

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

11

Beyond Formalism: The Function of the Soviet Photograph: 1924-1937

by

Margarita Tupitsyn

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1996

'

UMI Number: 9707157

UMI Microform 9707157
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty
in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

9 Sept. 96
Date

RCW Long
Chair of Examining Committee

9 Sept. 96
Date

RCW Long
Executive Officer

Mona Hadler

Anna Chave

Christopher Phillips

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

Beyond Formalism: The Function of the Soviet Photograph: 1924-1937

by

Margarita Tupitsyn

Adviser: Professor Rose-Carol Washton Long

The primary focus of this dissertation is an analysis of a function of the photographic image in the Soviet Union between 1924, the year of Lenin's death and 1937, the year of Stalin's implementation of the Soviet Constitution. The major examples of straight photography and photomontage produced in this period by Aleksandr Rodchenko, Gustav Klutssis, Sergei Sen'kin, El Lissitzky, Valentina Kulagina, Natalia Pinus, Elizar Langman, and Boris Ignatovich are discussed and related to such sociopolitical events as New Economic Policy, Lenin's death, First and Second Five-Year Plans, and to the process of increasing censorship toward the arts. Among the issues that are examined are the changing functions of representation and authorship in Socialist society and the new role given to artists in the mass media. The dissertation establishes a link between the writings of critics such as Osip Brik, Sergei Tre'tiakov, Leonid Volkov-Lannit, Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Lev Iakubinskij and the development of photography and photomontage during this period. This study also includes

previously unpublished and untranslated material from Klutis's letters, Rodchenko's public presentations on photography, Lissitzky's late writings about mass media, and Valentina Kulagina's personal diaries. Many previously unknown photographs provide an important visual supplement to the ideas expressed in this dissertation.

Preface

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the history of Soviet photography in the Soviet Union between 1924, the year of Lenin's death, and 1936, the year of Stalin's enactment of the new Soviet Constitution.¹ To unveil the main points of this history, this study concentrates on the artists more familiar from the history of Soviet avant-garde including Aleksandr Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, and Gustav Klutsis. These three artists after establishing careers as abstract artists in the early 1920s, each decided to devote himself to photography and photomontage. Beyond that, this study introduces virtually unknown figures in this field who closely worked with either Lissitzky, Klutsis or Rodchenko. These are Sergei Sen'kin, Valentina Kulagina, Natalia Pinus, Elizar Langman, and Boris Ignatovich who were not active members of the avant-garde movement before Lenin's death. All these artists and photographers abandoned the concept of an isolated aesthetic production and were prepared to leave their studios and go into the factories, plants, and mines in order to experience first-hand the productive forces in the Soviet Union. In this sense the history of photography and photomontage brought to a full realization the ideology which was initiated in

¹In this study I intentionally avoided any discussion of parallel Western developments in photography for two main reasons. First, because the history of Soviet photography is virtually unknown, my goal was to bring the information about this period to the level when historians can begin to compare Soviet and Western (particularly German) practices. Secondly, Soviet photography developed under very different socio-political conditions and thus requires an intensive focus of its own. For a discussion of Western photography and photomontage in the period between the two wars see Photography at the Bauhaus, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990); The New Vision, Photography Between the World Wars, ed. Maria Morris Hambourg (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989); Montage and Modern Life, 1919-1942, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992).

1921 by such critics as Osip Brik, Boris Arvatov, Nikolai Chuzhak, and Boris Kushner who rejected easel painting and defended "the complete fusion of the artistic and technological aspects of the productive process."² These had to be performed by "an 'artist-constructor' who would possess both the artistic and technical skills required to produce an object completely adapted to its total function."³

In the beginning such mediums as photography and photomontage constituted only a small fragment in the broader tendency of Productivism to apply art technologies to the practical needs of everyday life. However, with the approach of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928, there was an immediate need to inspire millions of workers to take part in the Plan's grandiose economic transformations and to quickly report news from far-flung construction sites. This afforded photographers a new and unprecedented power.

Until recently, there has been a general reluctance to include in the history of the Soviet avant-garde a variety of photography and photomontage produced between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s.⁴ This exclusion may be explained by the fact that the rise of photography and photomontage coincided with the increasing prominence of figuration in Soviet avant-garde circles. Like figurative painting, photography produced after the mid-1920s was viewed as a precursor of propagandistic Socialist realism and as an adjustment to the government's demands to produce art that would be more comprehensible to the masses. Although in

²Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 75.

³Ibid.

⁴Rodchenko's early photographs and photocollages were included in The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980). Photography was exhibited and examined on the equal level with painting and sculpture in The Great Utopia (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992).

many cases this move from more universal abstract works to realist paintings with domestic socio-political themes and imagery did, indeed, signal the arrival of conservative moods, in the case of many photographers, it meant a committed effort to connect with the masses without abandoning visual experimentation.⁵

This study attempts to separate photographic practices from the contemporary production of realist painters and to demonstrate that Soviet photography of the late 1920s and early 1930s continued to advance the major issues pertinent to the debates in the earlier stages of the Soviet avant-garde. Among these issues were formalism, abstraction, the Russian avant-garde's relation to mass culture, and the role of the Bolshevik regime in the development of the arts. In this context, the function of the photographic image between 1924 and 1937 exemplifies the last "great experiment," in the search for an effective connection between art, radical politics, and the masses.

There is substantial archival material documenting the theoretical and practical roles in photography of Rodchenko, Klutis, and Lissitzky. These include Klutis's letters, previously unpublished or untranslated, and his wife's (Valentina Kulagina's) personal diaries, Rodchenko's public presentations on photography, and Lissitzky's late writings about mass media. The information on most other photographers, Boris Ignatovich, Elizar Langman, Arkadii Shaikhet, Max Al'pert, and Semeon Fridliand, those who did not participate in the earlier stages of the Soviet avant-garde, is scarce and primarily comes from various periodicals published in the period under discussion. Among the magazines which are particularly valuable for research on the history of the photographic image are LEF

⁵For a discussion of various realist groups of painters of the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Charlotte Douglas, "Terms of Transition: The First Discussional Exhibition and the Society of Easel Painters," The Great Utopia (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992), pp.451-465.

(Left Front of the Arts), published from 1923 to 1925 and Novyi LEF (New LEF) which replaced LEF in 1927 and lasted for one year. Both magazines were edited by the poet Vladimir Maiakovskii and united critics and artists who were committed to radical artistic ideas both in theory and practice. LEF published photcollages and photographs by Rodchenko and agit-constructions by Klutsis. New LEF devoted much attention to straight photography and to the debate on photography vis a vis painting.

Similarly important for tracing the history of Soviet photography are the periodicals Daesh (Let's Give) and 30 Dnei (30 Days). These inexpensive publications were dedicated to art, literature, and science and aimed at educating the broad masses of workers. 30 Days, published between 1925 and 1941, in the late 1920s illustrated the magazine's writings with the photographs and photomontages of Rodchenko, Klutsis, and Sen'kin. During only one year of its publication Let's Give regularly printed Rodchenko and Ignatovich's reportage from construction sites, factories, and collective farms.

The magazine Sovetskoe foto (Soviet Photo) was initiated in 1926 by the photographers' Union (Souzfoto) and played an essential role in recording both the theoretical and visual history of Soviet straight photography. This magazine closely followed and covered a variety of events, theories, debates, and exhibitions which occurred in the photographic community from the late 1920s and until the mid-1930s. Equally important to the history of Soviet photography and photomontage is the picture magazine SSSR na Stroike (USSR in Construction), founded in 1930 and intended for domestic as well as for international audiences. Such artists and photographers as Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Langman, Al'pert, Shaikhet, and Fridliand actively took pictures for USSR in Construction and designed many of its issues. All these publications often provide materials for the

study of the history of the photographic image and often present the only record of many images. This is due to the tendency common in that period to view photography as a nonartistic production, made for mass consumption rather than for museums or archives. As a result, original prints and photomontages were often thrown away immediately after they were published in the above mentioned periodicals.

Many critical articles which provided an initial theoretical base to the photographers were published in LEF and New LEF and written by the critics associated with productivist standpoint. The writings of Brik, Sergei Tret'iakov, and Chuzhak were particularly influential on the formation of Soviet photographic reportage. As an original member of the literary formalist group called Opojaz, Brik contributed to the blending between formal and sociological aspects of art making.⁶ Chuzhak proposed the idea of art as a system of facts, a view that resulted in his theory of "ultra-realism." Chuzhak claimed that documentary art was not the same as conventional realism but required that the artist passes reality "through the prism of dialectical revolt."⁷ This theory of strictly documentary art production along with Tret'iakov's notion of seeing the writer and artist not as a creator but as a producer of utilitarian objects and writings⁸ helped to shift the attention of the Soviet avant-garde photographers from taking aesthetically appealing photographs to recording only immediately useful events for publications in popular magazines.

⁶See Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 67.

⁷Nikolai Chuzhak, "Pod znakom zhiznestroeniia," LEF no.1, 1923, p.17.

⁸I specifically refer to Tret'iakov's articles published in Novyi LEF including "Fotozametki," Novyi LEF, no.7 (1928) and "Ot redaktsii," Novyi LEF, no.12 (1928).

The existing studies of Soviet photomontage and photography consist mainly of material incorporated into monographs on individual artists or photographers. In this respect, Rodchenko and Lissitzky's photographic production are far better studied. For example, the early monograph on Lissitzky published first in Germany in 1967 and then in Great Britain in 1968 and edited by his wife Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers established him as the originator of many tendencies in Soviet photography and led to the assumption that he played a major role in shaping photomontage and photography as well.⁹ The fact that Lissitzky did not demonstrate a strong interest in propagandistic imagery until he worked on the designs for the International Press Exhibition (Pressa) with Klutssis, Sen'kin, and Kulagina was addressed neither in Lissitzky-Kuppers's book nor in the catalogue of Lissitzky's work produced in conjunction with his exhibition in Municipal Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 1990.¹⁰ As a result, these publications did not directly address the issue of a drastic change which occurred in Lissitzky's career in the late 1920s, preserving the view of Lissitzky as an artist continuously involved in formalist experiments.

The exhibition review titled "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility" written by Yve-Alain Bois broke this chain of viewing Lissitzky's work as a continuous entity and instead proposed to divide Lissitzky's career into three distinct periods: "a 'Chagallian' Lissitzky at the beginning of 1919 (L 1); the 'Suprematist' Lissitzky of the end of 1919 and the early 1920s (L 2); and the 'Stalinist' Lissitzky of the 1930s (L 3)."¹¹ Furthermore Bois stated that the question of the relation between L 2 and

⁹See El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts, ed. Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968).

¹⁰See El Lissitzky, 1890-1941 (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1990).

¹¹Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," Art in America, April 1988, p. 165.

L 3 was "more complex than the relation ... between L 1 and L 2."¹² This study is specifically dedicated to tracing the career of L 3, that was only barely touched upon by Bois in his article and viewed negatively.

Such early studies of Rodchenko's photography as Hubertus Gassner's Rodchenko Fotografien of 1982 and of Selim O.Khan-Magomedov's Rodchenko: The Complete Work of 1986 provided a close analysis of this artist's photography and are especially valuable for establishing the sources for Rodchenko's first photcollages and for the examples of straight photography.¹³ They linked them with his formal concerns exhibited in abstract work which dealt with line. Both studies however, failed to clearly show the major structural and iconographic transformations that occurred in Rodchenko's photographic practices first in the late 1920s and then again in the mid-1930s. This study specifically concentrates on clarifying the circumstances under which these changes in Rodchenko's work occurred.

For a long time our knowledge about Klutis's contributions to the history of photomontage was limited to the examples presented in the exhibition Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection which opened at Guggenheim Museum in 1981. These included his photomontage the Dynamic City, 1919-1920 and a series of photomontage postcards dedicated to the Olympic Games and produced in 1928.¹⁴ Christina Lodder's inclusion in her 1983 book Russian Constructivism of Klutis's other early photomontages as well as of

¹²Ibid.

¹³Hubertus Gassner, Rodchenko Fotografien (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, 1982) and Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, Rodchenko: The Complete Work (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987); first edition published in Italian in 1986).

¹⁴Margit Rowell and Angelica Zander Rudenstine, Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1981), p. 189; pp. 274-275.

the examples of his posters commemorating the First Five-Year Plan, expanded our knowledge of this artist's photographic and design practices. It was not until 1991, when a retrospective of Klutis's work took place in Germany that we received a survey of his career and in particular of his virtually unknown late work and of the circumstances of his arrest and execution in 1938.¹⁵ The catalogue which accompanied this exhibition positioned Klutis not only as a designer of posters but as a photographer.

By including photomontages and posters of the First Five Year Plan in her book Russian Constructivism, Lodder offered a view of this material as a continuation of constructivist and productivist agendas. However, the cutting off point of Lodder's study was the early 1930s, which left unanswered many questions about almost another decade of the avant-garde artists who attempted to preserve the principles of productivist ideology through photography and photomontage. She also viewed the reappearance of figurative art in the form of photography and photomontage as a phenomenon which laid the basis for Socialist realism. Lodder considered photomontage, for example, as "a vehicle of Constructivism's decline."¹⁶ Unlike this position I claim that the production of photography and photomontage during the First Five-Year Plan was a direct continuation of constructivist formal principles and of productivist ideology and that it was not connected with Socialist realism.

Art historian Benjamin Buchloh in his article "From Faktura to Factography" traced the careers of Klutis, Lissitzky, and Rodchenko beyond the accepted point of the avant-garde demise in 1932.¹⁷ In that year the Central

¹⁵Gustav Klutis: Retrospektive, eds. Hubertus Gassner and Roland Nachtigaller (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1991).

¹⁶Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism, p.204

¹⁷Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," October, no.30 (Fall 1984), pp. 82-119.

Committee of the All-Union Party issued the "Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations" which dissolved many art groups and institutions and initiated the government's direct involvement in defining the forms of art. Buchloh laid grounds for the analysis for Rodchenko's and Lissitzky's collaboration with IZOGIZ (Visual Art Department of the State Publishing House) and concluded that "It remains to be determined at what point, historically as well as structurally, [the change in photographic representation] takes place during the 1930s."¹⁸ This study attempts to clarify at what point these changes occurred and demonstrate that the factographic and formalist elements in photographic image were tolerated in the Soviet Union as late as 1935.

Although the above mentioned books and articles provided invaluable material for our awareness of the photographic production of Rodchenko, Lissitzky and Klutskis, they continued to present these artists as isolated practitioners of photography and photomontage in the Soviet Union. How these photographers stood in relation to their colleagues has received no particular attention. In fact, such photomontage practitioners as Sen'kin, Kulagina, Natalia Pinus, and Vasili Elkin and straight photographers Ignatovich, Langman, Al'pert, and Shaikhet who played an essential role in shaping both the theory and practice of Soviet photography and photomontage received no attention in the literature on Soviet avant-garde. In fact, the surveys of straight photography, such as Grigorii Shudakov's Pioneers of Soviet Photography (1983) and three volumes of Antologija sovetsoi fotografii (1986-1987) were written not by art historians but by the editors of Soviet photo.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid. p.114.

¹⁹See Grigory Shudakov, Pioneers of Soviet Photography (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983) and Antologija sovetsoi fotografii, vol.1 and 2 (Moskva: Planeta, 1986-1987).

The first chapter of this study is an investigation of how at the beginning of the 1920s artists Rodchenko, Klutsis, and Sen'kin abandoned abstract art as well as more traditional modes of execution like three dimensional objects and took up photographic representation produced for printing in books and magazines. The earliest examples of photomontage are separated into the more political production of Klutsis and Sen'kin and the less politically oriented works of Rodchenko. The appearance of political photomontage is linked to Lenin's death in 1924 and to formalist critics' rethinking of their position on the function of literary language as a reaction to the same event. Literary critics such as Viktor Shklovskii, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Lev Iakubinskii shifted from formalism to socio-formalism and this change, reflected in their articles dedicated to Lenin's speeches and writing, is examined in relation to the new application of constructivist methods to political photomontage. This chapter includes an examination of Klutsis and Sen'kin's photomontages for Young Guard and Lenin i Deti (Lenin and Children) and of Rodchenko's first photocollages published in the magazine Kino-fot (Film-foto) and photomontage illustrations for History of VKP(b).

The second chapter focuses on photography's advancement during the First Five-Year Plan period (1928-1932) to the radical frontier of the arts. This process was encouraged by the majority of radical critics and artists' dissatisfaction with the performance of painting in a socialist society. This chapter also examines the change in the role of the artist. An individual creator who works in his/her studio was replaced by a productivist idea of an artist who produces useful everyday objects and images. Responding to LEF's critics call for the ideology of documentary artistic production, photographers Rodchenko, Ignatovich, Langman, Klutsis, and Sen'kin committed themselves to a convincing reflection of socialist facts.

Chapter three compares the two major tendencies in Soviet straight photography of the First-Five Year Plan. The making by October Association photographers (Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and Langman) of fragmented photo-stills is juxtaposed with ROPF's (The Russian Society of Proletarian Photographers) (Shaikhet, Fridliand, and Al'pert) production of organically structured photo pictures. Rodchenko's and Ignatovich's contributions to the magazine Let's Give are analyzed in the context of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's ideas about framing a cinematographic image and his theorizing about perceiving abnormal points of view in the image on levels other than a purely formal. In this chapter the technically specialized nature of the images produced by October photographers is equated with Roland Barthes's idea of "marxist writing" as language consisting of severely codified metaphors.

The relationship between the fractured compositions of October photography and the organic ones of ROPF is viewed within the famous debate between two forms of realism: Bertolt Brecht's reliance on the power of estrangement effects achieved by means of creating anti-naturalist and anti-illusionist images versus Georg Lukacs' support of totalizing and whole images which allow an easy relationship with the view.

Chapter four focuses on the schism between the concepts of photo-picture and photo-still which began in the early 1930s after the second October exhibition in 1930. A dispute over the political effectiveness of posters in general and of photomontage posters in particular took place at various institutions in the same period. It was a response to a criticism that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had publicly expressed in relation to the activities of many artistic organizations including IZOGIZ, which was primarily responsible for the commission of photomontage posters.

The fifth chapter deals with the final stage of Soviet photography before Socialist realism. Focusing on the least studied period in the Soviet avant-garde between 1932 and 1937, and examining photographs and photomontages of Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Varvara Stepanova, Klutis, Langman, Ignatovich, and Kulagina, this chapter traces their transformation from documentary to mythographic imagery. It particularly gives attention to these artists' serving of IZOGIZ including their active contribution to USSR in Construction. This chapter demonstrates that formalist elements in photography were criticized but tolerated in the Soviet Union as late as 1935 and suggests a rather complex and even contradictory ending to avant-garde photographic practices in the Soviet Union.

Table of Contents

Abstract, iii-iv

Preface, v-xvi

List of Illustrations, xviii-xxix

**Chapter 1 Lenin's Death and the Birth of Political
Photomontage, 1-27**

**Chapter 2 The Photographer in the Service of the
Collective, 28-56**

**Chapter 3 Photo-Still Versus Photo-Picture: The Politics of
(De)Framing, 57-79**

Chapter 4: Debating the Photographic Image, 80-106

Chapter 5: Restructuring of a Photographer, 107-147

Illustrations, 148-317

Bibliography, 318-322

List of Illustrations

1. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Oval Hanging Construction no.12, 1920-21, 83.7 x 47 cm., plywood, open construction partially painted with aluminum paint and wire, 61 x The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
2. Sergei Sin'kin, Rabis, 1921, 93 x 79 cm, oil on canvas, Museum Ludwig, Cologne.
3. Gustav Klutsis, Construction in Material, 1920-22, Whereabouts unknown.
4. Gustav Klutsis, Design for a Screen-Tribune-Kiosk for the Fifth Anniversary of October Revolution, 1922, 25.5 x 15.5 cm., lithograph, private collection
5. Gustav Klutsis, Electrification of the Entire Country, 1920, 17.2 x 11.5 cm., vintage gelatin silver print, private collection.
6. Gustav Klutsis, The Dynamic City, 1919, 28 x 22.9 cm., vintage silver print, IVAM, Valencia, Spain.
7. Gustav Klutsis, The Dynamic City, 1919, 87 x 64.5 cm, oil with sand and concrete on wood, George Costakis.
8. Gustav Klutsis, Kino-Front, no. 5-6 (1926), cover.
9. Gustav Klutsis, Young Guard, 1924, lithograph, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, The George Riabov Collection of Russian Art, Acquired with the Frank and Katherine Martucci Art Acquisition Fund.
10. Gustav Klutsis, Young Guard, 1924, lithograph, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, The George Riabov Collection of Russian Art, Acquired with the Frank and Katherine Martucci Art Acquisition Fund.
11. Sergei Sin'kin, Herald of Labor, 1925, lithograph, private collection.
12. Gustav Klutsis, Herald of Labor, 1925, lithograph, private collection.

13. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, cover, Ex Libris, New York
14. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, Ex Libris, New York.
15. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, Ex Libris, New York.
16. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, Ex Libris, New York.
17. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, Ex Libris, New York.
18. Gustav Klutssis and Sergei Sen'kin, Children and Lenin, 1924, lithograph, Ex Libris, New York.
19. Dziga Vertov, Stills from Kino-Pravda, Kino-Fot, no. 4 (1922).
20. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Spatial Construction, 1918 printed in Kino-Fot, no.2 (1922).
21. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Objectless Graphics, 1915, printed in Kino-Fot, no.1 (1922)
22. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Printed Matter For Criticism Montaged by Constructivist Rodchenko," Kino-Fot, no. 1 (1922)
23. Aleksandr Rodchenko Psychology, Kino-Fot, no.3, (1922).
24. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Detective, Kino-Fot, no.3 (1922).
25. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pro Eto, 1923, photomontage, Soviet photo.
26. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pro Eto, 1923, photomontage, Soviet photo.
27. Aleksandr Rodchenko, To Alive Lenin, 1924, cover.
28. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Technology and Life, 1924, cover

29. Aleksandr Rodchenko, History of VKP (b), 1925-26, 30 x 21 cm., lithograph, IVAM, Valencia, Spain
30. Aleksandr Rodchenko, History of VKP (b), 1925-26, 30 x 21 cm., lithograph, IVAM, Valencia, Spain
31. Aleksandr Rodchenko, History of VKP (b), 1925-26, 30 x 21 cm., lithograph, IVAM, Valencia, Spain.
32. Aleksandr Rodchenko, History of VKP (b), 1925-26, 30 x 21 cm., lithograph, IVAM, Valencia, Spain
33. Gustav Klutssis, cover for Aleksei Khruchenykh's book Lenin's Language, 1925
34. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Portrait of Mother, 1924, photograph, Soviet photo
35. Aleksandr Rodchenko, The Building on Miasnitskaia Street, 1925, photograph, Soviet photo
36. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pine Trees in Pushkino, 1927, photograph, Soviet photo.
37. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Newspaper, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
38. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Newspaper, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
39. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Newspaper, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
40. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Newspaper, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
41. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Newspaper, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
42. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Tass Is Speaking, 30 Days, no.11 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
43. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Still-Life Leika, 1929, photograph, Soviet photo.
44. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Journalist, 1930, photograph, Soviet photo.

45. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Let's Give, 1929, 30 x 23 cm., cover, lithograph, Productive Arts, Irvine, California.
46. Gustav Klutssis, Spartakiada, 1930, 14.6 x 10.2 cm., lithograph, private collection.
47. Gustav Klutssis, Spartakiada, 1930, 14.6 x 10.2 cm., lithograph, private collection
48. Gustav Klutssis, Spartakiada, 1930, 14.6 x 10.2 cm., lithograph, private collection
49. Gustav Klutssis, Spartakiada, 1930, 14.6 x 10.2 cm., lithograph, private collection
50. Gustav Klutssis's Hand, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print
51. Photomontage of Klutssis's Hand with a Worker, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print
52. Gustav Klutssis, Design for Let Us Fulfill the Plan of the Great Projects, 1930, 12 x 9 cm., vintage gelatine silver print, private collection.
53. Gustav Klutssis, Design for Let Us Fulfill the Plan of the Great Projects, 1930, 18.2 x 10.7 cm, photomontage, private collection
54. Gustav Klutssis, Let Us Fulfill the Plan of the Great Projects, 1930, lithograph, Merrill C. Berman, Scarsdale, New York
55. El Lissitzky, The Constructor, 1924, 10.7 x 12 cm., photograph, Houk/Friedman Gallery, New York
56. El Lissitzky, Brigada Khudozhnikov, cover, no.4, 1931, cover, lithograph.
57. El Lissitzky and Sergei Sen'kin, Pressa Frieze, catalogue, 1928.
58. Russian Typographic Exhibition, 1927, photograph: Gustav Klutssis
59. El Lissitzky, I Want a Child, 1930, 17.8 x 23.7 cm., photograph, Houk/Friedman, New York

60. Soviet Photographers in a company of John Heartfield, 1931, photograph: Gustav Klutsis.
61. Gustav Klutsis, The Struggle for Heat and Metal, 1932, lithograph, 141 x 100 cm., private collection
62. Gustav Klutsis Wearing Coal Miner Costume, 1932, photograph: Gustav Klutsis
63. Arkadii Shaikhet, Steamroller, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo.
64. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Paving Streets: Leningradskoe Highway, 1929, photograph, Soviet photo.
65. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Portrait of Mother, 1924, photograph, Soviet photo.
66. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Electroplant," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no.12 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
67. Boris Ignatovich, "Let's Give Soviet Turbine," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no. 7 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
68. Boris Ignatovich, "Kondostroi," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no. 7 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine California
69. Boris Ignatovich, "Export Forest," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no.4 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
70. Boris Ignatovich, "Red Triangle," reproduced in Let's Give, no.9 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
71. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Machinery is Advancing in Full Gear," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no.11 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
72. Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Soviet Automobile," 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no. 11 (1929), Productive Arts, Irvine, California
73. Aleksandr Rodchenko and Boris Ignatovich, Harvest Sequence, 1929, reproduced in Let's Give, no. 13, 1929, Productive Arts, Irvine, California

74. Gustav Klutsis, Plan of Socialist Offensive, 1929, lithograph, reproduced in 30 Days, no.12 (1929)
75. Elizar Langman, Ploughed Field, 1935, photograph, Soviet photo
76. Elizar Langman, Workers' Cooperative of Proletarian District, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print, photograph, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
77. Elizar Langman, Untitled, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
78. Elizar Langman, Untitled, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
79. Elizar Langman, Untitled, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
80. Elizar Langman, Untitled, 1930, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
81. Alkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, Proletarian photo, no. 4 (1931)
82. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, Proletarian photo, no. 4 (1931)
83. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, Proletarian photo, no. 4 (1931)
84. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo
85. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo.
86. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo.
87. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo.

88. Arkadii Shaikhet and Max Al'pert, Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov Family, 1931, Proletarian photo, no. 4 (1931)
89. Aleksandr Rodchenko, The AMO series, 1929, photograph, Soviet photo.
90. Aleksandr Rodchenko, The AMO series, 1929, photograph, Soviet photo.
91. Elizar Langman, Lacemaker, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo.
92. Elizar Lachman, Gymnastics on Radio, 1931, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
93. Elizar Langman, Young Commune, 1931, vintage gelatin silver print, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
94. Boris Ignatovich, New Moscow, 1931, photograph, Soviet photo
95. Boris Ignatovich, Old Leningrad. New Leningrad, 1931, Proletarskoe photo, no. 2 (1931), Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne.
96. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pioneer With a Horn, 1930, photograph, Soviet photo
97. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pioneer, 1928, photograph, Soviet photo.
98. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pioneer, 1930, photograph, Soviet photo.
99. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Pioneer Girl, 1930, photograph, Soviet photo.
100. Arkadii Shaikhet, Red Army Skiers, 1928, gelatin silver print, Soviet photo.
101. October Association Exhibition of Photomontage, photograph: Gustav Klutssis
102. Solomon Telingater, The Word is Given to Kirsanov, 1930, lithograph
103. Posters of Sergei Sen'kin, Vasili Elkin, Valentina Kulagina, and Natalia Pinus, reproduced in Izofront, 1931, IVAM, Valencia, Spain
104. Gustav Klutssis, Dynamic City, 1919, reproduced in Izofront, 1931, IVAM, Valencia, Spain.

105. Valentina Kulagina, International Women Workers' Day is the Fighting Day of the Proletariat, 1931, 94 x 69.3, lithograph, private collection.
106. Valentina Kulagina, International Women Workers' Day, 1930, 108.9 x 72.1 cm, lithograph, Merrill C. Berman.
107. Natalia Pinus, Female, Delegate, Worker, Shock-Worker, 1931, 104 x 75 cm, lithograph, private collection.
108. Gustav Klutssis, In the Storm of the Third Year of the Five Year Plan, 1930, and John Heartfield reproduced in Izofront, 1931, IVAM, Valencia, Spain.
109. El Lissitzky, The Constructor, 1924 and Jan Tschichold, reproduced in Izofront, 1931, IVAM, Valencia, Spain.
110. El Lissitzky, Russian Exhibition in Zurich, 1929, 126.4 x 90.5 cm., intaglio, Houk/ Friedman Gallery, New York.
111. El Lissitzky, International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden, 1930, Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany
112. A page with Klutssis's works printed in Izofront, 1931, IVAM, Valencia.
113. Gustav Klutssis, Male and Female Workers Sign Up For the Party of Il'ich, 1924.
114. Gustav Klutssis, We Shall Repay the Coal Debt, 1930, 10.2 x 7.6 cm., vintage gelatin silver print with color, private collection.
115. Gustav Klutssis, We Shall Repay the Coal Debt, 1930, 16.5 x 11.5 cm., vintage gelatin silver print with color, private collection.
116. Gustav Klutssis, We Shall Repay the Coal Debt to Our Country, 1930, 101.6 x 71.2 cm., lithograph, Merrill C. Berman, Scarsdale, New York
117. Gustav Klutssis, Speed Up the Tempo of Industrialization, 1930, 26.5 x 17.9 cm., vintage gelatin silver print, private collection
118. Gustav Klutssis, Under the Banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction, 1930, 97 x 71 cm., lithograph, Merrill C. Berman.

119. Gustav Klutssis, We Shall Provide Millions of Qualified Workers, 1931, lithograph, private collection.
120. Gustav Klutssis, We Shall Provide Millions of Qualified Workers, 1931, 21.5 x 13 cm., photomontage, private collection.
121. USSR in Construction, no. 9 (1933), El Lissitzky designer.
122. USSR in Construction, no. 2 (1934), El Lissitzky designer.
123. USSR in Construction, no. 9-12 (1937), El Lissitzky designer, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
124. USSR in Construction, no. 9-12 (1937), El Lissitzky designer, Productive Arts, Irvine California
125. USSR in Construction, no.9-12 (1937), El Lissitzky designer, Productive Arts, Irvine California
126. USSR in Construction, no. 9-12 (1937), El Lissitzky designer, Productive Arts, Irvine, California
127. El Lissitzky, Design for the Agricultural Exhibition, 1935-38, tracing paper, graphite and color pencil, Tre'tiakov Gallery, Moscow.
128. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko designer and photographer, Productive Arts, Irvine California
129. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko designer and photographer, Productive Arts, Irvine California
130. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko photographer and designer, Productive Arts, Irvine, California
131. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko photographer and designer, Productive Arts, Irvine California.
132. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko photographer and designer, Productive Arts, Irvine, California

133. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko photographer and designer, Productive Arts, Irvine, California
134. USSR in Construction, no.12 (1933), Aleksandr Rodchenko photographer and designer, Productive Arts, Irvine, California
135. USSR in Construction, no. 12 (1935), Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova designers, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
136. USSR in Construction, no. 8 (1936), Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
137. USSR in Construction, no.8 (1936), Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, Alex Lachman Galerie, Cologne
138. Exhibition of Masters of Soviet Art, 1935, photograph: Aleksandr Rodchenko, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne.
139. Elizar Langman, Skating Rink, 1935, photograph, Soviet photo
140. Elizar Langman, Collective Farm Field, 1935, photograph, Soviet photo.
141. Elizar Langman, Comrade Ordzhonikidze at the Inauguration of Kramatorskii Plant, 1935, photograph, Howard Schickler Gallery, New York.
142. Aleksandr Rodchenko, A Jump into Water, 1934-35, photograph, Soviet photo
143. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Make Way for Women, 1934, photograph, Soviet photo.
144. Aleksandr Rodchenko, A Jump into Water, 1934-35, photograph, Soviet photo.
145. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Rumba, 1935, photograph, Soviet photo.
146. Boris Ignatovich, Photoessay About the Shoe Factory "Parizhskaia Kommuna, 1934, photograph, Soviet photo.
147. Boris Ignatovich, Photoessay About the Shoe Factory "Parizhskaia Kommuna, 1934, photograph, Soviet photo.

148. Boris Ignatovich, Searchlight Plant "Frezer," 1935, photograph, Soviet photo.
149. Elizar Langman, Kazakhstan, reproduced in Soviet photo, no.10 (1935)
150. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Jump on a Horse, 1936, photograph, Soviet photo.
151. Aleksandr Rodchenko, A Jump Into Water, 1934-35, photograph, Soviet photo
152. Boris Ignatovich, Comrade Stalin with Pioneer Girl Mamlakat, Soviet photo, no. 1 (1936), cover, Alex Lachmann Galerie, Cologne
153. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Sport Parade on Red Square, 1936, photograph, Soviet photo.
154. Gustav Klutssis, Feasibility of Our Program Is Real People, It's You and Me, 1931, 34.3 x 20.3 cm, pencil on paper, private collection.
155. Gustav Klutssis, The Feasibility of Our Program Is Real People, It's You and Me, 1931, photomontage, 28.5 x 20.3, private collection
156. Gustav Klutssis, Victory of Socialism in Our Country is Guaranteed, 1932, lithograph, Merrill C. Berman.
157. Gustav Klutssis, At the End of the Five-Year Plan Collectivization of the USSR Must Be Basically Over, 1932, lithograph.
158. Gustav Klutssis' Posters Displayed on Streets of Moscow, 1932, photograph: Gustav Klutssis
159. Gustav Klutssis' Posters Used for Educational Purposes, 1932, photograph: Gustav Klutssis
160. A View of the Exhibition Posters at the Service of the Five-Year Plan at Tretiakov Gallery, 1932, photograph: Gustav Klutssis
161. Sergei Sen'kin, Under the Banner of Lenin for the Second Five Year Plan, 1932, lithographs, private collection.

162. Valentina Kulagina, Female Shock Workers Enter the Rows of VKP (b), 1932, lithograph, private collection.

163. Natalia Pinus and Gustav Klutssis, Women on Collective Farms Are Substantial Power, 1933, lithograph, private collection.

164. Gustav Klutssis, Design for Pravda, 1933, 67.4 x 50.2 cm., photomontage, private collection

165. Gustav Klutssis, Design for Pravda, 1933, 65 x 48.2 cm, photomontage, private collection.

166. Gustav Klutssis, The USSR Is the Shock Brigade of the World Proletariat, 1931, 35 x 24.7 cm., lithograph, private collection.

167. Gustav Klutssis, Politburo, 1935, 40 x 58 cm., photomontage, private collection.

168. Gustav Klutssis, Politburo, 1935, 17.6 x 13.4 cm., photomontage, private collection.

169. Gustav Klutssis, Photomontage Panel for the Paris World's Fair, 1937, photograph.

170. Aleksandr Rodchenko, Field Flowers, 1937, photograph, Soviet photo.

Chapter 1

Lenin's Death and the Birth of Political Photomontage

In the early 1920s Rodchenko, Klutskis, and Sen'kin were involved in teaching and exhibition activities of the Moscow art school called the VKhUTEMAS (Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops). Similar to other new Soviet educational institutions, the VKhUTEMAS was launched in 1920 as a result of a restructuring of the educational system as it existed before the Revolution. Unlike other art schools, however, the VKhUTEMAS was specifically oriented toward training "artists of high quality for the benefit of the national economy."¹ With such an objective of putting arts into the service of life, the VKhUTEMAS responded to the advocates of Production art, who around 1921 began to challenge the notion of Constructivism by repudiating painting for its inability to penetrate real life and to directly influence the social environment.² The Productivists, who initially included primarily critics, called for a practical definition of Constructivist three-dimensional work produced at this time by the artists of OBMOKhU (The Society of Young Artists) group which included Rodchenko, the brothers Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg, Konstantin Medunetskii, and Karl Ioganson.³ Instead as Christina Lodder explains, the

¹Newspaper Izvestia, 25 December 1920.

²According to Christina Lodder the collection of essays published in 1921 and called Art in Production began a discussion about the notion of "production art." See Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 103.

³For a discussion of the activities of The Society of Young Artists see Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism, p. 103.

Productivists proposed the "commitment to the idea of art being involved in industry and with the production of real objects of everyday use."⁴

Rodchenko, who began to teach at the VKhUTEMAS in the year of its opening in 1920 and stayed there until the school closed in 1930, reacted against painting in 1921 by contributing to the 5 x 5 = 25 exhibition in Moscow.⁵ In it five artists--Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Aleksandr Vesnin, Liobov' Popova, and Aleksandra Ekster--presented five easel paintings as the definitive statement of their departure from this medium. Rodchenko showed in the 5 x 5=25 a triptych of the three primary colors, Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color, completing his prior experiments in painting and announcing his shift to what he called spatial constructions.(fig.1) Although Rodchenko's three-dimensional objects were executed in non-traditional materials and meant to enter the actual environment, they were not transcending what was called by Constructivists "laboratory work" since as Lodder points out these constructions "do not seem to represent any immediate culmination of Rodchenko's evolution towards a utilitarian stance in terms of practical activity."⁶ At the VKhUTEMAS Rodchenko first taught the Basic Course on construction and then moved to the Metalwork faculty which he directed from 1922 onwards.⁷

Like Rodchenko, Klutssis and Sen'kin began their careers as abstract painters: they studied together at Kazimir Malevich's studio in 1919. Sen'kin

⁴Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism.

⁵On the details and participants of this important exhibition see Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism.

⁶Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism, p. 27.

⁷For a comprehensive survey of Rodchenko's early work see Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, Rodchenko: The Complete Work (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

began to depart from paintings based solely on the interrelation of abstract forms in 1921, when he exhibited at the VKhUTEMAS-affiliated Cezanne Club a group of paintings which combined a painterly, abstract compositions with political messages. Composition (RABIS, [Workers' Art]) (fig.2) is one of such works and it exemplifies the then-growing tendency to introduce propagandistic slogans amid abstract forms, and thus, to link art and politics. Klutskis graduated from the VKhUTEMAS painting department in 1921 but he continued to actively participate in the development of the VKhUTEMAS teaching system.⁸ Like many of his VKhUTEMAS colleagues, Klutskis first became known for paintings that synthesized Suprematist and Constructivist compositional methods. His move from painting to three-dimensional constructions in 1920 (fig.3) and then to agitational stands and kiosks (fig.4) in 1922 betrays his response to productivist ideology. Klutskis continued to associate with the VKhUTEMAS until the school's closure in 1930.

Despite the presence of Rodchenko and other productivist artists and critics in the VKhUTEMAS, their influence in that school remained very limited. This can be explained by the fact that in that school there were still faculties which were devoted to the concept of "fine art" as well as teachers who continued to commit themselves to easel painting. As a result of this diversity in teaching policies, the VKhUTEMAS student body was also uneven, often leaning toward traditional teaching.⁹ As Russian art historian

⁸While studying painting, Klutskis also participated in various propagandistic projects, including the photomontage panel Storm: Attack on Counterrevolution created for the Fifth Congress of Soviets in Moscow in 1918. A photograph of this photomontage was first published in Larisa Oginskaia, Gustav Klutskis (Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1981), p.7.

⁹For a further discussion of VKhUTEMAS see Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism, pp. 109-130.

Selim O. Khan-Magomedov points out, "Students in the faculty [of metalwork] were not always attracted by the prospect of working in industry at the end of their course of studies."¹⁰ Khan-Magomedov concludes that by 1925 "the entire group of production-oriented faculties accounted for only thirteen per cent of the students at the VKhUTEMAS."¹¹ Reacting to these conditions in 1923, Rodchenko, together with artists Anton Lavinskii, Stepanova, Popova, the Stenberg brothers, and Konstantin Medunetskii and critic Brik, published a statement in the magazine newly founded by Maiakovskii and called LEF. This report, titled "The Breakdown of the VKhUTEMAS. Report Concerning the Condition of the Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops," affirmed that the "ideological and administrative breakdown of the VKhUTEMAS [was] an accomplished fact,"¹² and complained that "the only higher education art school in the Soviet Union maintains a miserable existence, disconnected from the ideological and practical tasks of today and from approaching proletarian culture."¹³ The report specifically noted that the "productivist departments [were] empty" and that, in their place, painting and sculpture had taken over; students were under the complete influence of easel painting.

The next year-1924-, also in LEF, Klut'sis and Sen'kin published a statement titled "The Workshop of the Revolution." In that text, they similarly criticized the VKhUTEMAS program and its failure to "become

¹⁰Khan-Magomedov, Rodchenko: The Complete Work, p. 172.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²"Razval VKhUTEMASA. Dokladnaia zapiska o polozenii vysshikh khudozhestvenni-tekhnikeskikh masterskikh," LEF, no.4, 1923, p.27.

¹³Ibid.

revolutionized;" the two artists noted that most professors continued to teach by the old methods.¹⁴ The true role of "the workshop of the revolution," Klutsis and Sen'kin argued, should be the preparation of "productivists, whose goal is [to produce] a wide sociocultural effect on a mass viewer, and artists, agitators, and propagandists, who know how to answer to the practical needs of the Revolution."¹⁵

Shortly after Rodchenko, Klutsis, Sen'kin, and other Productivists announced their disillusionment with the state of affairs in the VKhUTEMAS, the socio-political atmosphere in Russia began to change due to Lenin's death in 1924. By then his project of N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), inaugurated in 1921 to rescue the country from starvation after the Civil War, had visibly improved small industry and had provided peasants with access to the free market. However, because N.E.P. encouraged private enterprise and thus promoted the pro capitalist elements, its policies stirred constant debate among various leaders of the Party. When Lenin died, the less compromising forces within the government, were quick to try to curtail all N.E.P. activities. Lenin's death also resulted in an intense struggle of various politburo members for the leadership of the Party.¹⁶

¹⁴Sergei Sen'kin and Gustav Klutsis, "Masterskaia Revolutsii," LEF 1, no.5 (1924), pp. 155-59.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁶This involved a struggle between Stalin and Trotskii, as well as various conflicts between other positions held by Nikolai Bukharin, Leo Kamenev, and Gregory Zinoviev. Stalin's final victory came at the Fifteenth All-Union Congress of the Communist Party, which on December 27, 1927, condemned all "deviations from the general Party line." For a further discussion of this period see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 543-544.

Because Lenin was a tangible icon for many Soviet critics and artists, their reaction to his death was immediate and involved an attempt to link Lenin's image to new artistic manifestations. This gesture was particularly and promptly expressed by a group of "formalist" literary critics including Victor Shklovskii, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Lev Iakubinskii. Together around 1916 they gave birth to the beginnings of Russian Formalism when they found Opoiiaz (Obschestvo izucheniia poeticheskogo iazyka) in Petersburg and The Moscow Linguistic Circle in Moscow.¹⁷ Shklovskii defined the credo of the Formalist School in his 1917 essay "Art as Technique." This article, in its emphasis on the autonomy of the work of art, the process of defamiliarization, and the importance of constructive devices, shows an affinity to the position of Rodchenko and other abstract artists of the same period.¹⁸ Shklovskii wrote:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make

¹⁷At the time of these groups' formation the term "formalism" and "formalist" was used in a narrow sense of defining literary practices such as those devoid of straight meanings and clear linguistic structures. In the 1920s these terms begin to acquire a much wider use and were applied to most abstract practices including Suprematism and Constructivism. Eventually in the 1930s, the active use in the press of both "formalism" and "formalist" carried negative connotations and defined all artistic expressions which contradicted the objectives of the Party line. On a further discussion of history of Russian formalism see Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 51-69.

¹⁸This connection between literary and artistic formalism can be partially explained by M.M. Bakhtin/P.N. Medvedev's remark that "Russian [literary] formalism was tightly interlaced with the artistic program ... of Russian futurism." They also point out that "The formalists did not polemicize with other ... movements in literature as much as with other artistic programs." See M.M. Bakhtin/P.N. Medvedev, The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 64.

objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.¹⁹

In his writings from this period Shklovskii demonstrated his reluctance to accept the notion of a parallel between what he called "social revolution" and the "revolution of artistic forms." He also refused to consider "art as one of life's functions" and claimed that "new forms in art appear not to express new content but to replace old forms which stopped being artistic."²⁰

As in the case of abstract artists, in the early 1920s, the literary formalist doctrine began to incline toward recognizing the importance of concrete sociological aspects in the work of art. This shift was documented in the magazine Pechat' and Revolutsiia (Press and Revolution) whose 1924 entire issue was dedicated to the debates about "formal method." Along with the essays written by various literary critics such as Eikhenbaum, Press and Revolution published an article written by Anatolii Lunacharskii, the People's Commissar of Enlightenment. This interest of political figures in the issue of formalism was initiated by Leon Trotskii's 1923 article "Formal School of Poetry and Marxism"²¹ and started the use of the word "formalism" as a more general term unifying all avant-garde tendencies in literary and artistic circles.

