolution of the bourgeoisie in relation to the various art movements. The first bourgeois generations were financially in a position to claim new forms of liberation. They fought feudalism (state and aristocratic controls) such as property, marriage and family. A second bourgeois generation fought on the same principle of liberation but this time against marriage etc. in favour of the central bourgeois figure, the most important 'individual'. I would argue that liberation cannot be achieved either through a settled relationship or through individualism in this context forms of property and other economic controls can only hinder liberation of a whole society because technically in a bourgeois society everyone has 'freedom' but in actual fact only those who control the means of production, distribution and exchange are free. Marx argued:-

"The supersession of private property is, therefore, the complete emancipation of all human qualities and senses. It is such an emancipation because these qualities and senses have become human, from the subjective as well as the objective point of view. The eye has become a human eye when its object has become a human, social object, created by man and destined for him."

(Karl Marx, 1844)

Class struggle, strikes, protests, campaigns are collective actions. People become open to ideas of solidarity and of socialism. The passive avant-garde can never contain such notions, all methods of protest take place within the existing society not against it.

The Russian avant-garde constructivism because of its participation with the Bolshevik revolution avoided the paradox created by the Western European avant-garde, the paradox being that the western european avant-garde thrived in those political and economic systems it sought to eliminate. It was in Russia that the different agendas between government and avant-garde complimented rather than contradicted each other. The avant-gardes aspiration to change not only art but society expolded in constructivism. Marxist ideology was the driving force behind constructivism, it wished to eliminate alienation by erasing the gap between society and community. Constructivism sought to overcome private property in all its cultural forms and therefore sought to collectivize the production of art.

Lenins view was that 'of all arts, the film is most important to us -' and Russian cinema developed rapidly with state aid. However, works such as Sergi Eisensteins 'Battleship Potempkin' received limited exposure with the failure of the Russian Revolution and demonstration of Stalin.

'Proletarian' art reached its peak between 1928 and 1929 under Stalin when he undertook the first five year plan and terminated the new economic policy. 'Proletarian' art consisted of a group of artists and critics who believed that the most revolutionary art is not based on a particular Marxist theory but art which follows party directives. They echoed of Proletkul't but their principles were different - they advocated the partys needs and the partys art. It was a grave irony that artists such as the Constructivist Rodchenko fell victim to such 'Proletarian' art envisaged by Stalin. Particularly noteworthy is the Belomorestore (White Sea Channel) which was a project by Stalin which tied together the system of labour camps and combined genocide with the exploitation of cheap labour. Rodchenko blinded by Stalins 'Party' directives documented the event through photographs failed to see the Constructivism had already been eclipsed by the political changes.