¹⁹Victor Shklovsky, "Iskusstvo kak priyom," Sborniki II, 1917, here cited from Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12.

²⁰Victor Shklovskii, "Ob iskusstve i revolutsii," Iskusstvo Kommuny, no. 17, 1919, p. 2.

²¹L. Trotskii, "Formal'naia shkola poezii i marksizma," Moskovskaiia Pravda, no.166, 1923.

In his article for Press and Revolution, Eikhenbaum specifically noted that the issue of formalism became "topical, although it seems that it is extremely distant from the problems of the 'first necessity.'"²² Eikhenbaum confirmed that it was Trotskii's article which "attracted attention to [formalism] from the new circles which up to now did not suspect that these 'formalists' exist."²³ He also summed up the development of formalism and announced the appearance of what he called "for-sotsy" (an abbreviation for formalists-sociologists). According to Eikhenbaum, the "for-sotsy" proposed "to connect two 'methods' -- formal and sociological" and to view art as "social fact and social factor"²⁴ In reaction to Trotskii's accusation in "Formal School of Poetry and Marxism" that the formalists were detached from Marxism, Eikhenbaum pointed out that formalism did not "contrast" itself to Marxism but it rejected "a simple transformation of socioeconomical problems in the sphere of study of art."²⁵ Eikhenbaum continued, "Marxism in itself does not guarantee a revolutionary position... formalism is a revolutionary movement because it frees [art] from the outdated traditions and forces to reconsider all fundamental concepts and schemes."²⁶

After Lenin's death, Eikhenbaum and other formalist critics used the formalist-sociological method in their 1924 articles published in LEF to analyze Lenin's oratorical and written works. In his essay "The Basic Stylistic Tendencies of Lenin's Speech," Eikhenbaum emphasized the

²²B. Eikhenbaum, "Vokrug voprosa o formalistach," Pechat' i Revolutsiia, no. 5, (1924), p. 1

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid. p. 2.

²⁵Ibid. p. 10.

²⁶Ibid. p. 11.

formalists' new interest in what he called "practical" language, which in previous formalist theory was always to be replaced by poetic language. This practical language was closely related to "agitational" needs and was directed to the masses, who "have to be convinced."²⁷ Eikhenbaum praised Lenin for avoiding abstractions and for introducing into his writings aspects of "the everyday, including crude words and expressions."²⁸ In his LEF article "Lenin as De-canonizer," Shklovskii emphasized the importance of a concrete political event such as Lenin's death in radicalizing art language. Specifically, Shklovskii referred to the process of pereimenovaniia, or "ousting of one word by another,"²⁹ an agitational gesture manifested in the renaming of many institutions, factories, and streets in the Soviet Union after Lenin's death. Shklovskii also stressed the importance of Lenin's own use of everyday language to his struggle for change:

People who attempt to understand Lenin's style must understand above all that that style has to do with the act of change [of various processes] and not with the act of establishing [them]. When Lenin introduces a routine fact into his writing, he does not "standardize" that routine but rather uses it to change the scale of comparison. He compares the large with the small.³⁰

As with Shklovskii and Eikhenbaum, Klutskis was prompted by Lenin's death to make his final break with forms devoid of concrete content and to fully dedicate himself to a photographic image. Klutskis's reaction to Lenin's death was part of his interest in political themes expressed shortly after the

²⁷Boris Eikhenbaum, "Osnovnye stilevye tendentsii v rechi Lenina," LEF 1, no.5 (1924), p. 58.

²⁸Ibid., p. 59.

²⁹Viktor Shklovskii, "Lenin kak dekanonizator," LEF 1, no.5 (1924), p. 56.

³⁰Ibid.

Revolution and it can be explained by certain details of his biography. As a young man, he became disillusioned with the monarchy after his brother was arrested and exiled. Later, as a member of the Latvian Rifles, he actually took part in the storming of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg and the overthrow of the Tsar. In 1918, Klutssis moved to Moscow and served in Lenin's personal military guard at the Kremlin. He became a Communist Party member in 1920. These experiences no doubt influenced Klutssis's belief that art should have a direct connection to the political goals for which he had fought. For Klutssis, it was not enough to claim that art was for the new classless society; for him, it was essential to create visual language which would include realist imagery comprehensible to the masses. In order to do this, Klutssis introduced photographic images into his abstract compositions and thereby created the first photomontages with specific sociopolitical messages.

His photomontage The Electrification of the Entire Country, (1920), (fig.5) was conceived as a poster project to advertise Lenin's Plan of 1920 which aimed at providing electricity to the entire country and was endorsed at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets.³¹ This photomontage constituted one of the earliest examples of the combination of an abstract composition with an overtly political message expressed through photography. In The Electrification of the Entire Country, Klutssis departed from the formal concerns of his earlier photomontage called Dynamic City (1919) (fig.6) where he introduced four small photographs of construction workers around the central geometric shapes borrowed from his first, fully abstract version of

³¹Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 541.

Dynamic City (fig.7).³² Preserving his interest in the spatial instability expressed in his abstract compositions, such as the first version of Dynamic City, Klutis sought to abolish gravity by placing the photographic images of the construction workers in various rotational positions. In The Electrification he deliberately discarded the "overall confusion" of Dynamic City's spatial reversibility in order to introduce a more readable ideological content. The Electrification design is dominated by a central circle overlaid by a red geometric shape and a model of Constructivist architecture. Klutis shatters the purity of abstract space by populating it with tiny figures of workers and a giant figure of Lenin who strides across the composition. The leader, who is clearly designated as the national hero, carries metal scaffolding and architectural sections, symbols of the technological modernization promised by the Bolshevik government. Here all figures are firmly grounded in the pictorial field, allowing the viewer to make an easier identification with that space and its content. The Electrification abandons a broad abstraction in favor of a more immediate and sociopolitically specific photographic representation.

Klutis's utilization of realistic imagery directly demonstrates his interest in the documentary aspects of a work of art. In this respect, his first

³²Because Klutis did not publish these early photomontages at the time of their production, their dates are sometimes questioned by scholars. However, both Larisa Oginskaia in her monograph Gustav Klutis (Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1981) and Christina Lodder in Russian Constructivism accepted the artist's dates. Moreover, Oginskaia points out that as early as 1918 Klutis used photomontage in his design for a street panneau Storm produced for the Fifth Congress of Soviets in Moscow; this panneau is now at the Museum of Latvian and Russian Art in Riga. Both Dynamic City and The Electrification differ in composition from his photomontages which were published in 1924.

photomontages relate to contemporaneous experiments in film, especially those of Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Lev Kuleshov.³³ Vertov's manifesto "My" ("We"), written in 1919, the year the kinoki (cinema-eye men) group was founded, but only published in 1922 in a newly founded magazine Kino-fot (Film-Photo), bears certain conceptual links with Klutssis's first photomontages. Using the notions of "dynamic geometry" and the "dynamic sketch," Vertov wrote, "Our path is from a dawdling citizen via the poetry of a machine to a perfect electric man. A new man, freed from weight and clumsiness, with the exact and light movements of a machine, will become a useful object of filming."³⁴ Like Klutssis, Vertov was interested in the theme of electrification, and in 1922 he asked for support to produce a film on the subject.³⁵ Vertov's newsreels from 1922-25, called Kino-Pravda (Film-truth), endorsed a documentary basis for art making and dismissed the individual artist's vision as inferior to that of a mechanical tool. Klutssis also believed that agitational artworks depended above all on "intellectual

³³According to Kuleshov he was the first in Russia to use the word 'montage' and to speak about "realism in the art of the film." In 1920, Kuleshov filmed Lenin at the first Subbotnik. See Lev Kuleshov, "The Origins of Montage," in Luda Schnitzer, Jean Schnitzer, and Marcel Martin, eds. Cinema in Revolution (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), pp. 67-68. On the theory of photomontage also see Varvara Stepanova, "Foto-montazh. Aleksandr M. Rodchenko," Fotografie (Prague), no. 3 (1973), pp. 18-19. Anonymous, "Foto-Montazh," LEF (Moscow), no. 4 (1924), pp.43-44. Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage of Cine-Attractions," Kino segodnia, Moscow, (1925). Also see Dziga Vertov on "harmonious" montage in "O kinopravda," LEF, no. 6, (1924).

³⁴Dziga Vertov, "My," Kino-fot, no. 1 (1922), p. 11.

³⁵In Kino-Fot Vertov complained about difficulties in getting funds for making Kino-Pravdas. He was competing against many films sponsored by the NEP man. In this regards he wrote: "NEP says: 'Film where you are paid. A Film Castle of Tamara (a restaurant with cozy offices) is preferred over a film about electrification.'" Dziga Vertov, "He and I," Kino-Fot no.2 (1922), p. 10.

perception," a notion that corresponds to Eisenstein's contemporaneous concept of "intellectual montage."³⁶ The latter is described by film historian Jacques Aumont as "an intensification of the range of possible stimuli, primarily because it takes the spectator and his reactions into account. Intellectual montage is clearly aimed at producing meanings stripped of all ambiguity (ideologically and semantically)."³⁷ Like Klutssis's first agitational photomontages, Eisenstein's "intellectual montage," was according to Aumont based on the negation of "abstract, formal experimentation."³⁸ Klutssis's direct interest in the theories and films of Vertov and Eisenstein is demonstrated by his designs for the covers of the magazine Kino-Front (Film-Front) (fig.8) in 1926 . These designs were composed from stills from such films as Vertov's One Sixth of the World and Eisenstein's General Line.

In letters written in the late summer of 1924 to his wife, artist Valentina Kulagina, Klutssis spoke enthusiastically about photography and photomontage. He was beginning to accumulate his own documentary snapshots (later to be combined in photomontages with those borrowed from other photographers), and he mentions taking "successful photographs of the crowds."³⁹ In one of his letters, Klutssis specifically discusses his efforts to take photographs for use in political montages:

³⁶In his archive, Klutssis kept the book Advertising and Poster as Weapons of Propaganda, written by German critic Theodor Kunig and published in Leningrad in 1925. Klutssis underlined the passage in which Kunig stated that advertising relied on "intellectual perception."

³⁷Jacques Aumont, Montage Eisenstein, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley, and Andrew Ross (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.159.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Letters of Gustav Klutssis to Valebtina Kulagina of August 20, 1924, and August 14, 1924. Klutssis Family Archive, Moscow.

I began to work on the history of VKP (b) [All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks] of comrade Zinoviev. I will actively use photographs which I have recently collected in large amounts. On Sunday, I took a series of good shots: a parade of athletes which I came across on Red Square. Now I have to photograph workers and the Red Army soldiers. Then I will be satisfied.⁴⁰

The snapshots mentioned by Klutsis were used in photomontages published in the political magazines Molodaia Gvardiia (Young Guard) and Vestnik Truda (Herald of Labor) shortly after Lenin's death. These were designated to function as agitational representations and employed mass-media publications for distribution. By producing works for widely distributed magazines, Klutsis and Sen'kin adopted the role previously assigned to anonymous designers, who, since 1917, often were employed by the state to put together documentary photo albums which recorded various political events.

In the issue of Young Guard called "To Lenin" and published in 1924, Klutsis and Sen'kin (whose collaboration started with their statement "The Workshop of the Revolution") employed photomontage to create a vivid frame for Lenin's image. The compositional format of the pages as well as the reliance on red, black, and white color combination derive from Constructivist book designs in which typographic elements play a definitive role. Here, however, typography is combined with realistic and documentary instead of abstract imagery. In one illustration, the vertical stripes of slogans are replaced by arrows made of miniature documentary photographs, ranging

⁴⁰Klutsis's letter to Kulagina of August 26, 1924. Klutsis Family Archive, Moscow. In this letter, Klutsis mentioned that he used Kulagina's head in his montage for the image of an industrial female worker. This initiated his practice of utilizing portraits of relatives and friends in his photomontages.

from Lenin's disembodied head to massive demonstrations of workers (fig.9). Klut'sis's photomontage page called RKP (Russian Communist Party) (fig.10) is structured around a red diamond with a Constructivist agitational stand on it. Lenin speaks from a top the stand while four smaller figures of him are distributed around all four sides of it. In addition, the red diamond is surrounded by various shaped fragments of documentary photographs, including a ship with a sailor atop its mast, scenes of demonstrating workers, and portraits of foreign members of the Communist Party.

The issue of the political magazine Herald of Labor which Klut'sis and Sen'kin designed was dedicated to the Sixth Congress of the Unions and published in 1925. As in the case with Young Guard, Herald of Labor's design exemplified the successful merge between Constructivist formal design techniques and political iconography. One striking page by Sen'kin consists of an abstract rendering of a waving worker outlined in black and filled in with multiple portraits of delegates to the Congress (fig.11). This figure and the seven rays of slogans that stream from it overlay a photographic image of masses of demonstrating workers which spreads over the whole page. Klut'sis's most remarkable illustration in Herald of Labor (fig.12) shows clasped hands which join together photographic images of collective farmers in the lower left and industrial workers in the upper right; the handshake that unites them illustrates the slogan "The Rise of Labor Productivity Will Reinforce the Union Between Workers and Peasants." The bold arrows, a design element also used in Young Guard, are here employed to emphasize various slogans and objects of production. Applying strong "formalist" elements to documentary photographs and slogans to elevate Lenin and to reflect the sociopolitical reality of the Soviet Union, Klut'sis and

Sen'kin's photomontages in Young Guard and in Herald of Labor explicitly combined the propagandistic State agenda with the avant-garde compositional techniques such as fragmentation, diagonal compositions, and vivid color. They thus undertook the first steps in realization of the formalist-sociological method.

In their photomontages for Young Guard, Klutsis and Sen'kin utilized structural principles that are strikingly similar to the devices noted by the formalists in Lenin's oratorical and written language. For example, in analyzing one of Lenin's essays, Eikhenbaum noted that "syntactic parallelism penetrates this entire work, creating repetitions, not only in large areas of speech, but also in small ones, that is, in parts of phrases; this creates breaks and harmonies in rhythm and intonation. The article is divided by paragraphs between which one finds correlation which energize the speech."⁴¹ Lev Iakubinskii also emphasized Lenin's use of parentheses, which, according to him, worked to break up a "continuous syntactic construction" and helped "to divert" the reader from "the main flow of a speech."⁴² Klutsis and Sen'kin used a similar methodology to structure their photomontages. Lenin's figure appears on each page of the magazine in different compositional arrangements and in different scales. He is often reproduced several times on the same page, emphasizing the importance of repetition in montage. On some of the pages, Lenin is positioned in the center surrounded by photographic fragments. These additional documentary details add to the main image while at the same time destroying a continuous

⁴¹Eikhenbaum, "Osnovnye stilevyie tendentsii v rechi Lenina," LEF no. 1 (5), 1924 p. 66.

⁴²Lev Iakubinskii, "O snizhenii vysokogo stilia u Lenina," LEF no. 1 (5), 1924, p. 77.

composition and, in Iakubinskii's terms, divert the viewer from the main flow of representation. All the photomontages printed in Young Guard rely heavily on quotations of familiar images and attempt to fill the magazine pages with as much factual material as possible. Political slogans are prominently deployed, making explicit the essential links between verbal and visual representations. One montage shows Lenin as an orator agitating against imperialist domination. Breaks created by the typographic slogans allow the viewer to perceive the central figure of Lenin in a much broader sociopolitical context. In general, structural elements, such as sharp diagonal compositions, severe fragmentation of bodies and objects, the interplay of scales, the graphic contrast of black and red, and the intervention of slogans, contribute to the complexity of the structure of this new political photomontage.

Other photomontages produced by Klutis and Sen'kin in response to Lenin's death were made for Il'ia Lin's book Deti i Lenin (Children and Lenin), (1924). Unlike the illustrations for Young Guard, which concentrated on Lenin's image as a political figure, here the revolutionary leader was presented as a lovable human being surrounded by enchanted children. Except for the cover, Children and Lenin is printed in black and white. On the cover, a red square overlaps a black one, and both are covered with the title and with photographs of strolling Lenin and children. (fig.13). By placing representational elements over the Suprematist square, this design punctures the purity of abstract art. Inside, the book begins with a full-page montage showing Lenin, sitting comfortably in the center of a large, graphically rendered circle, embracing a small boy (fig.14). Radiating from the central image are six beams, each enclosing a photographic portrait of

children. Two additional standing figures of Lenin, smaller in size and different in appearance, are placed at the bottom of the circle, as if supporting the whole structure. Other illustrations combine photographs of Lenin and groups of girls and boys with collages of children's scribbles describing Lenin's achievements and virtues (fig. 15).⁴³ The overlay of blocks of awkward writing on top of documentary photographs creates a bizarre contrast. The images are arranged in a patchy, uneven fashion, as if in a scrapbook with portraits of children randomly interspersed with those of Lenin, freely alternating in scale and form. One image depicts a fragment of the country estate in Gorki where Lenin spent most of his time after he was shot and became sick. But the artists have placed the smiling leader on top of the roof, overturning the reality of Lenin's incapacitation in the years just before his death (fig. 16)

One of the most dramatic illustrations in Children and Lenin shows Lenin lying in state (fig. 17). He is mourned by three children, one of whom is represented as a disembodied weeping head boldly emerging out of the dark background. The book ends with a photomontage in which two Lenin heads, one on top of the page and the other on the bottom, are connected by three lanes of a racetrack (fig. 18). Three children are running on the lanes, and other athletes of various ages and different sizes are scattered over the page. To compensate for the antinarrativity of these illustrations, the artists have placed excerpts from Lin's text under each image, as if to fix the

⁴³Curiously, these samples of children's writings are strikingly similar to the examples of Lenin's scribbles which he made after he was shot and newly taught to write by his wife Krupskaja. The latter documents, attesting to Lenin's harsh disability after the shooting, were long-suppressed but were exhibited at Lenin Museum in Moscow shortly before it was closed in 1993.

meaning for the otherwise disjointed compositions. The last image, for example, is accompanied by the inscription: "Cheerful, strong, on the road of science and knowledge, running faster to the behests of Il'ich-to the Communism." Here, sport functions less as a field for individual achievement than as a metaphor for the fulfillment of Communist ideals.

The photomontages executed by Klut'sis and Sen'kin for Young Guard, Herald of Labor, and Children and Lenin extended Eisenstein's theory of "intellectual montage." Aumont's clarification of the three main structural characteristics of "intellectual montage" aptly corresponds to Klut'sis's and Sen'kin's representational methodology applied in these publications. Aumont distinguishes in montage, first, "the conscious decision to mix together genres and styles in patchwork fashion;" second, the idea of "'circularity,' or interlocking of narratives;" and, third, "the device of 'repetition.'"⁴⁴ He continues, "The common force behind all of these 'principles' of composition seems ... to be an anti-naturalistic or anti--linear bias already inherent in the choice of subject--and one which always appeals to both the thought of the spectator (the spectator is captivated by this patchwork effect: the circularity turns back on itself, and reaffirms his sense of purpose as a spectator, while the repetition drives the point home) and the 'dialectical' structure."⁴⁵ With such structural and contentual complexity, Klut'sis and Sen'kin's photomontages for various publications opened a new chapter in the history of sociopolitical publications. Since their contributions derived from challenging avant-garde ideas about form and design, the readers of such publications were never simply passive observers of vital social information.

⁴⁴Aumont, Montage Eisenstein, p. 164.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 165.

The artists themselves turned away from fine art to mass publications and claimed documentary photography as their primary representational tool. They thus sought to "lower the high style," commit to mass-cultural forms, and work for a consumer and by a commission.

Rodchenko's first experiments with making art work by means of a photo image occurred while he was still teaching at the VKhUTEMAS and shortly after he produced his three-dimensional constructions. The examples of his first photocollages were published in the magazine Film-Photo in 1922. Edited by Gan, one of the theorists of Productivism, Film-Photo was devoted to cinematography and photography. In an introduction to the first issue, Gan called cinematography "the affair of proletarian art" and distinguished Soviet film practices from Western ones. To illustrate this difference, he published stills from Vertov's newsreels called Film-Truths that dealt with the themes of workers, labor, civil war, and significant everyday events (fig.19). Along with Gan's politically charged texts and Vertov's documentary cinematographic imagery, the magazine generously displayed Rodchenko's early abstract artworks, including his spatial constructions (fig.20) and drawings based on an investigation of line. (fig.21) Film-Photo even illustrated Vertov's manifesto "We" with Rodchenko's drawing from his 1915 series called "Objectless Graphics." Along with these abstract formal experiments from Rodchenko's past, Film-Photo also printed his first photocollages.⁴⁶ As presented together in Film-Photo, these two

⁴⁶I choose to call Rodchenko's early experiments with photographs, photocollage, to equate them more with the Western Cubist and Dada collages and photocollages and to distinguish them from early political photomontages of Klutis and Sen'kin as well as from Rodchenko's own works with political photographic imagery. The latter include his illustrations for History of VKP (b) from 1925-26.

aspects of Rodchenko's oeuvre reveal his initial intention to transplant the compositional principles of his abstractions into the new works with figurative elements.⁴⁷ The structural affinity between the two types of work is especially visible in Rodchenko's photcollages, which appeared in the first issue of Film-Photo under the title "Printed Matter for Criticism Montaged by Constructivist Rodchenko." Composed of cutouts from theater posters and daily newspapers, these works actually include very few photographic images. (fig.22) The unsigned text which accompanies them poses them against Western Cubist and Dada collages. In the latter, the article claims, the printed material is utilized "abstractly and for the sake of only aesthetic tasks."⁴⁸ In reality, Rodchenko's experiments with printed matter cut outs are close to those of Cubist and Dada artists. In both cases traditional materials are replaced with fragments of printed matter and in Rodchenko's instance these fragments are arranged into compositions which closely follow the patterns of his abstract works. The resulting disconnected contents of these photcollages prevent them from conveying clear messages and from transgressing the frames of a solely aesthetic dimension.

A few issues later, Film-Photo, published two more Rodchenko's photcollages. In these, the amount of photographic imagery was visibly increased. These works, called Psychology and Detective, were used to

⁴⁷A number of scholars have linked Rodchenko's compositions in his first experiments with photcollage printed in Kino-fot with those developed a few years earlier in his paintings with lines and in what he called "belaia bespredmetnaia skul'ptura" (white objectless sculpture). See, for example, Hubertus Gasner, "Analytical Sequences," in David Elliot, ed., Aleksandr Rodchenko (Oxford: Oxford Museum of Modern Art, 1979), p. 108.

⁴⁸Anonymous, Kino-Fot, no.1 (1922), p. 13.

illustrate filmmaker Lev Kuleshov's article "Montage."⁴⁹ In this text, Kuleshov placed no emphasis on political uses of montage and praised the use of montage in American films and mass culture. Similarly, in his photocollages, Rodchenko showed no interest in political or documentary subject matter but tried to render the exhilarating reality of the N.E.P. In Psychology (fig.23), Rodchenko used the image of a woman as his central device; the large head of a fashionable young female observes four couples engaged in melodramatic love scenes. These images are squeezed together by vertical strips bearing phrases like "holy lie" or "she convinced me," clichés that reiterate men's stereotypical views of women's behavior in romantic relationships. Detective (fig. 24) is based on a similar combination of photographs and texts, and parodies the criminal activities stimulated by the competition of the N.E.P.'s economic opportunities. Although each fragment reports a criminal plot, the whole montage conveys the adventurous rather than dangerous life of a N.E.P. detective. These photocollages are structured in more linear than circular patterns and thus lack the compositional complexities of "intellectual montage" as defined by Aumont. Rodchenko avoids the repetition used to good effect in Klutskis and Sen'kin's photomontages because of his desire to construct a narrative.

Kuleshov's text and Rodchenko's imagery also stand in sharp contrast to Vertov's anti-Western and anti-N.E.P. themes. In fact, Vertov's Film-Truth specifically resisted the sorts of themes that Rodchenko depicted in Psychology and Detective. "Kino-Pravda," Vertov wrote, "is shown daily in numerous workers' clubs in Moscow and the provinces--with great success. And if an audience of N.E.P.-men prefers love stories or crime stories, that

⁴⁹See Lev Kuleshov, "Montazh," Kino-Fot, no.3 (1922), pp. 11-12.

does not signify that our work is not suitable. It means that the public is not suitable."⁵⁰

Psychology and Detective served as the structural and thematic models for Rodchenko's major book illustrations for Maiakovskii's poem Pro Eto (About That), 1923 (figs.25, 26). In these illustrations, Rodchenko intensified the technique of unexpected juxtapositions and diverse contexts to absorb the diverse and conflicting reality of N.E.P. and to convey a complex, multilayered world of romantic imagination and private references. Photography critic and grandson of the artist Aleksandr Lavrentiev points out that Rodchenko's use of photography in his graphic work was most likely spurred by Maiakovskii's 1922 visit to Berlin at which time he saw many publications with photocollage illustrations.⁵¹ Lavrentiev even suggests that German magazines, such as Die Dame, Junge Welt, Moderne Illustrierte Zeitschrift, and Die Woche, some of which were sold in Russia in the early 1920s, provided many of the images used by Rodchenko for About That illustrations.⁵² Rodchenko's use of foreign magazines as the source for his photocollages implies that he was far more concerned with photography as a new artistic means than as a vehicle to document the new Soviet life.

⁵⁰Dziga Vertov, "On the Importance of Newsreel," 1923. As cited in Schnitzer et al., eds., Cinema in Revolution, p. 80.

⁵¹Aleksandr Lavrentiev, "Pro etu knigu," in Vladimir Maiakovskii, Pro Eto, (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1994). In 1926 Rodchenko himself admitted that Maiakovskii who went abroad very often "brought back whole suitcases of magazines, catalogues and books." A.M. Rodchenko, Stat'i, vospominaniia, avtobiograficheskie zapiski, pis'ma (Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1982), p. 73.

⁵² Ibid. The photographs of Maiakovskii and Lili Brik were taken by Arkadii Shterenberg.

Rodchenko's wife, artist Varvara Stepanova, in 1928 commented specifically on his conscious attempts to distinguish these photocollages from photomontages dealing with political iconography. She wrote that in political photomontage, "the individual snapshots are not fragmented and have all the characteristics of a real document."⁵³ This observation is especially applicable to Rodchenko's magazine illustrations dedicated to Lenin (figs. 27-28) and printed after his death in 1924 and to Rodchenko's illustrations for the History of VKP (b), 1925-26 (figs.29-32), published by the Communist Academy in collaboration with the Museum of the Revolution. Both examples attest to Rodchenko's reluctance to mix formalist compositional methods with political iconography.⁵⁴ To illustrate the History of VKP (b), he executed twenty-five posters covered with historical photographs, archival documents, maps, and slogans--all arrayed against red, blue, or yellow backgrounds with repetitive precision. Compared to Klutskis and Sen'kin's original and dynamic illustrations of the same theme published

⁵³Varvara Stepanova, "Photomontage," 1928. As cited in Elliot, ed., Alexander Rodchenko, 1979, p. 93.

⁵⁴Among designs dedicated to Lenin are covers for Zhivomu Il'ichu (1924) and O Lenine (1925), as well as covers for the magazine Technika i zhizn' (1924). Along with Klutskis and Sen'kin, Rodchenko contributed a photomontage to the book Leninu (1924). This image is more formalist, suggesting that he did not want to look "uninventive" in the close company of his colleagues. It was only in 1928, when Rodchenko's interest in the ideological properties of a photograph increased, that he linked the representation of Lenin's image with the most advanced forms of photography. At that time he wrote, "Tell me what one needs to achieve in memory of Lenin: artistic bronze, oil portraits, lithographs, watercolors, a diary of his secretary, reminiscences of his friends or a file of photographs taken during his work and leisure. I think that there is no choice. Art has no existence in contemporary life ... Do not lie! Take pictures and have pictures taken of you." See "Protiv summirovannogo portreta za monumental'nyi snimok," Novyi LEF, no. 4 (1928), p. 16.

in early 1925 in Herald of Labor, Rodchenko's political photomontages appear overtly didactic and barely distinguishable from numerous contemporary examples of anonymous political propaganda. The illustrations for the History of VKP (b) show that Rodchenko was not yet interested in applying the principles of the avant-garde compositions, as they had been developed in his early experiments with Constructivism, to enrich the propagandistic material such as political mass-media publications. Instead, he continued to apply his constructivist compositional principles to the themes of more personal or fictional nature in order to reinvent his art practice without succumbing to the overtly political imagery. In this respect, his early applications of photographic imagery indeed continued rather than diverted from his constructivist agenda as manifested in abstract works.

In 1925, Futurist poet Aleksandr Khruchenykh published a book titled Lenin's Language: Eleven Devices of Lenin's Speech which featured on its cover Klutskis's construction Radio Orator (1922). (fig.33) In this book, Khruchenykh refers to literary and visual representations of a political nature as "agits," [agitki], noting that

an agit must be, first of all, very popular, lucid in thought, language, and form; secondly, it must be very artistic and original. If it does not satisfy the second condition, then its influence will be limited only to the primitive masses, missing the highly cultivated and qualified ones, and most importantly its influence will soon evaporate and will be forgotten even among the simple population."⁵⁵

⁵⁵Aleksandr Khruchenykh, Lef-agitki Maiakovskogo, Aseeva, Tret'iakova (Moscow, 1925).

Judging from Klutsis and Sen'kin's photomontages dedicated to Lenin, it is evident that Khruchenykh's attempt to link effective political art with formalist inventiveness was also their objective. This attitude allowed them to commit themselves to an overtly political iconography without losing the opportunity to experiment. This perception of the function of political photomontage placed them in sharp opposition to the method as practiced by Rodchenko. For him, it was important to keep the rendering of strictly political imagery separate from the rest of the iconographic arsenal. As a result, in his portfolio History of VKP (b), Rodchenko disregarded the second condition of Khruchenykh's concept of effective "agits," that is, to be "artistic and original." He also refused to apply in them one of the main principles of Constructivism, namely "invention."⁵⁶ Rodchenko's strict avoidance of political and agitational qualities in his experimental photocollages like About That and formalist methods in political photomontages placed him apart from the formalist-sociological method as defined by its theorists and practiced by Klutsis and Sen'kin. Klutsis himself said in 1931 that Rodchenko's production during this period "often slipped into the methods of Western advertising-formalist montage which had no influence on the formation of political montage."⁵⁷ With this succinct

⁵⁶Khan-Magomedov points out that the First Working Group of Constructivists, to which Rodchenko belonged, emphasized two components of Constructivism: "construction" and "invention." See Khan-Magomedov, "Early Constructivism," in Art Into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932 (New York: Rizzoli, 1990) p. 55. Also see "Programa uchebnoi podgruppy konstruktivistov INKhUKa" (Program of the Study Subgroup of the Constructivists of INKhUK) typescript, Moscow 1921, private archive, Moscow.

⁵⁷Klutsis, "Fotomontage kak novyi vid agitatsionnogo iskusstva," Izofront. Klasovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv. Sbornik statei ob'edineniia oktiabr' (Leningrad/ Moskva: Izofront, 1931) p. 126.

statement, Klutis summarized the complex and controversial beginnings of Soviet photographic practice, carefully disassociating his own intentions in this field from the advertising works made by other artists during the N.E.P. period.

Chapter 2

The Photographer in the Service of the Collective

The period of political and economic instability which began after Lenin's death, culminated in Stalin's victory when he expelled Trotskii from his Kremlin headquarters at the end of 1927, and when he implemented the First Five-Year Plan in 1928.⁵⁸ With the approach of the First Five-Year Plan the need to agitate millions of workers to take part in the Plan's grandiose economical transformations and to report news from the construction sites quickly and effectively boosted the role of mass media. With this rapidly emerging situation, the importance of photographic images was apparent and yet it was uncertain what place it would acquire in the pages of many new popular magazines.

It was easy for photography to prevail over realist painting, which bore the connotations of fine arts tradition. But the aspirations of one group, called the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) presented a more serious threat. The AKhRR group had been founded shortly before Lenin's death by artists who traveled to factories and collective farms and

⁵⁸Stalin's Five-Year Plan proved attractive to the Party because it promised a way out of the impasse: the Soviet Union could abandon the New Economic Policy and become a truly socialist country without waiting for world revolution. The main goal of the Plan was to develop heavy industry, including machine-building. Whole new branches of industry, such as the chemical, automobile, agricultural machinery, aviation, and electrical were created. Over fifteen hundred new factories were built. Gigantic industrial complexes, such as Magnitostroi, began to take shape. For further discussion of this period see Kuromiya Hiroaki, Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

painted what they saw with the painstaking naturalism as if imitating a photograph. By deliberately specializing in a practice which photography could perform more effectively, the AKhRR engaged in a "thermidor" not only against experimental photography but also against photography in general. In the years immediately following Lenin's death, the members of AKhRR received no special recognition from the government. But in 1928, the first year of the Plan, the AKhRR gained the government's official stamp of approval when the entire Politburo made a visit to one of the group's exhibitions.⁵⁹

In the light of these competitive circumstances, avant-garde photographers were compelled to try to demonstrate that photography was a more effective tool for agitation and propagandizing the Plan's agenda. One task was to attract numerous workers to participate in the amateur photographic production (particularly since the Productivists had failed to convince the majority of their students to join the industries). But the larger project of advancing photography to the radical forefront of the arts and proving that it was the best tool for shaping Socialist society could not have been realized without the rigorous and persuasive writings of the LEF critics.

Recognizing this emerging competition for the title of the "true revolutionary art," Novyi LEF (New LEF) critic Osip Brik claimed that AKhRR painters were merely trying "to regain lost positions and turn to a reproduction of reality in line with photography."⁶⁰ In his essay "The Photo-Still Versus the Picture," Brik presented one of the earliest comments by a

⁵⁹This exhibition took place in Moscow and was dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Red Army. See AKhRR: Sbornik vospominanii, statei, dokumentov (Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1973).

⁶⁰Osip Brik, "Foto-kadr protiv kartiny," Sovetskoe foto, no.2 (1926), p. 41.

radical Soviet critic on photography's superiority as a medium to painting. For Brik, the "social roots of this phenomenon were clear: first of all, a great demand for the chronicle of the new byt [everyday life]; secondly, masses of painters are left with no business because there is no one to buy painting."⁶¹ "After all," Brik continues, "Photographers reflect byt and events cheaper, faster and more precisely than painters. In this lie their strength and great social meaning."⁶² In this article Brik avoids criticizing painting as a technique (that would mean a rejection of abstract production as well) and instead attacks painting only for the "idea of reproducing nature." To emphasize this nuance in the title, he chose the word kartina ("picture") rather than zhivopis' ("painting"). The latter specifically implies painting as a technique, whereas the former conveys the "picturesque" qualities of painting. Relying on this nuanced play of meanings, Brik subtly expressed his disillusionment with the artificiality of realist painting. Similarly, the conventional translation of "foto-kadr" in Brik's title as simply "photograph" is inaccurate. Undoubtedly, Brik borrowed the term kadr ("still") from the language of cinema in order to suggest that the kind of photography he promoted had more to do with the process of filming than with that of painting.⁶³ In fact, in the same year, in the editorial section of the magazine,

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid. See John Bowl't's translation of this essay titled "The Photograph Versus the Painting" in Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), pp. 227-233.

⁶³I refer to various translations of this article including "The Photograph versus the Painting" by John Bowl't in Christopher Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), p. 213.

Sovetskoe Kino (Soviet Film), Brik wrote: "The basis of cinematography is photography. Without photographs there is no cinema. Each filmmaker must closely follow the success and progress of photographic art. In it lies the future of cinematography. Soviet Film is initiating a special section called Foto v Kino [Photo in Cinema], in which kino i foto-kadry [cinema and photo-stills], that are interesting from a photographic point of view, will be published."⁶⁴

From this more attentive reading of the title of Brik's article, then, it is apparent that he meant for everyone to stop judging photography as a supplement to the fine arts and to begin to see it as an offshoot of more technical traditions. As Brik asserted, "The photographer must show that it is not life ordered according to aesthetic laws which is impressive, but also vivid, everyday life itself as it is transfixed in a technically perfect photo-still."⁶⁵ In 1928, Brik published "From Picture to Photograph," an essay in which he tried to fully separate the function of photography from that of painting. He specifically discussed photography's "absolutely new ways of recording optical facts"⁶⁶ and emphasized the role of ideology in relation to various visual choices made by photographers. He wrote:

A photo reporter does not understand that the so-called accidental conditions of his work are ideologically necessary for presenting an object for our understanding. He does not understand that any

⁶⁴Osip Brik, Sovetskoe kino, no.4-5 (1926), p. 23.

⁶⁵Brik, "Foto-kadr protiv kartiny," p. 42. Translation from Alexander Rodchenko, p. 91.

⁶⁶Osip Brik, "Ot kartiny k foto," Novyi LEF, no.3 (1928), p. 29.

recording of an object with old-time methods returns us to the ideology of that old period.⁶⁷

Brik's insistence on photography's separateness from painting and its links to cinematography was reflected in his own and other critics' theories regarding the nature of a documentary practices. In his 1927 article "Fixation of Facts," Brik distinguished between past and present ways of art making: "If before," he wrote, "art work itself had a prime position and material was used only as a necessary raw product...now material stepped to the forefront and an art work is only one of the possible ways to concretize it [material]."⁶⁸ This interest of the circle of LEF critics and artists in factual nature of a work of art manifested itself already on the pages of LEF magazine. The unattributed 1924 text on photomontage heralds the value of factographic qualities in photography. It praises this medium for its "exact fixation" of a visual fact and notes that "precision and documentary quality give the photograph a power to influence the viewer that the graphic image is never able to attain."⁶⁹ Later in this article Brik, continued to connect photography and film practices, pointing to the unique ability of both mediums to record the facts of Soviet life. Like Vertov earlier, Brik criticized commercial films that had been produced during the N.E.P. period for preferring "invented facts" over "real facts." Significantly, in his discussions of documentary film practices, Brik argued that one could not simply "install a camera on a street and leave."⁷⁰ Instead, he maintained, "we have to reflect reality at certain

⁶⁷Ibid., p.33.

⁶⁸Osip Brik, "Fiksatsiia Fakta," Novyi LEF, no. 11-12 (1927), p. 49-50.

⁶⁹See "Fotomontazh," LEF, no.4 (1924), p. 41.

⁷⁰"LEF i Kino: Stenogramma Soveschaniia," Novyi LEF, no. 11-12 (1927), p. 67.

angles."⁷¹ This remark reminds us of Brik's advocacy of the formalist-sociological method, with its primary goal of synthesizing Socialist content with inventive form.

In 1929, one of the major defenders of overtly documentary practice, Nikolai Chuzhak, wrote in New LEF, "Our epoch brought forward a slogan-art as lifebuilding. ...In literature this is decoded as a direct participation of writers in a construction of our days (production, revolution, politics and everyday life) and as a connection of all their searchings with concrete needs. ... From here comes an emphasis on a document. From here comes literature of fact."⁷² Among the major forms of this method Chuzhak named "newspaper and factomontage." A year later, Chuzhak and other critics and writers associated with New LEF produced a book of essays titled Literatura Fakta (Literature of Fact). Although this book was dedicated primarily to literary practices, it indicated the general disillusionment of radical artists and writers with the state of artistic production. The main goals of this new "literature of fact" were to develop what the authors called the "vne-iskustvenny [trans-artistic] plot" and to achieve "a complete concretization of literature, redirecting the center of attention of literature from human emotions to the organization of society."⁷³ As Chuzhak, the book's editor, insisted, "One should not be afraid of 'uninteresting' themes as subject matter. One must only know how to 'present [this] uninteresting theme.'"⁷⁴ His quest, and that of the major practitioners of photography during this

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Nikolai Chuzhak, "Literature zhiznestroeniia, Novyi LEF, no.11 (1928), p. 15.

⁷³Nikolai Chuzhak, ed., Literatura Fakta (Moskva, 1929), p. 21.

⁷⁴Ibid.

period, was to invent the most effective way of presenting documentary (or "uninteresting") material. Chuzhak termed his theory of fact "ultra-realism" and thus made a vital distinction between the documentary practices in photography and cinema and the various types of realism then being offered in painting. The goal of "ultra-realism" was to operate with only those constructive forms which were not part of traditional aesthetics. These included common language for literary works and documentary photographs and films for visual arts.

The efforts of the New LEF critics to develop a totally new perception of photographic practice were reinforced by the opening of the Exhibition of Ten Years of Soviet Photography in 1928. This exhibition included as many as eight thousand exhibits with four hundred participants. It summarized the development of photography during the preceding decade and confirmed the approach of a new photographic era. Leonid Volkov-Lannit, another critic of New LEF, also believed that "photography is coming to take away the social commission of the epoch from easel painting."⁷⁵ He recorded many examples of viewers' comments on the Exhibition of Ten Years of Soviet Photography, including those of one who asserted, "It is necessary to inject photography into the masses of workers and peasants now, in the time of cultural revolution, photography is destined to play a great role."⁷⁶ Volkov-Lannit concluded that "Already in this exhibition, through the husk of traditional

⁷⁵Leonid Volkov-Lannit, "Mogil'schiki kisti," Novyi LEF, no.9 (1928), p. 40.

⁷⁶Leonid Volkov-Lannit, "Za ob'ektivnost' ob'ektiva," Novyi LEF, no.7 (1928), p. 44.

'artness,' one sees the features of truly Soviet photography as a representational tool of bytostroeniia [construction of everyday life] ."⁷⁷

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue of the Exhibition of Ten Years of Soviet Photography , the photography critic G. Boltianskii specifically discussed the function of photojournalism since 1917. He accorded photography a highly important role in both documenting major political events and in developing propaganda. Among the most effective uses of photography that Boltianskii discussed were what he called "movable photo-vitrines," or "agit-vitrines," portable photographic displays that were set up on streets and in agit-trains, agit-ships, and other agit locations. These "vitrines" utilized a carefully executed montage that combined "convincing and agitating photographs on a certain subject matter with agitating inscriptions and slogans to present a kind of a photo-story."⁷⁸ Like Rodchenko's series History of VKP(b) or many examples of overtly political photomontage produced prior to Lenin's death, the agit vitrines had "all the characteristics of a real document"; moreover they were neither "artistic and original," nor a hybrid of formalist "invention" with political documentation. Thus before 1928, documentary photography primarily developed separately from avant-garde art, functioning as a tool of propaganda in competition with no other fine arts medium.

Rodchenko participated in Exhibition of Ten Years of Soviet Photography with such renowned images as his Portrait of Mother, 1924 (fig.34) and several versions of his The Building on Miasnitskaia Street, 1925 (fig.35) These were produced shortly after his first experiments with

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Sovetskaia fotografiia za desiat' let, exh. cat. (Moskva, 1928), p. 351.

photomontage. Years later in 1936, he wrote that in 1925-26 his work for LEF was concerned with the "struggle for photographic language able to illustrate the Soviet subject."⁷⁹ Rodchenko also emphasized that he searched for "the points for photographing, [and] agitated for representing the world by means of photography, [and agitated] for facts, [and] reportage."⁸⁰ He said that at the time his main goal was "to show a subject from all sides and especially from the point of view from which is not yet customary to view it."⁸¹ In other words, in retrospect, Rodchenko recalled that his photographic work produced before the First Five-Year Plan already utilized the formalist-sociological method. In fact, however, Rodchenko did not make the transition to this method and to factography until at least two years later. As late as 1928, he was still reluctant to mix avant-garde experimentation with political content.