# THE NECESSITY FOR POLITICAL ORGANISATION

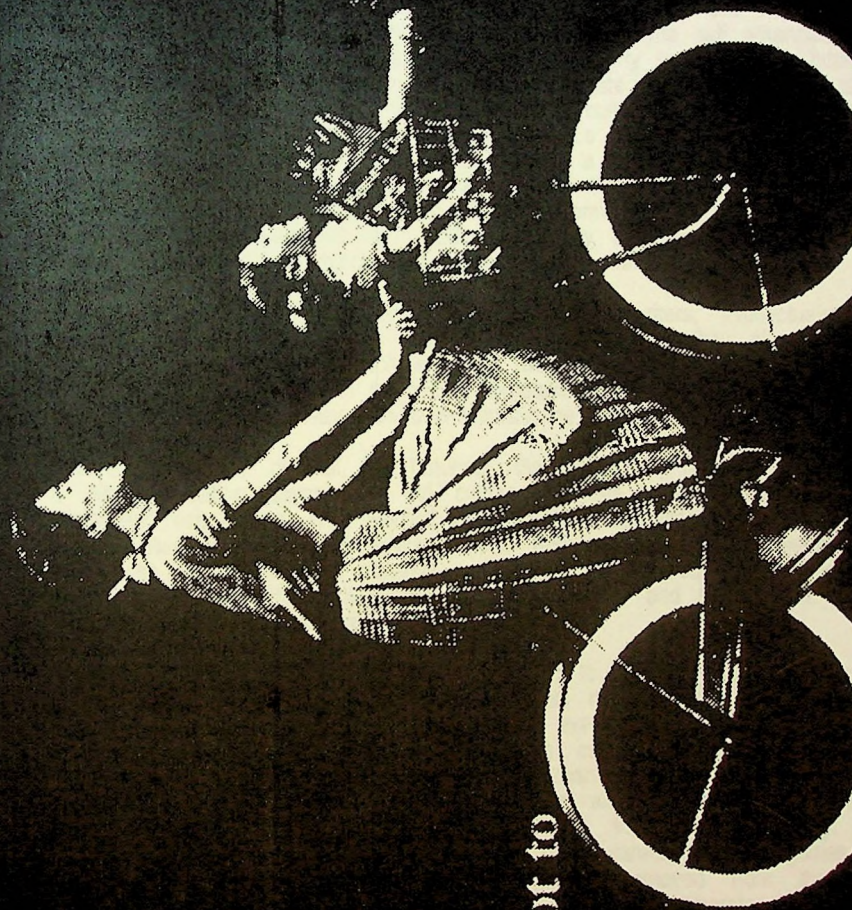
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to get Woman's Day  
for an answer.

Woman's Day is the only magazine that  
gives you the answers to all your questions.  
It's the only magazine that gives you the answers to all your questions.



She's got to



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I believe that the avant-garde failed not only because both the German and Russian revolutions failed but because many avant-garde artists were not committed to the social and political revolution. In order to achieve socialism it is not enough to be artistically organised. Even more importantly each individual needs to be politically organised within a revolutionary party.

The revolutionary party must be a working class party. No individual terrorists, peasant movement, student movement or grouping of intellectuals can act as a substitute for a party with its roots in the industrial proletariat. A young organisation finding itself, as often happens, predominantly petty bourgeois in composition must make a strenuous effort of self criticism and self transformation in order to make the transition to a workers' party. The democratic centralist party acts as the vanguard, the vanguard being the working class themselves who lead the class in its everyday battles in the factories, the pits, the offices, the housing estates etc. The party leads the class but from within the very class structure, not from the outside i.e. an elite few directing the way. Democracy is essential for the self emancipation of the working class. Centralism is essential because the party must wage a bitter struggle against a highly centralised enemy - the capitalist state. There was a dual struggle in Russia between the peasants who were smashing cultural treasures in a random and unarticulated way and between avant-garde artists i.e. 'Futurists' who had such retentive for the 'old'. The dual iconoclastic struggle posed a severe threat to culture in 1917. The anti-cultural and anti-intellectual menace and the subsequent struggles between these currents and the government ended in the domination of Stalin. This whole surge of egalitarianism, fused with a hatred of authority and iconoclasm made life very difficult for any intellectual who chose to remain in Russia after the revolution.

The revolution was eagerly anticipated by artists, writers, intellectuals etc. The majority of these were not in fixed class positions and they all had complaints against the bourgeoisie and capitalism. The Marxist critique of the reduction of labour to a trade could overlap with the artists complaint about the reduction of works of art to simple commodities by dealers and booksellers in the new cultural market.

The avant-garde in general, the Futurists, the intellectual, radical groups often took a nihilist position toward the old culture. Nihilism was against art considered elitist and soft culture. They wanted to spread scientific progress to the masses but instead often caused mixed feelings of fear and guilt. Nihilist manifestos through a liberal use of vulgarity and obscenity and occasionally grotesque costuming aimed at chastising and ridiculing conventional bourgeois morality and tastes. The avant-garde, tried to expose the degeneracy and hypocrisy of Tsarist life.