Brik criticized Rodchenko's photographs in 1928 precisely for their detachment from the "social demands" of the time and for attempting to resolve painterly goals through photographic language. In comments which most likely allude to Rodchenko's two photographic series, The Building on Miasnitskaia Street, which includes images of buildings shot from below at sharply angled points of view, and Pine Trees in Pushkino, 1927, in which the tops of the trees are captured from a worm's-eye perspective (fig.36), Brik wrote that "one should not depict an isolated building or tree which may be very beautiful but which will be a painting, will be aesthetics."⁸² In other

⁷⁹Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," Sovetskoe Foto, no.5-6 (1936), p.19.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Brik, "Ot kartiny k foto," Novyi LEF, no.3 (1928), pp. 29-33.

words, Brik felt that Rodchenko, at least in these specific photographs, continued to keep photography within the domain of "easel art." Critic and photographer Sergei Tret'iakov who believed that an artist must learn how "to excite people by the material from reality"⁸³ also criticized Rodchenko for not being able to depart from an aesthetics. "Instead of exploring the whole range of utilitarian goals confronting photography," Tret'iakov wrote, "Rodchenko is only interested in its aesthetic function. He reduces its activity to simply a reeducation of taste based on certain new principles--'we are seeking a new aesthetics,' 'the capacity to see the world in a new way.'"⁸⁴ Like Brik, Tret'iakov accused Rodchenko of "limiting photography's aims to those that once belonged to painting."⁸⁵ Under the influence of such vigorous critical challenges and the growing official pressure upon various artists to reflect the development of socio-political events, in 1928 Rodchenko began to pay more attention to the nature of the content of his photographs. As Lavrentiev confirms, "For Rodchenko, the process of experimenting in photography [at this point] became not the goal in itself but the means for the showing new socialist facts, plots and objects."⁸⁶

Rodchenko's new interest in "socialist facts" in 1928 resulted in a total commitment to working for mass media periodicals. In 1928, he was commissioned to produce a series of photographs titled Newspaper to illustrate an essay written by Leonid Saiansky for the magazine 30 Dnei (30

⁸³"Lef i Kino," p. 52.

⁸⁴[Sergei Tret'iakov], "Ot redaktsii," Novyi LEF, 12 (1928), p. 41.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁸⁶Aleksandr Lavrentiev, Unpublished manuscript, 1990, Collection of Rodchenko family, Moscow.

Days).⁸⁷ Rodchenko's photo essay illustrates the activities of men and women involved in reporting for, laying out and printing the newspaper (figs.37-38). The series concludes with photographs showing freshly printed newspapers (figs.39). Rodchenko's images emphasize the active role of women in the function of mass-media publications. These include a close-up of a young female messenger making a phone call to the editorial office (fig.40) and a bird's-eye view of woman sitting at a breakfast table reading the freshly printed paper (fig.41). In 1929, Rodchenko's worked on another photo essay for 30 Days called TASS is Speaking. In that series of photographs, he visibly reduced the presence of people in his images (showing primarily workers' hands) and instead concentrated on close-ups of such technical aspects of mass-media production as editing, typing, and printing.⁸⁸ (fig.42) In Still-Life with Leika (fig.43), which followed Newspaper and TASS is Speaking, Rodchenko reverted to staged photography to create a concise visual model for reportage. His own notebook, pen, and camera, photographed from above, overlap each other to suggest the kinship Rodchenko saw between the newspaper reporter and the photographer. In another photograph, he made this point literal by depicting a hand proudly holding the typeset word "journalist."⁸⁹ (fig.44)

Rodchenko outlined his new position regarding the social meaning of photography in a lecture presented at the October Association meeting in 1930. In summarizing his activities during the first two years of the Plan, he

⁸⁷See 30 Dnei, no. 12 (1928), pp. 49-62.

⁸⁸See 30 Dnei, no.11 (1929), pp. 12-19.

⁸⁹According to Rodchenko's grandson Aleksandr Lavrentiev, the hand holding the typeset word is most likely Rodchenko's.

asserted that the best examples of his own photography and those of his colleagues were published in popular magazines. In such periodicals, he argued, photography had great advantages over more traditional mediums:

Eighty to ninety percent of any magazine is built on factual material, and neither painting nor drawing can give the sensation of the moment, the actuality of events and their documentary nature; and thus we put our trust in photography, since it shows what happened at a particular place and factually convinces us of it.⁹⁰

At the time, Rodchenko left no doubt about the legitimate content of this new, factographic production:

If we photograph a street or some event, what should we pay more attention to and what type of things should we show? There are exemplary things, such as, for instance, the paving of a street or the laying of stones on a road. But there is also impassable mud and a totally impossible road. Since we cannot contemplate both things, we must photograph either the best or the worst--but under no circumstances the middle ground! The middle ground leads nowhere, whereas the paving of the street should be photographed because it shows what one should struggle for.⁹¹

This new function for the photographic image was realized in several new popular magazines, mentioned earlier such as 30 Dnei and Daesh (Let's Give), (fig. 45) which throughout late 1920s systematically printed photographs by Rodchenko, Boris Ignatovich, Roman Karmen, Dmitrii

⁹⁰Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Unpublished manuscript," 1930, Collection of Rodchenko family, Moscow.

⁹¹Ibid.

Debabov, and Elizar Langman⁹². These photographers were directly inspired by the events and themes of the First Five-Year Plan, during which, according to Ignatovich, "the dynamism of public life became one of the biggest influences on Soviet photography."⁹³ Describing the goals of photography during this period, Ignatovich enumerated, "How Soviet photography is different from Western photography: no entertainment, no tricks, no commerce. With the people and for the people. Life in all its typical manifestations, with typical people, that is the material which Soviet photography uses. Photography is the most contemporary realist art."⁹⁴

Each page of the magazine Let's Give was covered with a series of photographs, generally from four to six, mostly focusing on construction sites or work at plants and factories, with concise descriptions. In commissioning the photographs, editors of Let's Give and similar magazines were usually quite specific about the details and subject matter of the images. Photographers were instructed to include both positive and negative views, echoing Rodchenko's call for artists to photograph "the best or the worst-- but under no circumstances the middle ground."⁹⁵ This critical attitude

⁹²According to the editorial boards of Daesh and 30 Dnei, these magazines were committed to the goal of answering all questions that workers might have about art and to raising the artistic literacy of the population. For a comparative perspective on the situation of photo-reportage in Europe, see Diethart Kerbs, "Die Epoche der Bildagenturen: Zur Geschichte der Pressefotografie in Berlin von 1900 bis 1933," in Kerbs, ed., Die Gleichschaltung der Bilder: Pressefotografie 1930-1935, Berlin, Frolich & Kaufmann, 1983, pp.32-73.

⁹³Boris Ignatovich, "Unpublished manuscript," 1928-1962, Collection of Ignatovich family, Moscow.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Rodchenko's credo inspired a number of projects, for example, together with Elizar Langman, Rodchenko looked in Moscow for negative characters in order to produce an album called From Merchant Moscow to Socialist Moscow.

toward "socialist facts" underscored the radical commitment of Rodchenko and other avant-garde photographers to an authentic representation of novyi byt (the new way of life).

One of the important tasks for photographers of these popular magazines was to learn to represent labor as a truly modern and gratifying experience. Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and other photographers of the Plan era were committed to a mode of art production based on the actual experiencing of and participation in the events which they recorded. To fulfill this ideology of art making they traveled to various production sites and directly participated in the process of industrial restructuring. According to Lavrentiev, "While shooting the technical aspects [of production], one had to understand the meaning of technological operations, the arrangement of mechanisms, to see the structure of machines, all in order to show this convincingly in a photograph."⁹⁶ Such familiarity with the nature of the workers' labor placed the artist closer to the experience of the proletariat, thus narrowing the gap between the creator and the viewing public. Also, the artists' realization of the editors' instructions as far as subject matter was concerned led to a dismissal of the concept of a free individual expression of "artistic personality" and converted the creator into an operator. Tret'iakov was the main spokesman for this new function of the writer and photographer. He often traveled to villages and industrial sights, spending as long as a month there, in order to produce his documentary writings, which

⁹⁶A.N. Lavrentiev, "Rodchenko i ob'edinenie Oktiabr'" unpublished manuscript, 1990, A. Rodchenko and V. Stepanova Archive, Moscow.

he sometimes called "operative essays."⁹⁷ Tret'iakov emphasized "the primacy of the material over the writer's interpretation of it," saying that "the fabricated story and created novel are hateful [to us]. The once esteemed title of 'creator' sounds insulting in our age. The true man of letters in our age is the cautious 'discoverer' of new material, its non-distorting molders."⁹⁸ The dilemma that Soviet writers-- and, by extension, photographers--faced was as literary historian Victor Erlich later explained not "how to write" but "how to be a writer."⁹⁹

In his famous essay "The Author as Producer" (1934), German critic Walter Benjamin referred to the Soviet situation--and to Tret'iakov's writing in particular--as a perfect illustration of his own view of the author's new place in society. Benjamin wrote:

I should like to direct your attention to Sergei Tretiakov and to the type, defined and embodied by him, of the "operating," writer ... Tret'iakov distinguishes the operating from informing writer. His

⁹⁷As examples of such writing, see Tret'iakov's A Month in a Village (1930), Country A-E (1932), illustrated with his own photographs, and People on the Railway Tracks (1933).

⁹⁸Sergei Tret'iakov, "Den' Si-xua," quoted in Natasha Kolchevska, "Toward a 'Hybrid' Literature: Theory and Praxis of the Faktoviki," Slavic and East European Journal, no.4 (1983), p. 453.

⁹⁹Quoted in Victor Erlich, Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine (London: Mouton and Co., 1965), p. 127.

mission is not to report but to struggle; not to play the spectator but to intervene actively.¹⁰⁰

Benjamin also drew attention to the mass media as the most crucial bridge between author and public when he said, "The press is the decisive example [of this change], and therefore any consideration of the author as producer must include it."¹⁰¹ The goal of this new model of the author, he argued, was "to side with the proletariat," and thus to eliminate "the conventional distinction between author and public, which is upheld by the bourgeois press"¹⁰²

While Rodchenko and Ignatovich traveled widely to take photographs to illustrate magazines articles, Klutis often combined his own experiments in photography with a willingness to borrow documentary photographs from the

¹⁰⁰Walter Benjamin, Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1978), p. 223. The outline of this text was addressed at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris on April 27, 1934. Earlier while preparing for the writing of Moscow Diary, Benjamin in a letter to his editor Martin Buber written from Berlin on February 23, 1927, expressed his commitment to factographic writing. He wrote: "I want to write a description of Moscow at the present moment in which 'all factuality is already theory' and which would thereby refrain from any deductive abstraction...from any judgment. It is possible that while living in Russia for three months in the end of 1926 and early 1927, Benjamin was not only taken by what he calls "economic facts" but also influenced by the writings of such critics as Tret'iakov. See Walter Benjamin, Moscow Diary, ed. Gary Smith, trans. Richard Sieburth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 132. On Tret'iakov's aesthetic of the "operative artist," see Fritz Mierau, Erfindung und Korrektur: Tretjakows Asthetik der Operativitat, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1976. Tret'iakov's critical writings are still largely unavailable in English. Selections are available in German translation in Heiner Boehncke, ed., Sergej Tretjakow: Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers. Aufsätze, Reportagen, Portrats, Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1972; and in French translation in Henri Deluy, ed., Serge Tretiakov: Dans le front gauche de l'art, Paris, Maspero, 1977.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁰²Ibid., p.220, 225.

archives of other photographers.¹⁰³ His major project of 1928, the first year of the Plan, was a series of postcards commemorating the Olympic Games. According to art historian Larisa Oginskaia, in 1924, Klutsis had taken pictures of a sport parade in Red Square, which were then used in the Olympic Games series.¹⁰⁴ While producing the postcards, Klutsis also examined various archives, a fact he mentioned in a May 25, 1928 letter to Kulagina: "On the second day, I visited the photographer Krasinskii to see his photographs. He has a rich archive of very good images."¹⁰⁵

The Olympic Games series consists of nine color postcards, each dedicated to a different sport (including tennis, football, diving, riflery, and javelin throwing) (fig.46) Varying substantially in terms of scale and viewpoint, each postcard is charged with dramatic movement and energy. Moreover, as in his photomontages commemorating Lenin's death, Klutsis punctuated several of postcards with portraits of the late Soviet leader. This was to suggest, as Oginskaia points out, that "every sport parade, especially the Olympic games, was to be viewed as an achievement of the Soviet state, as a manifestation of the socialist way of life."¹⁰⁶ In two of the postcards, Lenin's fragmented face emerges from beyond the picture frame as a sort of affirmation of the represented activities (fig.47-48). In another image, Lenin

¹⁰³Unlike Klutsis, who made his own photographs as early as 1924, Sen'kin turned to photography only in the late 1920s, after he brought a camera and enlarger on his trip to Germany in 1928. He used his own photographs for his subsequent posters. However, later all his glass negatives were lost. From unpublished manuscript, Collection of the Sen'kin Family, Moscow.

¹⁰⁴Larisa Oginskaia, Gustav Klutsis (Moscow: Sovetsky Khudozhnik, 1981), p. 81.

¹⁰⁵Letter of Gustav Klutsis to Valentina Kulagina, May 25, 1928, Klutsis Family Archive, Moscow.

¹⁰⁶Oginskaia, Gustav Klutsis, p. 84.

affirmation of the represented activities (fig.47-48). In another image, Lenin is unexpectedly shown atop his own mausoleum, apparently the artist's attempt to suggest that Lenin's spirit remained alive (fig.49). Klutssis's optimism about the postcards is reflected in a letter to Kulagina: "You can be proud that you are the first to receive the new postcards," he wrote. "They initiate a new epoch in art."¹⁰⁷

The "new epoch in art" proclaimed by Klutssis in 1928 may be taken as referring to the artist's new capacity to respond to social and political issues. Klutssis's postcards for the Olympic Games, as well as the photojournalism of Rodchenko and Ignatovich, demonstrated the new prototype of the artist as an operator/producer at the direct service of the public. In Klutssis's case, such a model of authorship was most fully formulated in his photomontage posters Let Us Fulfill the Plan of the Great Projects, 1930, and Male and Female Workers All to the Elections of the Soviets, 1930, executed for the celebration of the Thirteenth Anniversary of the October Revolution. Both posters use the same image of the outstretched hand, but each has a different slogan. Surviving preparatory photographs and photomontages for these two posters illustrate Klutssis's step-by-step formation of this seminal image. He began by photographing his own hand firmly stretched out in the foreground, and nearly blocking out his blurred face (fig.50). This early composition was followed by a photomontage in which Klutssis's hand is attached to the figure of a working man, in effect, replacing the individual artist with the anonymous worker. (fig. 51) The initial suggestion--of transforming the artist's hand (the icon of individual creation) into a representation of

¹⁰⁷Letter of Gustav Klutssis to Valentina Kulagina, June 14, 1928, Klutssis Family Archive, Moscow.

collective proletariat power (the icon of voting and working)--is much more explicit in the subsequent maquettes for these posters. In one of them, Klutis has overlaid three outstretched hands on a background crowded with many groups of small figures of voting workers (fig.52). Each hand corresponds to a portrait, two anonymous and one of Lenin. In the following maquette, Klutis has reduced the number of hands to one, and has positioned it diagonally above a crowd of workers with raised hands, the whole composition merging into the surface of the open palm (fig.53). Lenin's portrait has been eliminated, perhaps an indication of Klutis's inclination toward anonymous imagery. The final version of this photomontage shows a drastic reduction in the number of workers who are compressed together at the lower right (fig.54). The open hand is the dominant form and it is repeated many times, as if it belongs to the workers themselves. By using his own hand to stand for the voice of the worker, Klutis seems to allude to the redefined role of the artist/creator in a socialist society: the artist's hand is a metaphor for collective rather than individual expression.¹⁰⁸

Klutis's use of the hand image is quite different from that of a number of other modernist photographers of the early twentieth-century who, according to art historian Rosalind Krauss, used "the palm of the hand as a manifestation of the natural impulse to make and leave traces."¹⁰⁹ Lissitzky's 1924 photomontage The Constructor (fig.55), for example, is a sort of self-portrait, showing his hand holding a compass superimposed on a shot of his head that specifically emphasizes his eye. The resulting montage seems to

¹⁰⁸While looking at this poster distributed on the streets of various Soviet cities, the viewer would not have been aware of the fact that Klutis used his own hand in the poster's montage.

¹⁰⁹Rosalind Krauss, "When Words Fail," October, no. 22 (Fall 1982), p. 100.

merge two models of the artist--the creator (hand and eye) and the constructor (compass)--while maintaining the importance of the individual. Lissitzky's 1931 design for the cover of the periodical Brigada Khudozhnikov (Artists' Brigade) (fig.56) shows a substantial change in his use of the hand image and ultimately in his perception of the artist's position in society. For this design, one hand is shown emerging from "inside" the composition, as if connected to the scene of steelworkers in the background. Another hand, presumably representing that of the artist/producer, enters from the outside and meets the worker's hand in an ardent clasp.¹¹⁰ Like Klutsis, Lissitzky depicted the hand of the author/producer as that of an engaged artist who has decided to "side with the proletariat." The difference between The Constructor and the Artists' Brigade cover embodies the process of Lissitzky's conversion from the model of the artist as original creator to the formalist-sociological model of the artist as author/producer. This conversion was a direct result of Lissitzky's exposure to Soviet political photomontage after 1925, and to the work of Klutsis and Sen'kin in particular.

This alliance between Lissitzky, Klutsis, and Sen'kin is especially significant in the context of the "International Press Exhibition" (or "Pressa"), staged in Cologne in 1928. This massive display gave Soviet artists an opportunity to demonstrate to Western viewers the summa of their achievements in the application of photography to political ends. For Soviet officials such as Lunacharskii, a project which aimed at achieving propagandistic goals through photography was a radical deviation from the

¹¹⁰ Lissitzky's design for the Artists' Brigade (fig. 56) is similar to earlier discussed Klutsis's photomontage for the magazine Herald of Labor in which he depicted two clasped hands whose arms were penetrated with the fragments of industrial and agricultural imagery.

earlier model of "monumental propaganda." In his text "Monumental Agitation" published in 1918, Lunacharskii advocated overtly conventional methods for producing State propaganda. He favored permanent sculptural monuments of famous people, particularly those who participated in the events of the Revolution, and he proposed utilizing quotations from the "great minds engraved on stone boards or cut out of bronze and installed at visible spots."¹¹¹ Shortly before the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928, Lunacharskii also defended the paintings of AKhRR artists, and spoke of the artistic advantage of their production over photography.¹¹² In the light of this position, Lunacharskii's willingness to support the exhibition which defended easily disposable means of propaganda and boosted the importance of photography and mass media, signified his recognition that no other medium but photography could effectively convey to the West the sheer magnitude of the changes and achievements in the Soviet Union during the First Five-Year Plan.

Lissitzky was offered the opportunity to head the *Pressa* project, most likely because Lunacharskii knew that he had important connections in Germany which would assure a favorable Western reception for Soviet propaganda material. Klutsis and Sen'kin were associated with *Pressa* only as members of a large preparatory group that was assembled in Moscow to produce preliminary designs for the exhibition.¹¹³ Given his penchant for

¹¹¹As cited in "Monumental Agitation," 1918, Sovetskoe Iskusstvo za 15 Let: Materialy i Dokumentatsiia, ed. I. Matsa, OGIZ-IZOGIZ (Moskva, 1933), p. 28.

¹¹²See A.V. Lunacharskii, "Diskusiia ob AKhRR," 1928, Ruskaia Sovetskaia Khudozhestvennaia Kritika: 1917-1941, ed. L. F. Denisova and N.I. Bespalova (Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1982), pp. 226-240.

¹¹³As for the members of the preparatory group, the *Pressa* catalogue mentions forty-nine names most of whom are little-known artists.

independence, it is hard to understand why Klutsis would have accepted such a subordinate position. But this unusual circumstance may explain why it was Sen'kin who traveled to Cologne with Lissitzky for the actual installation. An angry letter from Klutsis to Kulagina (who was also a member of the preparatory group) clarifies his role:

Recently, I received from Sereozha [Sen'kin] two catalogues ... There are some illustrations in the catalogue of the Cologne exhibition [Pressa]: a much discussed freize with an inscription "von Lissitzky and S. Sen'kin." Also, there are works of Prusakov, Borisov, Plaksin, Naumov; several photographs of installation views. By the way, compositional devices are all mine, only they are better in my execution. Scums! As one might expect, neither yours nor my works are there. I have not written to him [Sen'kin] and do not intend to do so.¹¹⁴

Klutsis clearly felt that his participation in conceiving the initial designs for Pressa was significant and that it was underplayed in the final presentation and in the catalogue. The photographic frieze which Klutsis refers to in his letter was the key panorama of the Pressa design and constituted the main image in the accompanying catalogue (fig.57). The frieze presents a highly dynamic photomontage composed of numerous photographs of male and female workers, grand construction sites, factories, and collective farms. These images are interspersed with marching soldiers, joyous sailors, and portraits of Lenin. The latter act as a necessary political element, unifying the drive forward building the new Socialist order. In general, the composition of

¹¹⁴Letter of Gustav Klutsis to Valentina Kulagina, June 11, 1928, Klutsis Family Archive, Moscow. Kulagina's first photomontages date from 1925, when she designed the children's book *Pitiash*. Sen'kin's letters to the family from Germany show that during the summer of 1928 he visited Berlin, Munich, Dresden, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Dessau, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart.

the frieze is rendered coherently, with the minimum of formalist tools. In this respect, the application of photomontage here is far less dependent on the innovative compositional methods applied by Klutssis and Sen'kin in their illustrations for books about Lenin.

In spite of his irritation with Sen'kin, Klutssis met with him a week later, and in a letter to Kulagina, he described Sen'kin's impressions of *Pressa*:

[Sen'kin] says that the exhibition had a very incomplete and sloppy look. A number of works, due to space limitations, were not exhibited. But their absence was unnoticed. Your hammer and sickle was repainted for a totally different purpose. Not for peasants diagrams. Your censor inscriptions on the blue rays were absent, because they were lost. And on those blue [rays], they stuck dates, for no reason ... But he [Sen'kin] says that the absence of such things was not noticed by anyone. Because noone ever read anything. Perfect! ¹¹⁵

Judging from Lissitzky's early writings and exhibition designs, before he took over the *Pressa* project in 1928, he had only a modest interest in political photography or photomontage. Before 1928, he made no propagandistic or factographic images, and his major exhibition designs including the room of abstract art at the "Internationale Kunstausstellung" in Dresden in 1926, and the Abstract Cabinet (1927) in Hannover, were based entirely on principles of abstract art. Moreover, in 1927, when he was asked to design the "Russian Typographic Exhibition," he chose to represent himself not as a political photomontagist but as an abstract artist. In this typography exhibition, Lissitzky displayed his seven-year-old Suprematist poster Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge (fig.58). Significantly,

¹¹⁵A letter of Gustav Klutssis to Valentina Kulagina, June 18, 1928, Klutssis Family Archive, Moscow.

design To the Memory of the Fallen Leaders,¹¹⁶ which shows Lenin's mausoleum pierced by a zigzag line of workers (Klutsis' design) and two hands firmly holding a triple red flag (Sen'kin's design).¹¹⁷ The pointed juxtaposition of Lissitzky's poster whose abstract design concealed its political meaning and Klutsis and Sen'kin's overtly documentary photomontage dramatised the ongoing debate between formalist and formalist-sociological method, with Lissitzky still on the side of the former.¹¹⁸

Lissitzky's reluctance, as late as 1927, to reflect political events through factographic means places his overtly documentary designs for *Pressa*, (begun shortly after the "Russian Typographic Exhibition") at odds with his concurrent production. In this context, then, Lissitzky appears to have adopted for *Pressa* the methods of politically based cultural production which had been developed earlier, in the work of photographers and photomontagists like Klutsis and Sen'kin. At the very least, their concerns with political, agitational, and documentary photographic imagery seem to have influenced Lissitzky's ultimate layout of the *Pressa* installation, which is full of reportage material. This supposition regarding Lissitzky's preparation for *Pressa* may explain why Klutsis felt so close to this project and was so overtly critical of the outcome. The failure to fully acknowledge Klutsis's contribution in the documentation of *Pressa* and the inclusion of Sen'kin's

¹¹⁶This installation was photographed by Klutsis on a glass negative.