All groups similarly to different degrees fell victim to elitism. They may have broken artistic rules but rarely those of society. Artists often claimed that art was more than simple labour, its cultural, aesthetic and even spiritual values were especially outraged in a capitalist society. The artistic cultural movement was free and liberating made up of individuals whereas the organised working class had disciplines of party and union. The identified with Marxism as a scientific truth whereas the cultural movement tried to maintain its own individualistic identity. Similarly although the Futurists were provocative they often carried the ambiguities between revolution and carnival. They were actually far removed from the organised revolutionary parties which would use scientific socialism to liberate the masses. The futurists were correct in hoping for an end to the separation of culture from technology but an entire cultural revolution was needed in order for this to happen.

Both modernism and the avant-garde rejected the existing social order and this could be expressed by a simpler art bending towards the primitive or the exotic, the true native culture of the vitality of the naive. Modernism proposed a different social world, it was supposedly 'anti-bourgeois' it rejected tradition and emphasized creativity.

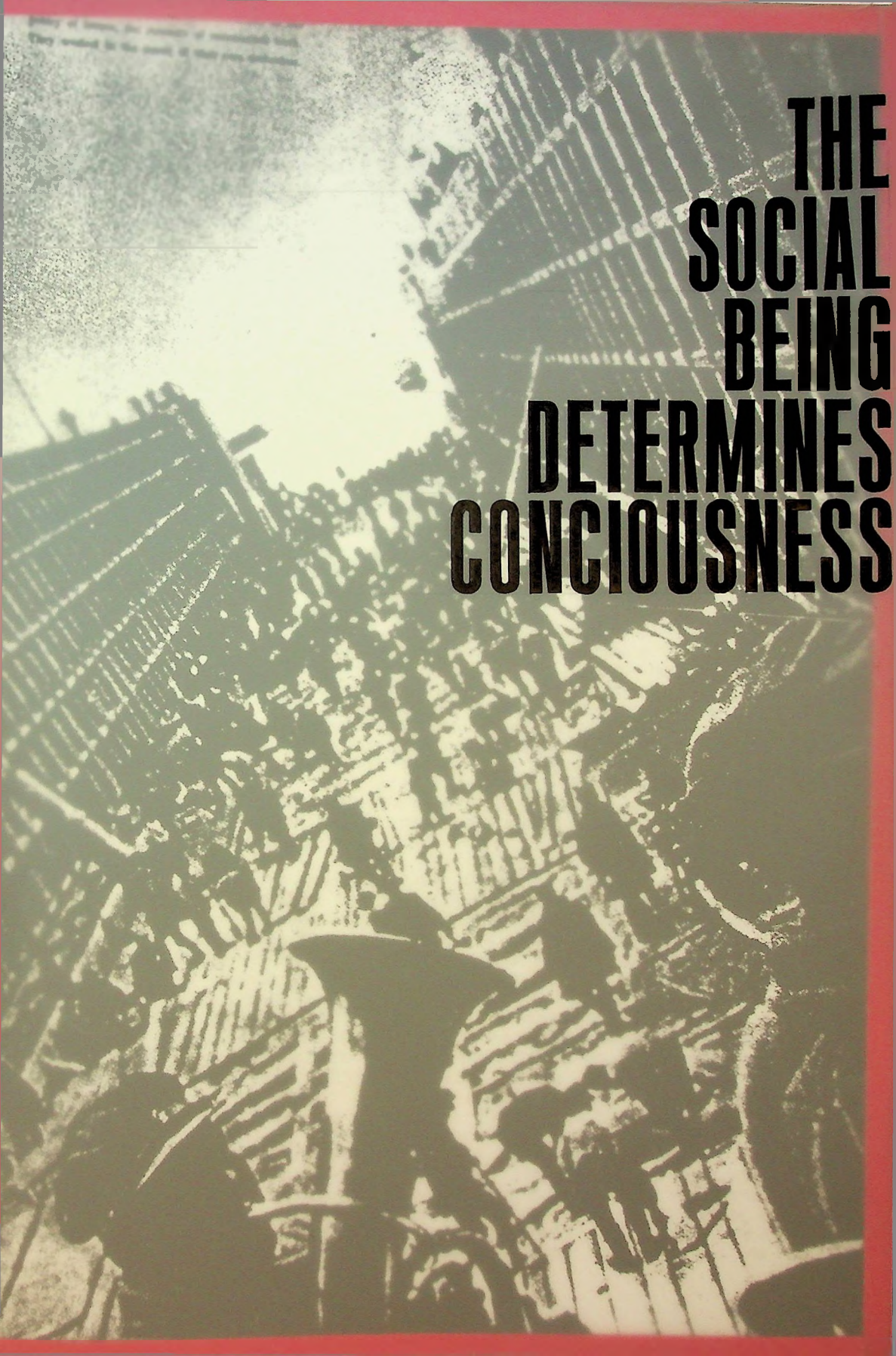
The 'folk' emphasis could represent a repressed popular tradition. The 'primitive' could represent the new art which the revolution would release and therefore they could blend themselves with socialist and radical revolutionary tendencies. The 'folk' and 'primitive' can be even further subdivided; Italian and German Faxism both learned on the 'folk' tendency as a emphasis on the people and this could lead to nationalistic identifications. The primitive could eventually lead to the rejection of all politics in the name of art and not only liberal progressivism but also scientific socialism, the philosophical in favour of the scientific. However, the diverse movements had an underlying similarity they were all adopting new methods, purposes, thoughts in the art field and it was for this very reason that they would be suppressed by Stalin.

It has been proven that when tensions reach the highest extreme it is necessary to take either side. This was proven espeacially by Nazism, its seizure of power in 1933 and also the civil ware in Spain and this is why political organisation is essential. Stalin's rise to power was not inevitable; the failure of international revolution held the fate of the final defeat of the Russian Revolution. In Jan 1918 Lenin was able to say ' the final victory of socialism in a single country is of course impossible. Our contingent of workers and peasants which is upholding Soviet power is one of the contingents of the great world army.'

(Lenin 1918)

The domination by Stalin with the failure of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Facism in Europe proved how necessary it was to have an organized revolutionary movement with cohesive ideology. Many opposing groups wanted to break with the past but from different objectives and not the socialist ideal envisaged by Lenin but crushed by Stalin.





They wanted to be heard, the promise of immediate work.  
They wanted to be heard, the promise of their own liberation.

# THE SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES CONCIOUSNESS



many of them, the remains of unincorporated work.  
They worked in the midst of their own destruction.





The Bolshevik culture wanted to curb the radical upsurge of nihilism by the Russian Revolution. Unfortunately some of them did so by putting great emphasis on the spiritual welfare of the people. In Europe the 19th century philosopher Dietzgen once again became popular during 1919 - 1920 in the post war revolutionary turmoil. Dietzgen's views created an interest in the religious and myth making aspects of Marxism. He believed that Socialism was comparable to religion and because of this was capable of inspiring mass action. Lenin vilified 'Dietzgenism.' He did not want the Bolshevik circle forming around Bogdanov as this group represented both an ideological and economic threat to him. (The Bolshevik party before 1917 and after 1905 depended on intellectuals i.e. Gorky for money.) Bogdanov, Mach and Lunacharsky believed that victory for the proletariat would not be in economic terms alone but also in a new religious consciousness as opposed to Lenin's class struggle.

Lunacharsky placed a clear emphasis on religious 'atheism' but it would appear that Lunacharsky's own atheism was itself a kind of fate because for him socialism became a faith. Lunacharsky believed that all religions were myths bound to cultures of both particular times and societies. His book 'Religion & Socialism' was deeply influenced by Comte, Dietzgen, Mach and Avenarius. Mach believed in the self living on in peoples consciousness even after death, and Avenarius believed that there was no dualism between mind and matter. Lunacharsky believed that Christianity itself was almost revolutionary; it was a revolt of the poor Jew in Jerusalem. What Lunacharsky failed to see was that Christianity moved the masses of people by its emotional appeal to their beliefs and for this very reason Socialism should not act in the same way. Socialism would be a scientific truth that would have an all class appeal from its scientific economic and social background. The Jews revolted because they were oppressed not because they were Jews.