¹¹⁷In a letter to Kulagina of July 4, 1927 Klutsis made a drawing of this cover with an indication of his and Sen'kin's authorship.

¹¹⁸For discussion of the iconographic meaning of Lissitzky's poster Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge see Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," Art in America, April 1988, p. 169.

name next to Lissitzky's on the *Pressa* frieze may represent Lissitzky's conflicted acknowledgement of the influence on him of Klutis and Sen'kin.

But even as Lissitzky shifted toward the more politically efficacious methods of his colleagues, he remained more concerned with the formal organization of the propagandistic material at *Pressa* than with its message. In a letter written shortly after the exhibition opened, Lissitzky emphasized his frustrations with the formal resolution of the project:

Aesthetically there is something of a poisoned satisfaction. The extreme hurry and the shortage of time violated my intentions and the necessary completion of the form--so it ended up being basically a theater decoration.¹¹⁹

Sen'kin's comment to Klutis that verbal elements of the exhibition had been given little significance is further evidence of Lissitzky's primary concern with the formal and visual coherence of the installation. Lissitzky's collaboration with Klutis and Sen'kin on the *Pressa* designs created a sort of a hybrid between agitational-political photographic imagery (content) and constructivist design (form). This union of two aspects of artistic production was in line with a formalist-sociological method which combined documentary material with compositional techniques which could most expressively organize [emphasis added] that material. Unable to refuse such an ambitious project as *Pressa*, Lissitzky apparently developed a new

¹¹⁹From Lissitzky's letter written to J.J.P. Oud in December 26, 1928. As cited in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October*, no. 30 (Fall 1984), p. 109. Emphasis added. On Lissitzky's *Pressa* design, see Igor W. Rjasnzew, "El Lissitzky und die 'Pressa' in Koln 1928," in *El Lissitzky: Maler Architekt Typograf Fotograf*, exh. cat., Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle, 1982, pp. 72-81.

methodology, as organizer of the ideas of more politically oriented artists in order to address the demands of *Pressa*'s general documentary theme.

One year after the *Pressa* exhibition, Lissitzky published an essay in *Sovetskoe foto* (Soviet Photo) that summarized his position on photography: "The language of photography is not the language of painting, and photography possesses properties not available to painting. These properties lie in the photographic material itself and it is essential for us to develop them in order to make photography truly into art, into fotopis'."¹²⁰ Surprisingly, this text lacks any references to the propagandistic capacities of photography as evidenced at *Pressa*, or to what Rodchenko termed "new socialist facts." Instead, it underlines photography's formal differences from painting while serving the same aesthetic function, defined by Lissitzky as fotopis'. This neologism refers the importance of painterly effects in photography, particularly the contours, shadows, and textures that Lissitzky achieved in his experimental photograms. Lissitzky's emphasis on the creative or expressive aspects of photography suggests that by the end of the 1920s he was not entirely convinced by the notion of authorial anonymity promoted in formalist-sociological writings and in much of the photographic imagery of the First Five-Year Plan. Certain of Lissitzky's gestures, like the combining of his infant son's body with a spread from Pravda (fig.59) in 1930, betray the artist's efforts to resist the solely collective aspirations of documentary imagery. Only in 1931, with the Artists' Brigade, did Lissitzky finally adopt the factographic method and forego the model of the Constructivist creator typified by The Constructor.

¹²⁰El Lissitzky, "Fotopis'," *Sovetskoe foto*, no. 10 (1929), p. 311. Although there is no exact translation of this neologism, to convey its meaning I offer the word "photoscribing."

Toward the end of the First Five-Year Plan, the model of artist/producer defended by the LEF critics and radical photographers was being fully realized. Many radical photographers continued to tour construction sites and mines in order to keep in close touch with the proletariat. In one of his letters, Klutskis mentions encountering a group of photographers during his own extended trip with Sen'kin across the Soviet Union. He writes, "[The trip] was quite unpleasant--dirty, uncomfortable but most importantly I was able to talk to [John] Heartfield, [Arkadii] Shaikhet and [Max] Al'pert, we ran into them in Batumi"¹²¹ (fig.60). Like Klutskis, these photographers were collecting images for future contributions to mass produced posters and magazines. Regarding his own snapshots of the tour, Klutskis concluded, "The photographs are quite good. There are even interesting ones. In any case, as material, they will be one hundred percent used."¹²²

Klutskis's poster The Struggle for Heat and Metal, 1932 (fig.61), was most likely conceived as a result of this trip, specifically a stop he made in Donbass. In another letter to Kulagina, he says,

Last night at 10 o'clock, Sen'kin and I descended into a coalmine together with a shift of workers ... Only now do I understand all the seriousness and hardship of the coalminer's labor ... We received special coalminers' outfits and lanterns. Despite the fact that we did not work but only walked, we got dirty like real coalminers.¹²³

¹²¹Letter of Gustav Klutskis to Valentina Kulagina, September 3, 1931, Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

¹²²Letter of Gustav Klutskis to Valentina Kulagina, September 27, 1931, Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

¹²³Letter of Gustav Klutskis to Valentina Kulagina, September 7, 1931, Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

One of the two coalminers depicted in The Struggle for Heat and Metal, is Klutsis himself, wearing work overalls and a hat and carrying a miner's pick against his shoulder. Oversized, to suggest the unsurpassable productive power associated with coalminers, the two images of miners occupy the entire background of the poster. A bustling industrial landscape lies at their feet, insignificant compared to the two human giants. As with Male and Female Workers, Klutsis made preliminary photographs of himself for use in the photomontage (fig.62). Instead of his hand, however, which functioned more as an authorial sign than as an autobiographical element, Klutsis used a self-portrait in The Struggle for Heat and Metal; this allowed him to literally "side with the proletariat."

The commitment of Soviet photographers to the subject matter of Soviet daily life produced a model of the artist's function that further advanced the twentieth century tendency of using elements of everyday life as in cubist, dadaist, and constructivist collages. However, these earlier experiments were based on the appropriation of ready made materials, often drawn from mass media, in order to create an individual art work which fitted into a framework of traditional aesthetic. Klutsis, Rodchenko, Sen'kin, and Ignatovich instead were committed to the contact with reality which was based on their own involvement in the recorded events. They also viewed the single-frame still photograph or the photomontage not as finished art works produced to exist by themselves but as disposable objects composed during the process of making agitational posters and magazines. In this respect, they fulfilled Benjamin's dictum that "the work of art reproduced becomes the

work of art designed for reproducibility."¹²⁴ As a result, unlike many artists of their generation, they sacrificed their goals as individual artists to the needs and demands of the proletariat.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison, eds., Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 220.

¹²⁵In this respect these Soviet photographers were close to the position of John Heartfield. Unlike him, however, Soviet production was not of a critical nature and aimed at presenting Soviet life in a positive light. For a discussion of a connection between John Heartfield and Soviet photographers see Hubertus Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship, 1931-1932," in John Heartfield (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), pp. 256-289.

Chapter 3

Photo-Still Versus Photo-Picture: The Politics of (De)Framing.

During the period of the First Five-Year Plan, critics from widely different camps were in agreement that virtually all existing art groups shared "a platform of realist genre."¹²⁶ This universal adherence to realism did not, however, reflect any general agreement regarding the medium which would best express these realist principles or which mode of realistic representation would best serve the goals of the state. As a result, in the period of the First Five-Year Plan, numerous groups of realists emerged, coexisted, and received a critical coverage in press. The majority of these practitioners divided into two distinct camps: those who believed that Soviet *byt* must be rendered with the application of innovative modernist forms and those committed to reflecting everyday events in an overtly conventional manner. These two positions toward representation continued to polarize critics and philosophers throughout the twentieth century beginning in modernist epoch with Sergei Tret'iakov, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Georg Lukacs and stretching into postmodernist period in the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Fredric Jameson.

Photographers and photomontage artists formed a distinct faction in this pool of competing realists. In reviewing the work they produced during the First Five-Year Plan, one is inclined to conclude that they were united in their commitment to documentary representation. Yet it is also strikingly apparent, that these artists differed considerably when it came to composition. There were at least two principal formats: one, based on

¹²⁶Ia. A. Tugendhol'd, "K Vystavke AKhRR," Russkaia Sovetskaiia Khudozhestvennaia Kritika: 1917-1941, p.253.

fragmentation, viewed reality as a disconnected and puzzling space; the other leaned toward whole images and saw the world as a concrete and continuous entity. These two different representational strategies correspond precisely to critic Peter Burger's important contrast between traditional and avant-garde artists. According to Burger, traditional artists create organic works designed to give "a living picture of the totality," while avant-garde artists make works that are "no longer created as an organic whole but put together from fragments."¹²⁷ To demonstrate this distinction, we might consider two images from the First Five-Year Plan, both of which represent street paving. Arkadii Shaikhet's Steamroller, 1931 (fig.63), insists on an intelligible presentation of labor seen from a conventional viewpoint. On the other hand, Rodchenko's photograph of the same subject, an individual image from his series Paving Streets: Leningradskoe Highway, 1929 (fig.64), is disorienting as it eliminates the horizon and severely reduces the body of the machine. While Shaikhet seeks to grasp the totality of the paving process in one snapshot, Rodchenko reveals the operation through an unfolding series of fragments, each representing a moment in the development of the productive force. And, finally, while Shaikhet's photograph tries to seem natural, Rodchenko's image

¹²⁷Peter Burger, Theory of the Avant-Garde (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 70.

renounces shaping a whole and wholly embraces a montage of parts.¹²⁸ Burger points out that such montages have a different representational status: "They are no longer signs pointing out to reality, they are reality."¹²⁹

Among Soviet critics of the time, the major advocate of montage was Tret'iakov who defined it in 1936 as "a way of linking (comparing and contrasting) of facts [so] that they would radiate social energy and hidden truth."¹³⁰ He confirmed his commitment to experimental factography in several articles published in New LEF in 1928, linking it to utilitarian media such as "photo-information, photo-illustration and photo-posters." Tret'iakov claimed, "There is no LEF photography in general. LEF's approach to photography is above all to establish for what purpose one should take pictures and then to find the most rational points of view and ways of photographing."¹³¹ He also noted that "it is necessary to experiment as far as opportunity allows, in order to resolve concrete problems," since

¹²⁸It is possible that initially Shaikhet was influenced by Rodchenko's prints of VKhUTEMAS and other buildings shown at Ten Years of Soviet Photography. Shaikhet's contribution a year later to the Soviet section of Film and Photo exhibition in Stuttgart included a photograph Twenty Third Staircase From Above which sharply differed from his previous photographs and shared with Rodchenko his interest in depicting architectural details from sharp angles and unconventional views. It can be said however that Shaikhet's fascination with complex spaces was short lived. For an important analysis of the Soviet section of Film and Foto exhibition see Rosalinde Sartorti, "Jeder fortschrittliche Genosse muss nicht nur eine Uhr, sondern auch einen Fotoapparat haben", in Ute Eskildsen and Jan-Christopher Horak, eds., Film und Foto der zwanziger Jahren, Stuttgart, Hatje Verlag, 1977.

¹²⁹Berger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, p. 78.

¹³⁰Sergei Tret'iakov, Ludi Odnogo Kostra (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1936), p. 456.

¹³¹Sergei Tret'iakov, "Fotozametki," Novyi LEF, no.7 (1928), p. 40.

"photography is not just a stenographer, it also explains."¹³² So, for instance, "when a machine is photographed, its essential detail is singled out, while its other less important parts are obscured and made lighter.... Specific elements can be emphasized by unusual foreshortening, by lighting, by coloring."¹³³ Summarizing his position, Tret'iakov stated, "The question cannot be resolved by cheap recourse to the 'primacy of content,' by asserting that the 'what' is more important than the 'how.' To assert the primacy of the raw, unworked, unorganized fact is to threaten the practical, professional skill of the photographer."¹³⁴ For Tret'iakov formal elements contributed to the exposure of those important fragments in each subject which serve as suggestions for utopian thinking.

The impact of Tret'iakov views on Rodchenko's photography is made clear in the works Rodchenko published in Let's Give and other periodicals throughout 1929. Moreover, in his earlier mentioned lecture to the October Association in 1930, Rodchenko stated that his goal was "to photograph not a factory but the work itself from the most effective point of view," and that "in order to show the grandness of a machine, one should photograph not all of it but give a series of snapshots."¹³⁵ In this lecture, Rodchenko also revealed his debt to Brik's essay "The Photo-Still Versus the Picture," when

¹³²Sergei Tret'iakov, "Ot redaktsii," Novyi LEF, no. 12 (1928), pp. 41-42.

¹³³Ibid., p. 41.

¹³⁴Ibid. While writing criticism on photography, Tret'iakov attempted to take his own photographs during trips to various industrial and agricultural sites. For example, in the first issue of 30 Days (1929), he illustrated his documentary essay "A Day in a Collective Farm" with his own snapshots of life at the collective farm.

¹³⁵Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Doklad o sotsial'nom znachenii fotografii" (1930), unpublished manuscript, A. Rodchenko and V. Stepanova Archive, Moscow.

he divided press photography into two categories: foto-kadry (photo-stills), which he defended, and foto-kartiny (photo-pictures), which he criticized as "organic" representations of various everyday scenes. Rodchenko concluded that "the issue now is not to take 'photo-pictures' but [to produce] 'photo-stills.'"¹³⁶

In 1924, when Rodchenko moved from photomontage to straight photography, his main problem was determining which fragment of an image should constitute the final photo-still. Rodchenko sought to frame or crop his photographs at the time he selected the shot through the camera's viewfinder and, later, when he printed the images in his darkroom. This second framing process is clear in the comparison of the two variants of Rodchenko's Portrait of Mother, 1924. The first, as recorded on the glass negative, shows the elderly woman in medium range, seated at a table reading a newspaper (fig.65). The second version is more tightly framed, becoming a close-up view of the woman's face showing her hand holding a monocle.¹³⁷ (fig.34) In this second Portrait of Mother, the cropping was designed to select the best instant for the viewer's "reading" of the image. Rodchenko believed that such moments arose,

when a photographer frames [an image] for a sharper and more conflictual perception of a subject matter. Photographic composition can be much richer than a painterly composition. It can be structured vertically, horizontally, diagonally. It can be loaded in the center and on the edges, [it] can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Only with a sharp composition can one ... deliver to the viewer the freshness,

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Aleksandr Rodchenko, unpublished lecture at the October group meeting in 1930. As cited in Aleksandr Lavrentiev, "Kadriuet Aleksandr Rodchenko," Sovetskoe foto, no.1 (1978), p. 34.

unsteadiness and changeability of a moment which impressed the photographer.¹³⁸

In Portrait of Mother, as well as in other portraits from this period (such as those of Maiakovskii), Rodchenko's framing functions as a form of "rarefaction." The explanation for this phenomenon can be borrowed from philosopher and theorist Gilles Deleuze who in his analysis of the initial process of framing and cutting films argues that rarefied images are produced "either when the whole accent is placed on a single object or when the set is emptied of certain sub-sets."¹³⁹ Although there is a clear difference between the final, "rarefied image" of Rodchenko's mother and the more complete first version, in this particular case, the gap between the two is minimal and the angle of framing appears to be justified.

By contrast, in Rodchenko's photographs after 1928, particularly in those he published in the mass media, the images and compositional formats are "beyond all narrative or ... pragmatic justification" according to Deleuze's general classification.¹⁴⁰ With regard to such disconnected spaces found in film Deleuze employs the concept of "deframing" [*decadrage*]. Although this deframing designates abnormal points of view, Deleuze insists that they "are not the same as an oblique perspective or a paradoxical angle; and refer to dimensions of the image which transgress purely formal aspects."¹⁴¹ In the Soviet context, this practice of deframing was a formalist-sociological methodology that hybridized the "how" and "what" in order as Deleuze's

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement Image (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 12.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

general analysis explains "to confirm that the visual image has a legible function beyond its visible function."¹⁴² As in the case of framing where the image is freed from sub-sets, the deframed representation is dependent on the suppression of what Deleuze calls "the out-of-field." Unlike sub-sets which consist of real objects, spaces, etc., "the out-of-field" refers to "what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present."¹⁴³ As such, it carries a great importance in the formation of the "deframed" image, which, being spatially closed, tends "to *open itself* onto" other dimensions or, in Tret'iakov's words onto "a possible utopia."¹⁴⁴

Looking at the range of Rodchenko and Ignatovich's photographs published in the popular magazines like Let's Give during one year, we can observe their changing attitudes toward deframing and the suppression of "the out-of-field." Rodchenko's series Electroplant (fig.66) includes a generous variety of photographic images and presents the case for a more moderate employment of deframing technique. The entire series is printed on one magazine page. Across the top is a double image showing newly manufactured electric bulbs collected for inspection on a table; the lower section of the table is obscured by a slogan announcing the future growth of production. Overlaid on this view is a fragmentary image of the machine that helped to produce these bulbs. Three other shots are laid out on the left side of the page, one beside the other with no gaps. These show female workers, or simply their disembodied hands, making the bulbs or checking on the production. On the right side of the page is a photo-still of female worker

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 17.

who operates a small piece of equipment. This image is separated from the images on the left by the white of the page, the word "electroplant," and Rodchenko's name. The final photo-still, which displays the boxes with bulbs ready to be shipped to the stores, is placed casually on the magazine page and looks uneven in relation to the image above it.

In this series, the cropped bodies of the workers, spaces, and harshly reductive views of industrial paraphernalia produce a spatial tension within each photo-still; this makes them appear overloaded and compressed. A close colleague of Rodchenko, photographer Ignatovich addresses this intentional format and gives it the name "packing"; he claims this technique produces the "maximum condensation of a photo-still."¹⁴⁵ In order to "pack" each photo-still most effectively, the photographer must take pictures from abnormal points of view (deframing). Expanding his thoughts on this practice, Ignatovich writes,

Many argue now about methods but in reality the main issue in photography boils down to 50 percent on a composition. Composition is not a schema, there are no instant recipes, one cannot fit live thought into prefabricated frames. Composition is a creative process. Photography has to be interpreted as an expression of life. My credo is complete filling of a photo-still, a close-up."¹⁴⁶

In his own series for Let's Give, Ignatovich achieved this sort of composition by creating a sharp contrast between his grand themes (vast factories, huge machines, and massive forest production) and the limited space into which he fit this imagery in every photo-still. Ignatovich's series

¹⁴⁵Boris Ignatovich, "Notebook," 1928-1962, unpublished, Collection of Ignatovich Family, Moscow.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

Let's Give Soviet Turbine (fig.67) begins with a tight shot of the plant's facade. The plant's name and the Soviet state emblem above it are uncompromisingly cropped to disrupt any immediate signification. The other three photographs are laid out with white spacing between them (some of which is used for the title, short description, and the photographer's name) and record the interactions between workers and machines at the plant. One image catches three workers on top of a massive piece of equipment; another depicts a worker barely fitting into the upper space of the photograph. This space is cramped by the suppressed horizon and the oversized machine which extends to the edges of the photo-still. Both scenes are taken from high vantage points and thus operate within Rodchenko's conviction that "the most interesting points of contemporaneity are down from above, and up from below."¹⁴⁷

In two other projects, Kondostroi and Export Forest, Ignatovich sought to intensify the tension between the object being represented and the space he was willing to grant to it in the photo-still. One shot from the Kondostroi paper factory series (fig.68) uses a dramatically tilted perspective to provide widest view of the paper-making machine. This machine is then repeated in an adjacent image but in a severely cropped format; the cramped space virtually contradicts the first view. The Export Forest series (fig.69) is dominated by a vertical close-up shot of tall and tightly packed stacks of freshly sawn boards. Here the massiveness of the piled wood is conveyed not by including the whole production process but by specifically refusing an adequate space for that production in each photograph.

¹⁴⁷Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Puti Sovremennogo foto," Novyi LEF, no.9 (1928), p.31.

Ignatovich's Red Triangle (fig.70) and Rodchenko's Machinery is Advancing in Full Gear and Soviet Automobile (figs. 71-72) all illustrate how the already underplayed narrative aspects of reportage in Let's Give were further reduced. To construct Machinery is Advancing, Rodchenko used only two images. One is a sharply fragmented and tilted shot of the plant building, the other, a close-up of machinery which overlaps another fragment of the same building. All the elements specified by Deleuze's notion of deframing are employed by Rodchenko: the extremely abnormal points of view result in an image so spatially closed as to appear two-dimensional. Similarly, in Soviet Automobile, Rodchenko has reduced industrial imagery to the core of its technical detail. The four close-ups of machine parts are identified by purely technical terms, such as "a form for founding a flywheel of a motor" or "assembled crankshafts with flywheels." Every detail of the machine's surroundings is eliminated, leaving no indication of the topography of the plant. Finally, the industrial paraphernalia is separated from any human contact. In these two series, Rodchenko humanizes machines by giving them "a 'heart'," letting them as Deleuze described Vertov's film "revolve, tremble, jolt about and throw out flashes of lightning."¹⁴⁸ Ignatovich's Red Triangle, which shows the plant's final production of rubber artifacts such as tires and galoshes, is equally spare.