Leon Trotsky in his essay 'Vodka, the church and the cinema' written in 1923 points out that the Catholic Church, museums and theatre all similarly reaffirmed class distinctions in society. Trotsky points out that the tavern and church services were the only available forms of spectacle for both workers and peasants. While the tavern would have played a huge diversion in the working mans drab daily routine it was also a major source of state revenue. The church would have provided performances of ritual pomp and glitter and it too would have provided a diversion from daily routine. However, it would also be able to act as a powerful force of servitude and obedience. Once the peasant or worker obeyed the rules it would be sure that he would never rise beyond the tavern. Christianity is not a revolutionary doctrine - especially Christianity under state control.

Both positivism and symbolism were highly influential in Russia before 1914. They provided Marx's writings with both intellectualism and sophistication. Symbolism fused the religious and the modern but the spiritual sense remained a dominant theme. Symbolism perceived the world on two levels; the surface material level (familiar to Socialist ideology) and a much deeper spiritual level represented through the symbolic. Revolutionary socialism is not an elitist or religious doctrine. It does not allow 'consciousness' precedence over class struggle nor the elite over proletariat. Socialism is not based in the superstructure of society, socialism is based on society's economic base. Marx offered a comprehensive explanatory system, not redemptive myth. Engels, Marx's collaborator devoted a whole book to proving this theory, the title being, 'Socialism ..... Utopian or scientific'. It was through Mach that the European intellectual revolution involving both the irrational and science entered Russian Marxism. It was also Mach's views that subjected Marxist claims to the possession of a scientific truth and suggested Marxist doctrine as myth. Richard Avenarius empiricism went farther than positivism by defining the world as pure experience and eliminating the self in the perception of the experience. Empiricism was the philosophy of positivism although quite different from Comte's theory. Science no longer dealt in absolutes. Lenin attacked Mach and his followers in 1909 but by then Mach was already well known in Russia for more than a decade. The idea that the 'mind' could exist on its own became prevalent. Both the religion and intellectualism fell victim to elitism.



The first marxist party split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions at the second party congress in London. Lunacharsky followed Bogdanov and joined Lenin's faction. Lenin however, stressed the role of will, belief and activism through the revolution rather than ideological nonsense. Bogdanov would have feared the religious implications of Marxism as a religion but shared a belief in man becoming God and this would enable society to move towards a collectivist future. Bogdanov was considering Darwin's theory of the evolution of man to a higher type of individual 'the Russian Faust' rather than Marx's theory of class struggle. This would later be called 'God-Constructors' by Lenin.

One of the first proletarian schools situated on the island of Capri began operating in 1909 and was called the 'First Higher Social Democratic Propagandist and Agitator School.' It was here that Lunacharsky, Bogdanov and Gorky began their first experiments in proletarian culture by organising a school to educate and train workers for propaganda inside Russia. Vilonov was a worker who came to Capri from the Urals and it was Vilonov who in 1909 returned to Russia and recruited twenty workers. There were courses of history, Russian literature, European socialism, political theory and agitation practice. The purpose of the school was to create courses for training organizers and propagandists. Gorky believed that the school would strengthen intellectualism within the party. Lunacharsky left Capri in 1910 and founded his own party school in Bologna. Trotsky, Martov and Kollantai refused to lecture there and there were disputes over policy and curriculum. Capri and Bologna both failed as experiments in proletarian culture. Vilonov was expelled from Capri in 1909, he supported Lenin and found the intellectualism an the God-construction distasteful. Both schools suggested a great importance of ideology in a revolution and not alone this but a concept of party membership not unlike the Mensheviks. This stressed the role of consciousness and hence of the intellectuals in the historical process of revolution and it was this dedication to the life of the mind that made them hesitate in adopting the Marxist theory of material determinants which would relate the intellectual betrayal to the policies of imperialism and the class interests of the bourgeoisie. The religious and intellectual dimensions persisted and gave rise to a mythology of revolution based on falsehood that would ultimately aid Stalinist theocracy.

I do not want to undermine the importance of consciousness and intellectual power. On the contrary, intellectual power is most important for the future society. The working class will only be allowed gain intellectual power through the revolution. Capitalism makes sure to keep educated people in a minority because in this way it can hold the workers underneath its power. In the process of creating revolution, education is important but one cannot wait to be educated to revolt. Trotsky and Gramsci (an Italian Marxist) hoped for a time when the education of the working class would remove the chasm between the creative intelligentsia and the people. Gramsci argued that education of the people was the vital task of the intellectual rather than 'intellectual dictatorship'. This however, also threw up the idea of the proletariat needing to win intellectual power to organise themselves culturally. The proletariat will gain intellectual power through class struggle. Gramsci believed that the educational system should provide all citizens with standard linguistic skills which grant access to knowledge, power, culture and communication. In this way there would be no artificial blocks to the creative exploitation of language but did this mean that the working class couldn't enjoy avant-garde creativity?

And there are aspects of this echoing of eliticism. It was a grave irony that Maritetti, Ungaretti, and Pirandello - the people who helped create the avant-garde culture which Gramsci saw hope the radical political change - should have welcomed the Fascist regime which would stifle this hope.

Ideas are not isolated from the society in which they develop on the contrary, human beings act together to produce their livelihoods and ideas arise from these social relations, so the ideas in any society bear a direct relationship to the way in which things are produced. Social being determines consciousness and consciousness is not isolated from society and its social and economic background.

**THE NEXT  
WAR WILL  
DETERMINE  
CONCLUSION  
NOT WHAT  
IS RIGHT  
BUT WHAT  
IS LEFT.**



**THE NEXT  
WAR WILL  
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The conditions in which modernism arose have now altered much but many remain familiar.

The conditions in which modernism arose; aristocratic and landowning bourgeoisie, the academic aesthetic practices they supported and which in turn were supported by them; modern technology and the second industrial revolution; the belief in social revolution; have all been transitioned to replacement by one form or another - bourgeois democracy and industrial expansion. Because the working class have become more well off many critics believe that under such conditions there is no possibility of social revolution.

A specific philosophical current called 'Post-structuralism' emerged in the late 1960's around a group of French philosophers who came into prominence in the 1960's most notably Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault. They developed certain themes and the first and most fundamental was the rejection of the enlightenment tradition which Marx had sought to continue. The enlightenment was the project formulated by a number of French and Scottish thinkers in the 18th century based on the idea that human reason could both understand and control the natural and social world.

The Post Structuralists argue that reason and truth are in fact illusions. If this is so, the wish to change society would also be illusory. Foucault believes that human beings are subjected to a reality of a chaotic collection of fragments dominated by an endless struggle for power shaping nature and society alike. Therefore human beings as part of this reality lack any coherence or control over themselves. Foucault saw the individual human subject as a mass of drives and desires brought together by the prevailing power relations within society. Both Derrida and Foucault reject the idea that we can give a theoretical account of an objective reality independent of thought. All attempts to draw up a total theory of how the world works and how we might change it are doomed. They chose to ignore the position of the working class.

The post-war period has been dominated by the most sustained boom in the history of capitalism, which has resulted for the most part in the reformist integration of the working class. Genuine marxism was crushed between the relative passivity of the working class and the dead hand of Stalinist 'orthodoxy'. However, the internationalisation of capital does not signal a new phase of capitalist expansion, on the contrary, it has increased the instability of the world economy since the late 1960s. The recovery of the advanced capitalist economies from the world recession '79 - '82 invoked an expansion of demand based on easy credit and higher government spending. This began in the U.S. in the early 80's and then spread to Europe.