Of all of Rodchenko and Ignatovich's series published in Let's Give, Soviet Automobile and Red Triangle are the most apparent in their suppression of social or political content. However, in such representations, we are dealing not with an attempt to flee from social content, but rather a

¹⁴⁸Deleuze uses these terms in relation to Vertov's films. See Deleuze, Cinema I: The Movement Image, p. 39.

struggle to manage and contain it. As Jameson has suggested, this manifestly social content is contained by being secluded "out of sight in the very form itself, by means of specific techniques of framing and displacement which can be identified with some precision."¹⁴⁹ The severe reductiveness exercised by Rodchenko and Ignatovich in these reportage series may be also identified in Roland Barthes' terms as "marxist writing" in which "the closed character of the form does not derive from rhetorical amplification or from grandiloquence in delivery, but from a lexicon as specialized and as functional as a technical vocabulary."¹⁵⁰ The extremely detailed close-ups of industrial machinery direct our attention to the surfaces of these objects, not in order to accentuate their textures in a formalist manner, but to refer to what is not shown, the "out-of-field," utopian dimensions far beyond the borders of the fragments.

To preserve the transgressive function of the Let's Give photo-stills, it is important to view them in their original compositional format, not as single-frame images. This raises the issue of how the fragmentary Let's Give series relate to photomontage.¹⁵¹ Rodchenko himself connected these two practices, remarking in 1936 that "photomontage inspired [him] to do

¹⁴⁹Fredric Jameson, The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, volume 2: The Syntax of History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 138.

¹⁵⁰Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), p. 22.

¹⁵¹If photomontage is secured by its author by means of cutting and gluing photographic fragments for good, compositional format like that practiced in Let's Give faces a danger of having its fragments returned to single photo stills which begin to function as formalist studies of textures, forms and surfaces. The re-emergence of Rodchenko's, Ignatovich's, and other photographers serial reportage images as single frame photographs is the example of such transformation.

[straight] photography."¹⁵² Undoubtedly, Rodchenko's background in photomontage spurred his commitment to fragmentation and to compositional formats based on combining groups of nonorganic images. Photomontage, however, is based on combining documentary images from compatible but not necessarily directly connected sociopolitical contents; it thematically synthesizes factographic material drawn from various sources. By contrast, the above discussed Rodchenko and Ignatovich's series published in Let's Give, no matter how visually disconnected they seem to be, were always composed from factographic documentary shots taken by the photographers at the specific production sites. Using Chuzhak's terminology, then, the Daesh series might be designated "factomontage."

Two images from 1929 demonstrate the contrast between factomontage and photomontage: Rodchenko and Ignatovich's harvest sequence (fig.73) from Let's Give and Klutis's Plan of Socialist Offensive (fig.74) published in the journal 30 Days.¹⁵³ Rodchenko and Ignatovich's image consists of five photo-stills showing harvesting machinery, a grainery, combine operators, and two extreme close-ups of wheat grain. A portrait of a delighted female harvester is placed at the center where all five fragments merge, partially obscuring each of them. Although this factomontage is far from being a complete picture of a particular harvest, it is clearly connected to one place and one time. In Klutis's Plan of Socialist Offensive, on the other hand,

¹⁵²Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Stat'i. Vospominaniia. Avtobiograficheskie zapiski. Pis'ma*. (Moskva: Sovetskii Khudozhnik, 1982), p. 43.

¹⁵³Both images were published in the end of 1929. In 1930, in his article "Fotomontage kak novyi vid agitatsionnogo iskusstva," Klutis specifically pointed out the connection between Rodchenko and Ignatovich's photography and the principles of photomontage.

connections to a specific time are made primarily by means of brief texts which intrude on the image and inform the viewer about the industrial achievements of the second year of the Five-Year Plan. Klut'sis's photomontage joins photographs from a variety of events and industrial sites (only some of which may have been visited and photographed by Klut'sis himself), rather than relying on reportage from a single place. Significantly, while Rodchenko and Ignatovich stress the image of a woman worker and invest within her the force that propels the industrial achievements of the Soviet Union, Klut'sis relies on Lenin's portrait as a universal symbol of and inspirational source for realization of grandiose projects. But, despite these differences, Klut'sis's photomontage and Rodchenko and Ignatovich's factomontage share an important similarity in that they both depend on the method of deframing. Rodchenko and Ignatovich use abnormal points of view while taking pictures, and later when framing each image, to disrupt the narrative of harvest process. Klut'sis's deframing is achieved by cutting and gluing, and results in a similar violation of the viewer's single-level perception of the photographic image.

Rodchenko and Ignatovich's harvest series brings us to the issue of the way Let's Give photo-stills and similar reportage series treated the worker as a subject of representation. Typically, in these images female and male workers are dominated by scenes of construction and industry, their bodies obliterated to the point where only their working hands are shown. In other instances, the workers turn from the viewer, drawing attention away from who is working and producing, to what is being made and how it is being made. This intentional obscuring of the individual workers was meant to suggest the presence of a vast collective responsible for the enormous levels

of production. In this way, what might appear as de-personalization is also the principal indicator of utopian context.

The reverse is true for Elizar Langman's reportage photography. Langman was a close colleague of Rodchenko and Ignatovich, and he employed similar photographic strategies, but in his series he specifically shifted his emphasis from machines and objects of production to individual workers. He became a professional photojournalist in the early 1920s and attributed his maturity as a photographer to his meeting with Rodchenko and Ignatovich in 1929. Langman believed that "the slanting of a photo-still is needed if it can be justified, if it stresses the content."¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, his reasons for some of his formalist techniques were given within the framework of Tret'iakov's notion of shock effects. Langman said that he "applied slanting to a photo-still as a form of protest against a stereotype in photography. I had to irritate the viewer with something, to kick him out of a dull standard."¹⁵⁵ In the context of the issues discussed in Chapter II about Soviet photographers' attempt to use what Chuzhak called "uninteresting" themes, Langman's observation that the photographers involved in documenting the Plan were dealing with "nonphotogenic objects" is particularly interesting. Langman described his snapshot of a ploughed field (fig.75) as a typical example of a "nonphotogenic object," an image that resisted any impulse by the photographer toward aesthetization. The subject matter itself, he claimed, precluded the possibility of turning these photo-stills into objects for aesthetic enjoyment. He wrote, "Soil was never photogenic and it is very hard to photograph it. For the first time I attempted

¹⁵⁴Elizar Langman, "Tvorcheskie poiski," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6 (1936), p. 28.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

to fill up the entire photo-still with soil. It was essential to turn it into a socially meaningful photo-still, it was necessary to show that soil had been cultivated by a tractor, thus I concentrated on the display of that soil."¹⁵⁶ Like Rodchenko and Ignatovich, Langman insisted on disclosing socialist content not through creation of a picture of totality but by secluding it in the form itself. Langman's favorite "nonphotogenic" subject matters were male and female workers whose intense close-up portraits populate many of his reportage series from factories and plants¹⁵⁷ (fig.76). Machinery and objects of production are not shown in these photo-stills; enlarged human faces fill up the condensed spaces (fig.77). Interest is focused on the textures of their faces and hands rather than on the surfaces of industrial objects as in Rodchenko and Ignatovich's photo-stills (fig.78-79) In some cases, Langman squeezed several workers together, forcing them to share a cramped area (fig.80). In these group representations, Langman materializes the absent collective only implied in Rodchenko and Ignatovich's series from Let's Give.

Earlier I compared two types of documentary photography produced in the course of the First Five-Year Plan: Shaikhet's photo-picture Steamroller and Rodchenko's photo still Paving Streets: Leningradskoe Highway. In order to examine more closely the difference between organic and nonorganic photographic representation, we might consider Shaikhet and Al'pert's photo essay Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of the Working Class Filippov

¹⁵⁶Langman, "Tvorcheskie poiski," p. 28.

¹⁵⁷Ignatovich said that Langman's extreme close-ups were possible because he had found a way to reduce the minimum distance (1 meter) between Leica's viewfinder and the subject of photography. Langman merely removed a screw on the viewfinder, which allowed him to open the viewfinder further and to take pictures at the distance of half a meter.

Family¹⁵⁸ This work was commissioned in 1931 by the Union of Soviet Photo, which had been approached with the idea by an Austrian "Society of Friends of the USSR." From the beginning, the Soviet government treated this project with high expectations, both because it was being produced for a European audience and because it carried vital propagandistic information about workers' lives in the first fully Communist country.¹⁵⁹ The series was planned to demonstrate "how the family of the Red Proletarian's worker Filippov lives, works, studies, and rests,"¹⁶⁰ and was rapidly executed in five days under the editorial supervision of critic Leonid Mezhericher. In their article "How We Photographed the Filippovs," Shaikhet and Al'pert aligned themselves with the serial method of documentary photography. But their criticism of a photo reporter who arrived "at a construction site [and] above all rapaciously jump[ed] on the most effective parts of it"¹⁶¹ was a clear jab at the unconventional photojournalistic techniques employed by Rodchenko and his colleagues. Shaikhet and Al'pert further remarked that they understood series "not as a 'simple' display of a succession of workbenches or detached people at workbenches; a series has to reveal the social essence

¹⁵⁸Before this series, Al'pert authored three major projects recording vast construction sites, including the Turksib (Turkestan-Siberian Railroad), 1929, and the Magnitogorsk (Magnitogorsk Metallurgic Plant), 1929. These series were executed using Alpert's principle of the all-inclusive photographic pictures.

¹⁵⁹The series then was exhibited in Vienna and published in the Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung (AIZ) in 1931. Following this publication, AIZ devoted a special issue to "Die Deutschen Filipows," a photo series about a life of a Berlin worker.

¹⁶⁰A. Shaikhet i M. Al'pert, "Kak mi snimali Filippovykh," Proletarskoe foto, no.4 (1931), p. 46.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

of objects and events as a whole, in their complete dialectical diversity."¹⁶² A much more interesting approach to industrial subject matter, they argued, was the "observation of some giant in order to periodically show truly well in snapshots how it began to be built, the difficulties of construction, the growth of it ... and finally the collective which came out a winner in this struggle."¹⁶³

In accordance with Shaikhet and Al'pert's desire to grasp concrete reality as an organic whole, each snapshot in this photo essay presents a legible and complete "photo-picture." These images describe certain events in the life of this ordinary family. The series, which includes over forty photographs, begins with an image of the Moscow area where the Filippovs live (fig.81). The expansive, panoramic view of the Moscow horizon even includes a symbol of the denounced past, a large church rising on a hill in the far distance. The contrast between the Filippov's new and comfortable apartment building and their previous wooden two-story house is made by including a miniature shot of it. It is through such juxtapositions of whole photographs and through the inclusion of explanatory texts (such as the detailed description of the Filippov's surroundings outside and inside the building) that Shaikhet and Al'pert make their documentary case. The next photograph is a full portrait of the family members in the apartment, each identified by name. They sit in a modestly furnished room sipping their morning tea. In the following photographs, the impulse to recognize each family member dominates all other ways of thinking about these representations. The viewer locates and identifies the Filippovs in a streetcar, in the plant where the father and son work, in the stores where the son and

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid.

wife shop, and in a store where the daughter is a saleswoman (fig.82-85). Unlike the photo-stills in Let's Give, the meaning of these photo-pictures is dependent on the specificity of the represented people and places. In this respect, the issue of a compositional format which is essential to the reading of Let's Give photo-stills, takes on a totally different meaning. Deframing is no longer a vehicle for radically changing the meaning of a representation, but merely a formal device appropriated to embellish an already defined content. This explains why Shaikhet and Al'pert claimed that they were "not against unusual angles of observation and shifted positions of the camera during photographing" (figs. 86-87)¹⁶⁴

A number of photographs from Twenty-Four Hours are spatially compressed and use diagonal compositions, close-ups and high views. They comfortably coexist, however, with images which are overtly conventional in their framing and composition. Filippov's wife, for example, who as the accompanying text suggests, chose to give up her work and take care of the home, is depicted sitting near a window, embroidering. (fig.88) The photographers have borrowed a classical compositional format from painting: an individual sits by a window through which we see a view that carries us far beyond the room. Such recourse to traditional representational structures specifically associated with painting prompted Tret'iakov to harshly criticize the Twenty-Four Hours series. Labeling it a "photo biographical extract," he wrote that "in their photographic traditions, a deeply posed photograph of two young women with tennis racket is no different from photographs of

¹⁶⁴Semen Fridliand et al., "Prodolzhaem tvorcheskuu diskusiu," Proletarskoe foto, no.2 (1931), p. 14.

bourgeois celebrities at fashionable resorts."¹⁶⁵ Tre'tiakov also pointed to some factual discrepancies--such as a half-empty street car, a rare sight in overcrowded Moscow--which he felt undercut the veracity of Twenty-Four Hours .

As I pointed out in the beginning of this chapter the majority of criticism published in this period debated two distinct views of reality which are well reflected in the Lets Give series and the Twenty Four Hours sequence. Because most of that critical writing concerned itself with painting or literature, its analysis here would take us far beyond the subject of this book. Those debates which did deal with the nature of photographic image are discussed in the following chapters. So here I choose to interpret the above described versions of documentary photography in a broader context of the historical debate over realism as it was particularly well articulated in the writings of Bertolt Brecht and Georg Lukacs.

Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and Langman reflected reality in a way close to Brecht's understanding that the artist must "employ his fantasy, his originality, his humour, his invention" and "not stick to too detailed ...models."¹⁶⁶ For these three photographers, realistic representational

¹⁶⁵Sergei Tre'tiakov, "Ot fotoserii k dlitel'nomu fotonabludeniui," Proletarskoe foto, no. 4 (1931), 20.

¹⁶⁶Bertolt Brecht, "Volkstumlichkeit und Realismus," originally written in the late 1930s, as a reply to Georg Lukacs at the time of the "Expressionism debate," but was only published in Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst, Frankfurt, 1967. My citation is from Francis Francina and Charles Harrison, eds., Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 229. For a further discussion of German Expressionism debate see, "The Left and the Debate over Expressionism in the Thirties," (Chapter V) in German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism, edited and annotated by Rose-Carol Washton Long (New York: G.K. Hall &Co, 1993).

categories were combined with experimental objectives that were directed toward the work itself, as well as the audience. For Brecht, the realistic work of art is composed out of fragments which can be added or omitted without a significant change in the meaning.¹⁶⁷

The photographs in Twenty-Four Hours relate to Lukacs's theory of realism, which defends the "expression of a social whole" and looks for "knowledge of the historical process in its entirety."¹⁶⁸ Lukacs points out that the question of one or another style of realism transcends "a formalistic category" and instead deals with issues of content. Later, in his article "Reportage or Portrayal," Lukacs specifically criticized the concentration on "isolated facts" or "groups of facts" at the expense of what he called "unity-in-process of the totality." His definition of bad reportage included the criticism of the conceptualized representations. By contrast, he defended reportage that shows class relations, "disclose[s] causes and propose[s] consequences." He wrote, "In good reportage, the fact, i.e. the individual case, is depicted concretely and individually in a way that makes it really come to life."¹⁶⁹ In a similar fashion, Shaikhet and Al'pert treated their material as something living: for their series they choose a specific family

¹⁶⁷In Deleuze's writing on Vertov, this same process is called "the divisibility of content." This is based on a condition where "parts belong to various sets, which constantly subdivide into sub-sets or are themselves the sub-set of a larger set, on to infinity."

¹⁶⁸Georg Lukacs, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, (Berlin: Malik Verlag, 1923). English translation from Georg Lukacs, History and Consciousness (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 34.

¹⁶⁹Georg Lukacs, "Reportage oder Gestaltung?" Die Linkskurve, IV/7, 8, 1932, pp. 23-30. English translation by David Temback in Georg Lukacs: Essays on Realism, Rodney Livingstone, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), p. 49.

and pursued an accurate reflection of the everyday life of each family member. For them it was significant, above all, that their photo essay was true to life and offered a linear development. As a result, Twenty Four Hours exemplifies the organic work of art in which "individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity ... the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts."¹⁷⁰

In view of the fact that these reportage images were produced for consumption by a wide Soviet audience, it is important to consider the possible reception of these photographs. In the early 1920s, the shift from abstract to iconic representation was to a large degree fueled by the artists' concern about the presumed inaccessibility of abstract production to mass audiences. Although the producers of photo-pictures and photo-stills were equally involved in iconic representation, the contrasting models of reality they created defined two types of relationship between the image and its recipient. Brecht, who saw montage technique as the most effective form of representation for the world of labor, believed that the viewer should be confronted with "a riddle." This means that art is both challenging and disruptive. In works such as photo-stills, then, the viewer was deprived of imagery which he could comfortably identify with. In Rodchenko and Ignatovich's factomontages for Let's Give, dedicated to the process of labor, the severely fragmented images offered the spectator a partial and perplexing picture of the work area. These photographs aggressively resist the viewer's temptation to perceive them as carriers of narrative or definite meanings; instead they produce a kind of shock. For Benjamin and Tret'iakov, this shock was "a key to changing the mode of reception of art

¹⁷⁰Burger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, p. 79.

and to disrupting the dismal and catastrophic continuity of everyday life."¹⁷¹ Both critics believed that this disruption was "a prerequisite for any revolutionary reorganization of everyday life."¹⁷² Such a dialectical absorption of representation of labor, and in general of the real, prevented the viewer, who was often the subject of these images, from identifying his or her reality with predictable patterns. In Let's Give's photo-stills, machines, buildings, and men were "presented as a material system in perpetual interaction."¹⁷³ This created a model of contemporary life which was solely devoted to "the (communist) transitions from an order which is being undone to an order which is being constructed."¹⁷⁴

By contrast, a viewer could easily find his or her own prototype within the legible space reproduced in the photographs of Twenty-Four Hours. In this series, the form of one's life is already defined in representation, the naming of a worker allows the viewer to identify with the main character. These images are endlessly mimetic, conforming to a precise identification between desire and representation. In such an organic whole, Adorno notes, "to become identical, [is] to become total."¹⁷⁵ As such, this representation of social reality leaves no space for reflection; nothing in it can be "shocking."

¹⁷¹Andreas Huyssen, After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 14.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image, p. 39.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 146.

There is no room for doubts or critiques of the real. There is no place for utopian thinking to enter.

Shaikhet and Al'pert placed the proletariat in a specific sociopolitical framework and designated as a hero that individual who best represented what Lukacs called "the typical." Rodchenko, Ignatovich and Langman, on the other hand, deindividualized and deframed photo production, transgressed historic specificity, and turned the proletariat into a unanimous force subsumed under the desire for utopia. Their new model of representation was able to point out utopian aspirations, without resorting to abstract language. These two representational systems, then, corresponded to two distinct political visions of Communism after Lenin's death. The left position, defended by Trotskii, stood for the idea of world revolution and thus inclined to a much more utopian notion of communist victory; the faction headed by Stalin believed that Communism was a more specific project which could be realized in the Soviet Union alone. Although by 1928, Stalin's faction had seized power and had begun to implement the First Five-Year Plan, avant-garde artists like Rodchenko continued to adhere to the more utopian aspirations embodied in world revolution.

Chapter 4

Debating the Photographic Image

Two diverse views of photographic representation coexisted in government-supported magazines during the first years of the First Five-Year Plan primarily because the Party remained reluctant to impose any definite policies on the representational choices. Instead, it embraced all artists who were willing to contribute to the dissemination of the agenda of Stalin's economic reconstruction. The first signs of denunciation in official press of the representational and theoretical strategies practiced by Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and Langman came from their colleagues, like Shaikhet and Al'pert, and occurred in the context of the photo exhibition of the October Association in 1931.

The October Association had been formed in 1928, and along with a number of other newly founded or activated groups, it reflected the artists' revitalized feeling that they could effectively influence the sociocultural direction of the country. Unlike the members of AKhRR group, who hoped to return painting to the forefront of Soviet art, October united architects, mass-media designers, photographers, filmmakers, and critics who shared a belief in art as a tool for what New LEF critic Chuzhak called "lifebuilding." They adhered to the productivist ideology and viewed the artist not as a creator but as an operator. The members of the October Association expressed discontent with the tradition of abstract Constructivism, as well as with commercial tendency of cultural production inspired by the private patronage of the N.E.P. era.¹⁷⁶ They also stressed the importance of cultural diversity and the danger of privileging any single artistic group. The

¹⁷⁶October's general declaration was published in Pravda, June 3, 1928.

manifesto of the October Association emphasized the important distinction between the popular post-revolutionary slogan "Art to the Masses," which reflected a strategy of applying Constructivist ideas to utilitarian objects, and the newer slogan "Art of the Masses," which symbolized the active integration of amateur practitioners into professional circles.

The diversity of the October Association caused factions to develop, and ultimately led to its break up into different sections. The photography section was formed in 1930, two years after October issued its first general declaration of purpose, and included Rodchenko, Langman, Ignatovich, Victor Gruntal', B. Zemchuzhnyi, Karmen, Abram Shterenberg, Ol'ga Ignatovich, Elizaveta Ignatovich, Moriakin, and Dmitrii Debabov.¹⁷⁷ In addition, the heads of various fotokruzhki (photo workshops) were accepted into the October Association (many photojournalists of the 1930s came out of such photo workshops). The photo-stills that Rodchenko and Ignatovich had published in periodicals and the photographic discourse formulated by productivist critics provided the theoretical base. But what really connected the members of the October photography section was their shared interest in photojournalism and their commitment to the themes of the First Five-Year Plan. It was considered an obligation for all responsible photojournalists to be affiliated with production, that is, to work in the mass media and to contribute to newspapers and magazines. In addition, every member of the October Association's photography section had to supervise the photo workshops at the factories and collective farms.

¹⁷⁷Both Ol'ga and Elizaveta Ignatovich were part of the so-called "Brigade of Ignatovich" which in 1929-30 took photographs for the newspaper Vecherniaia Moskva."

The photography section's program, outlined in a collection of essays published by October Association, sought to distinguish photographic strategies of its members from the "aesthetics of abstract 'left' photography like that of Man Ray, Moholy-Nagy, etc."¹⁷⁸

We are for a revolutionary photography aesthetically unconnected with either the traditions of autonomous painting or the objectlessness of "left photography." We are for a revolutionary photography, materialist, socially grounded, and technically well equipped, one that sets itself the aim of promulgating and agitating for a socialist way of life and a Communist culture ... Through the fixation of socially directed and not staged facts, we agitate and show struggle for socialist culture. ... We are against "Akhrovshchina," [AKhRRism] ... flag-waving patriotism in the form of spewing smokestacks and identical workers with hammers and sickles. ... We are against picturesque [emphasis added] photography and pathos of an old, bourgeois type.¹⁷⁹

In their criticism of both Western modern photography and the conventional realism of AKhRR, the October photographers made clear that their own use of formalist devices (diagonal compositions, extreme close-ups, fragmentation, bird's-eye and worm's-eye views, and suppressed horizons) reflected a conscious ideological position. They opposed any view of reality that saw the world as a continuous, organic entity.