From this recovery arose the new middle-class i.e; highly paid managers and professionals. However, this generation had also participated in the radicalisation of young intellectuals throughout the western world and shared the collapse of revolutionary hopes which took place in the mid and late 70's. The 'new' middle-class have been major beneficiaries of the Thatcher/Reagan era, their tastes defined by their rather inflated salaries. They are situated in a contradictory class location: between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Postmodernism had been accepted by this strata in society because of their disillusionment with the working class revolutions in the 70s.

Post modernists failing to acknowledge the working class believe that society is based not on previous class division, but merely on a chaotic disorder and that lead to the conclusion that the world cannot be changed. In arguing that there is not economic political and social base that governs the development of history and the social world they fail to realise the capacity of humans to recognise the system in which they live and act on this for the possibility change. They choose to ignore the power of the oppressed in the Eastern Empires when they threw off the heavy chains of Stalin and state imperialism.



Capitalism is far more international now than in the day of the Russian revolution. The multi-nationals operate on a global scale. This signifies the necessity of international social revolution.

Trotsky argued that art follows economic developments but that under socialism this relationship is so delayed and complex that there is no justification for a socialist government attempting to prescribe artistic form. Because Socialism is based on collectivity and production for need instead of profit it can release the creativeness of a majority not constrained by the rules of a capitalist market.

At the 'First all Russian conference of Cultural Enlightening Organisation' in September, A.A. Andreev brought up the question about how to unite the creativity of the artist with the task of implanting socialist consciousness. He argued for 'labor collectives' which would join skilled painters with ordinary workers in proposing new art and in doing so awaken creativity in the broad proletarian masses. Andreev believed in trying to induce collective skill which would allow for individual talent and not to its detriment. The socialist system caters for genuine individuality whereas the capitalist system exploits it as a means in the alienation of people from society.

Marx believed that man under the social division of labour was alienated from his society. He argued for the replacement of the bourgeoisie profit and by community and self fulfilment. In society today art management is no longer in the hands of the artists. Instead art is subjected to the manipulation and control of a relatively autonomous cadre of bureaucrats whose primary job is to allocate state funds in support of individual works of art and also in support of shows and projects to the detriment of other artists, styles not in vogue etc. I would argue that art must become the means to organise life and therefore art will cease to live on the edge of society. There must be a direct co-operation between art and all branches of technique in the manufacturing industry. It is not important whether industry absorbs art or vice versa once the objective is obtained. All art must have a function and if the function of some art is decorative, then so be it but to the highest form of decor as its function. This does not mean that the artist must lose individuality, on the contrary he will be able to determine the course of events through the exercise of his own will. Art has a redemptive quality and this must be pursued in social terms and not just in the artistic field. There cannot be a proletariat culture as the ideal of the revolution is not only to smash the class based system in order that the average human type will rise to greater heights and even greater heights.

A short time before his assassination, in his testament Trotsky repeated his optimism for the future:

My faith in the Communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today than it was in the days of my youth ... I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall and the clear bluesky above the wall and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful, Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence, and enjoy it to the full.

(Leon Trotsky)

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover	Photograph of the demonstration of soldiers and workers of Petrograd during 1917. It shows the widespread popular support for the Bolshevik peace programme. The banners proclaim: 'Long Live the Democratic Republic: Land and Freedom' and 'Down with the Old World'.
1st Chapter	Have you volunteered? Poster 1920 by Dmitry Moor.
2nd Chapter	Clip from Sergi Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925).
3rd Chapter	Poster By: <b>GENE FEDERICO.</b>
4th Chapter	Photograph of the 'Belomostroe' by Rodchenko from U.S.S.R. in Construction, No. 12, December, 1933. The Belomostroe was an infamous Stalin project which for the first time harnessed the system of labour camps, and combined genocide with the exploitation of cheap labour.
Conclusion	Poster by: <b>HERB LUBALIN.</b>