¹⁷⁸"Programma fotoseksii ob'edineniia 'Oktiabr'", in *Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv. Sbornik statei ob'edineniia Oktiabr'* (Leningrad i Moskva: Izofront, 1931), p. 150. Lavrentiev attributes the authorship of the photo program to Rodchenko. It is possible that Rodchenko specifically stressed the difference between October photography and that of Western photographers like Moholy-Nagy or Man Ray because Rodchenko's first experiments in straight photography were criticized in *Sovetskoe foto* as mere copies of contemporary Western photographers such as Moholy-Nagy. See *Sovetskoe foto*, no.3, 1928.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

In the October Association's first general exhibition at Gor'kii Park in 1930, the photography section included the periodical Radioslushatel' (Radio Listener), designed by Stepanova and illustrated with reportage photography by Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and Gruntal'. Also exhibited was a group of Rodchenko's photographs that ranged from the early portraits of Maiakovskii to a more recent series taken at the AMO automobile factory. The AMO series was executed in the reportage mode that Rodchenko had first demonstrated in Let's Give. They constitute the ultimate application of his technique of deframing. In one photo-still, Rodchenko employs an extreme close-up, turning the front body of a car into a flat, two-dimensional surface (fig.89). The wholly abstract quality of the image is violated only by the specificity of the plant's engraved emblem and a diagonal line created by the junction of the two metals used to build the car. A similar spatial and iconographic abstraction is achieved in another photo-still from the AMO series. This shows a tilted table covered by columns of small parts which are being assembled by female hands (fig.90). The worker's body, leaning back from her table, is further decomposed by Rodchenko's bold cropping of her body across the line of the shoulder. As with many of his images of workers in the Let's Give series, here Rodchenko confronts the viewer with a representation of labor based on anonymity. The viewer cannot identify with the worker, and, as a result, is disinclined from associating the process of labor with a recognized routine.

The photography section's second exhibition opened at the House of Publishing in May 1931. Also there, a number of photographers, including Semen Fridliand and Iakov Khalip, joined Shaikhet and Al'pert to form a group named ROPF (the Russian Society of Russian Photographers); they

exhibited in the same space as the October photographers, but separately. This event revealed the difference between the photo-stills, as manifested in the photography of Rodchenko, Ignatovich and Langman, and photo-pictures, as displayed in Shaikhet and Al'pert's Twenty-Four Hours. This split constituted the base for debates in the official press about the most appropriate model for Soviet photography. A declaration by ROPF members was published in Proletarskoe foto (Proletarian Photo) in 1931, accusing the October photographers of following the path of Western photo-practitioners such as Moholy-Nagy despite the October members' own explicit affirmations to the contrary. ROPF photographers thus confined the problematics of the October photography to the context of formalist discourse as they believed existed in the West. ROPF photographers ignored the October photographers' insistence on the notion of "how" a photograph is made as a functional, rather than an aesthetic, element. The ROPF group also failed to understand that the fundamental argument concerned a conflict between the two different visions of "social reality" and two different modes of realism.¹⁸⁰

As early as 1929, critics had alleged that the October type of photography was an unfit model for the Soviet press. In a 1929 article "The Competition of the Photojournalists Unfolds", Shaikhet wrote,

Many photojournalists who submit vivid snapshots [to magazines] experience complete disappointment when the editors do not grasp their "points of view." Often they [the editors] simply do not understand how a photograph can be tilted or, simply said, "fall," or how one can publish a photograph with a close-up, for example, of

¹⁸⁰See Semen Fridliand et al., "Prodolzhaem tvorcheskuiu diskusiiu," Proletarskoe foto, no. 2 (1931), p.14.

the details of machines, the movements of hands, etc. Above all, editors approve of photographs in which all the events are fitted into absolutely concrete and intelligible forms for the reader.¹⁸¹

By the early 1930s, this position had acquired clear official support. In 1931, the Central Committee of Proletarian Cinematographers and Photographers stated that they preferred the photographic methods employed in Twenty-Four Hours as a model for the "proletarianization" of Soviet photography. The Committee's plenum declared that the images from the Twenty-Four Hours presented a "bright realist documentary representation of the class truth of our reality [plus] the ability to expose the class essence of the events."¹⁸² What followed was a widespread tendency in the Soviet press to glorify and heroize the proletariat. Workers were not shown as an undifferentiated class whose personal deeds were subsumed under a united desire for a utopian society (as is the case in the photographs of Rodchenko, Ignatovich, and Langman), but as a class of typical heroes whose achievements were viewed in the context of official socio-political demands. It was felt that showing and naming a super-productive or exemplary worker in the press would provide others with an inspiration for competition. Similarly, Soviet leaders believed that designating the fulfillment of a specific amount of production would redirect the worker's desire, moving it from abstract or utopian thinking about socialist labor in general toward the realization of specific projects of the Plan.

The opening of the 1931 exhibition at the House of Publishing triggered heated discussions in the press about this issue. Critics such as Leonid

¹⁸¹A.. Shaikhet, "Sorevnovanie foto-reporterov razvertyvaetsia," Sovetskoe foto, no. 23 (1929), p.713.

¹⁸²"Shire razvernut' tvorcheskuu diskusiu," Proletarskoe foto, no. 4 (1931), p. 48.

Mezhericher, the editor of Twenty-Four Hours, became major voices in the debate over the proper role of photography. In "Soviet Reportage Today," Mezhericher adhered to an already familiar critical line. He claimed that the photographs exhibited by October members were not press photography but aestheticized production and that Rodchenko had negated the importance of content and thus had undermined photojournalism at its core. Mezhericher continued:

Rodchenko is a skillful and stubborn "left" artist; [in his work,] along with a dose of the positive (the elimination of impressionist-type canons in painting and the finding of truly photographic language), there is a dose of the negative (penetration of the new Moholy-Nagian canons, formalism from the "left" instead of formalism from the "right," negation of "contentness," and thus a negation of photo-journalism in its essential nature).¹⁸³

As a typical example of the weaknesses of this Moholy-Nagian photography, Mezhericher cited Langman's Lacemaker, 1931 (fig.91), calling it the "apogee of formalism." Langman's photograph shows a close-up of a female hand working on a piece of lace. The lace stretches over the entire image, with the lacemaker's face seen through the fabric. This creates a sharp discontinuity between foreground and the background. While Mezhericher acknowledges the technical mastery of Langman's photograph, he labels it

a typical aesthetic snapshot, an example of a senseless adoration of a fragment of reality plucked from its surroundings without reason. ... The author is too preoccupied with a contrast between the faktura of the hand and the fabric, and with creating an interesting effect with a

¹⁸³Leonid Mezhericher, "Segodniashnii den' sovetskogo reportazha," Proletarskoe foto, no.1 (1931), p. 10..

face seen through the woven fabric. ... Here, a formalist task is resolved using the scene of a factory production; it could just as easily be achieved with the material of a petty bourgeois environment. The idea is lost in the pursuit of form.¹⁸⁴

A number of other photographs exhibited at the House of Publishing also met with harsh criticism from the press. Langman's Gymnastics on Radio, 1931, (fig.92) in particular, was accused of having a confusing composition. It features two young men exercising in front of a radio. Their bodies, positioned parallel to one another, only partially fit the boundaries of the photo-still. The gymnasts stretch from the upper right and reach toward the close-up speaker in the lower-right-hand corner. Each gymnast has one hand twisted upward; these are abruptly cropped by the photograph's frame. The foremost gymnast's other hand is pointed to the lower right; this increases the sense of diagonal movement already established by the sloping floor. As a result of these complex spatial relationships and the way the photo-still is "packed," the image seems to have several viewpoints and no clearly legible structure.

The photo-still Gymnastics on Radio is just one image from a series which documented a young commune from the Dinamo plant. Other photographs from this series demonstrate Langman's tendency to use extreme close-ups to draw the viewer's attention to seemingly insignificant details. His photograph Young Commune, 1931, for example, presents two young men sitting in the background at the table, drinking tea (fig.93). A third male, in the immediate foreground, is pouring tea, and the close-up kettle he holds virtually obscures his already greatly fragmented image. Lagman's commitment to capturing the fleeting facts of the Soviet byt tended to

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

contradict the officially endorsed principles of descriptive photography. As a result, Proletarian photo observed, "When Langman comes to the young commune of the Dinamo plant, he is dealing with an exceptionally deep subject matter: the new youth is being formed in the new conditions. ...One cannot grasp such a theme all at once. One should visit the commune not once, not twice, but more, and talk a lot with the guys. But Langman's eye and his camera button act fast. And, as a result, one of the most thrilling problems of our new social construction is blocked by a kettle."¹⁸⁵

Similarly, Ignatovich's New Moscow, 1931 (fig.94), was denounced in Proletarian photo for concentrating on indistinct fragments of reality. In this image, a cathedral tower, the symbol of old values, is pushed to the background, while fragments of political banners, which mark the new revolutionary aspirations, crowd the foreground. The messages on the banners are broken up into syllables and thus prevent the viewer from easily deciphering the nature of "new Moscow." Instead, the image functions in a Brechtian way, giving the viewer "a riddle" which is supposed to challenge him or her, awakening a new political consciousness. Ignatovich's Old Leningrad. New Leningrad (1930) is a view from an airplane, which juxtaposes in two photos, published side by side, the city's pre-revolutionary Isakievskii cathedral and its contemporary industrial plant (fig.95). ROPF photographer Fridliand dismissed the image as "a caricature of a Soviet plant," and complained that it offered "Nothing new, nothing old. All the same partyless treatment of Soviet reality. All the same formalism which removes one from the deepened dialectic disclosure of the social essence of

¹⁸⁵Ot redaktsii, "Gruppa 'Oktiabr' dolzhna nemedlenno perestroit'sia, esli ona ne khochet postavit' sebia vne riadov proletarskoi fotografii," Proletarskoe foto, no. 32 (1931), p. 12.

the phenomena into the realm of a fruitless abstraction of the 'original' and 'unusual.'¹⁸⁶

And, finally, these critics regarded Rodchenko's Pioneer With a Horn as a distorted image of a Soviet pioneer (fig.96) Fridliand wrote: "The snapshot Pioneer most clearly manifests the leftist, narrow formalist tendencies of October's creative principles, which have reached counter-revolutionary distortions of Soviet reality. A pioneer is sacrificed to satisfy 'creativity from the left' which echoes the production of the right 'hunters for beauty in general.'¹⁸⁷ The young bugler in Rodchenko's photograph is seen from a worm's-eye view; the image is so severely deframed that only his head, with a distinct view of the chin, and a tiny fragment of a horn, remain in the photo-still. The pioneer's head is positioned diagonally and tilted upward toward the sky. Rodchenko used this upward gaze in a number of other photographs of pioneers produced around this period (figs.97-98); in some, the viewer is positioned directly above the subject. Curiously, few years later this pose was criticized by photographer and critic Ivan Bokhonov, who said of Rodchenko's photograph Pioneer Girl, 1930 (fig.99), also included in the second October exhibition, "The Pioneer girl has no right to look upward. That has no ideological content. Pioneer girls and Komsomol girls should look forward."¹⁸⁸ For Soviet ideologues, even such subtle directional signals figured in the conflict between photo-stills and photo-pictures. "Forward"--that is, the horizontal or diachronic--fit into the domain

¹⁸⁶S. Fridliand, "Molchanie--ne vsegda zoloto," Proletarskoe foto, no. 32 (1931), p. 18.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Leonid Mezhericher attributes this comment to Ivan Bokhonov in 1935. See L. Mezhericher, "O trekh opasnostiakh," Sovetskoe foto, no. 5-6 (1935), p. 38

of the observable future. This ideology found its realization in photo-pictures, which confined the image to already determined and visible reality. By contrast, "upward"--that is, the vertical or synchronic--was synonymous with the unknown, the unseen, and the unpredictable. These conditions were made manifest in photo-stills, particularly by means of deframing which directed the image upward, into the out-of-field.

A comparison, made in Soviet Photo between Rodchenko's Pioneer With a Horn and Shaikhet's Red Army Skiers (fig. 100), illustrated the schism between these two models of representation, and demonstrated the congruence between the views of the government and the representational choices of the ROPF. In discussing these two images, the press criticized Rodchenko for his selection of an "unsuccessful" moment, one which did not reveal the essence of a pioneer organization. As such, the critics argued, the image might cause the viewer to believe that "pioneers just blow a horn." On the other hand, Shaikhet's photograph, a high view of a group of soldiers skiing through a snowy forest, was praised for having a strong sense of narrative, which would allow the viewer to mentally continue the story. Sovetskoe foto went so far as to suggest their own version of the story:

The Red soldiers are in a hurry to reach the village where they will conduct meetings, talk about collectivization, help to set up cultural activities, and generally strengthen ties between proletarian city and the poor village. This trip will not only result in one more initiative for the socialist reconstruction of the village, it will also offer a splendid opportunity to practice skiing, a skill which significantly reinforces the defense potential of our army."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹"Na Sotsialisticheskoi stroike," Sovetskoe foto, no.1 (1931), p. 12.

This comment clearly suggests that, even in nonserial photography, the official press demanded representations which would form a continuous plot, if only in the viewer's mind.

Mezhericher praised the ROPF photographers, saying that their work could "be imagined as pictures on the walls of a club, a panel on a square or in a park, a postcard or a shield over the demonstration column."¹⁹⁰ He attacked the October photographers for the excessive fragmentation of their images. His argument against Langman's Lacemaker as a "fragment of reality plucked from its surroundings" is typical of the larger Marxist crusade against fragmentation. Like all critics, photographers, and painters who adhered to a more conventional model of Realism, Mezhericher believed that he was realizing Marx's project of emancipation, the most fundamental characteristic of which has been described by Alvin W. Gouldner as "to make the world whole, to connect the disconnected ... to overcome old contradictions."¹⁹¹ In this sense, fragmentation was not a purely artistic device; it was a state of reality caused by the "nonorganic" phenomena of capitalism. From Marx's utopian standpoint, the course of reality is characterized by its movement from fragmentation toward unity. Such a paradigm of dialectical change was, in Marx's opinion, identifiable with progress, for, as Hegel had said, "The truth is the whole." By trying to organize the world into homogeneous "photo-pictures," the ROPF photographers were fulfilling what they believed as Marx's holistic drive to overcome fragmentation and alienation. In ROPF's oeuvre, the process of

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Alvin W. Gouldner, Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 266.

"reunification of a fragmented world" was primarily achieved by means of the photograph's iconic functions. By contrast, October's single-frame photographs and factomontages were based on indexical representations in which Benjamin Buchloh has described as "the network of cuts and lines of jutting edges and unmediated transitions from fragment to fragment are as important, if not more so, as the actual iconic representation contained within the fragment itself."¹⁹² As such, October's photography pointed to the life beyond the frame and thus aimed at a much more global model of "reunification."

The events surrounding the October Association exhibition of 1931 also summed up the major achievements in photomontage and marked a turning point in its development (fig.101). Klutis's article, titled "Photomontage as a New Kind of Agitational Art," was published in a collection of essays by October Association. In it, he outlined the importance of photomontage in the development of the Soviet mass media, arguing that in its impact on the audience photomontage is comparable only with film, which "combines a mass of photo-stills into a complete art work."¹⁹³ Klutis linked the emergence of photomontage with the bankruptcy of abstract art and with the Constructivists' search for utilitarian applications of their formal methods. He claimed that he was the first Soviet artist to use photomontage in his Dynamic City (fig.6) and then in the illustrations for Young Guard which he produced with Sen'kin. And, although he acknowledged that Lissitzky and Rodchenko were also among the early practitioners of

¹⁹²Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Factura to Factography," October, no. 30 (Fall 1984), p. 103.

¹⁹³Gustav Klutis, "Fotomontage kak novyi vid agitatsionnogo iskusstva" in Izofront, 1931, p. 124.

photomontage, Klutsis emphasized that they were inclined toward formalist-advertising tendencies and thus had no influence on the evolution of agit-political photomontage.

In a description of one of the October Association's meetings before the exhibition at Gor'kii Park, Kulagina made clear the difficulties that Klutsis faced as an uncompromising defender of a specific mode of photomontage. She wrote,

Yesterday there was an exhibition committee meeting. It was selecting the works for the polygraphic section. There was Klutsis, Novitsky, Ginsburg, Kurella, and less significant people like Telingater. ... Gustav was in the minority--the only photomontagist out of seven members of the committee--and when they rejected his cover, a good one, he announced that he was leaving the committee because of its structure. This created a scandal and arguments between everyone. Gustav told Telingater that he has not done a single work on his own. Everything is like somebody else's.¹⁹⁴

Klutsis saw Solomon Telingater, a close friend of Lissitzky, as an example of an artist whose work was merely imitative of formalist-advertising photomontage. Telingater's preference for playful designs and imagery revealed itself in his choice of verbal messages, which were often eclectic and playful. In his two-part bookmark, The Word is Given to Kirsanov, 1930, Constructivist typography is mixed with photographs to produce a cartoonish portrait of Kirsanov (fig.102) Telingater's use of photomontage was far different from that of the artists Klutsis celebrated in his article: Vasilii Elkin, Faik Tagirov, Kulagina, Nikolai Spirov, and Natalia Pinus. Those artists used photomontage to convey political and economic messages. Klutsis stressed that his work (and that of his colleagues) was

¹⁹⁴From Kulagina's diaries, April 27, 1930. Klutsis Family Archive, Moscow.

connected to "thousands of nameless artists-workers and collective farmers at work-who depict urgent political themes with the photomontage method."¹⁹⁵

To illustrate his photomontage article, Klutsis included designs by Sen'kin, Elkin, Kulagina, and Pinus, (fig.103) along with his own works (fig. 104). Sen'kin's poster Who Is Saying That There Is No Lenin, Lenin's Light Is Burning Everywhere (fig.103) is akin to the illustrations he and Klutsis had made earlier in memory of Lenin. In the poster, the leader is shown repetitively and in different scales, juxtaposed next to his mausoleum (the sign of his immortality). Elkin's poster is dedicated to Max Geltz' s book From White Cross to Red Banner, which stressed a vital role of a worker in the revolutionary process. Kulagina's photomontage We Are Building, 1929, and Pinus's Female Collective Farmer Build Collective Farms, also included in Klutsis's article, illustrated how photomontage could activate women during industrialization and collectivization. Both images portray female workers as anonymous but powerful heroines, responsible for continuous socioeconomic transformations. Judging from remarks Kulagina made in her diary just a few months before the October Association Exhibition at Gor'kii Park, she considered women's themes in the mass media to be of vital importance. She wrote, "Today I began a poster of the subject matter of construction and collectivization of a village. Nobody has yet been able to give a sharp poster on this theme; usually it is limited to showing a woman on a tractor or a woman with a cow (as if she is dragged to a kolkhoz)."¹⁹⁶ Kulagina's major posters from this period elevate women's role in the pre-

¹⁹⁵Klutsis, "Fotomontage kak novyi vid agitatsionnogo iskusstva," in Izofront, 1931, p. 126.

¹⁹⁶From Kulagina's diaries, March 12, 1930. Klutsis Family Archive, Moscow.

Revolutionary days, as well as the post-Revolutionary period. Her International Women Workers' Day Is The Fighting Day of the Proletariat, 1931 (fig.105), juxtaposes scenes of women's participation in demonstrations against the Tzar with a series of photographic images showing emancipated, festive, and daring females building Socialism. These photo fragments documenting women's everyday lives are dominated by a hand-drawn rendering of a bold female worker. She is placed against a red banner whose pole stretches diagonally across the frame dividing her from the photo fragments. In International Women Workers' Day, 1930 (fig.106), a giant female factory worker operates a hefty textile machine. In the foreground, and much smaller in size, packed-together masses of women workers commemorate the holiday. They are mindful that their present position was made possible by the Bolshevik's Party liberation of women. Pinus's Female Delegate, Worker, Shock-Worker, 1931 (fig.107), similarly presents women as active citizens making decisions about political and economic reforms. Here, a female metallurgist rules the space; next to her, other females, much smaller in scale, appear as students, agitators, workers, and mothers.¹⁹⁷

In "Photomontage as a New Kind of Agitational Art," Klutis also claimed that Soviet agit-political photomontage had an influence on "communist publications in Germany."¹⁹⁸ To emphasize this point, he juxtaposed his poster In the Storm of the Third Year of the Five-Year Plan,

¹⁹⁷In addition to Kulagina and Pinus's posters dedicated to Soviet women a large number of photomontage posters with women's themes were executed by anonymous designers. All this production attests to the fact that in the post-revolutionary period the government paid serious attention to the role of women in building Socialism.

¹⁹⁸Klutis, "Fotomontage kak novyi vid agitatsionnogo iskusstva," in Izofront, 1931, p. 119.

1930 (fig.108), with John Heartfield's The Dead Parliament of the same year. He also placed Lissitzky's The Constructor next to Jan Tschichold's photomontage Laster Der Menschheit--a woman's portrait combined with Constructivist form and typography. (fig.109) Since Klutis was seeking to distance himself from the formalist-advertising tendencies typified by Lissitzky, this last comparison was probably meant to link Lissitzky to more formalist German Constructivist traditions. But the fact was, in 1930, Lissitzky was largely preoccupied with bold architectural and exhibition designs. His use of photography was largely confined to its application to these activities.¹⁹⁹ His famous poster for the Russian Exhibition in Zurich in 1929 (fig.110) had used photomontage to create a dramatic double-headed image of male and female youths who share an eye and have "USSR" written across their foreheads. In the foreground of this poster are a number of empty exhibition stands as though to make the public curious about the content of the exhibition. In his 1930 designs for the International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden (fig.111), on the other hand, printed messages and photographic images cover virtually every square of the walls, stands, and ceiling. As with his *Pressa* installation, the architectural scale of Lissitzky's Dresden project emphasized the great didactic potential of photomontage, taking it beyond the framework of magazines and posters and endowing it with greater power to influence the viewer.

Klutis rounded out the illustrations to his photomontage article with his own Dynamic City, Sport (1922), and illustrations from Young Guard and Pitiash, (1926) (fig.112). These images were presented as the first Soviet

¹⁹⁹In the October Association Exhibition of 1930, Lissitzky exhibited with Telingater in the design section.

photomontages and as prototypes for Klutssis's posters produced in response to the Five-Year Plan. During the Plan, he concentrated (as did the straight photographers), on representations of workers and labor, themes he had begun to develop as early as 1924. In the photomontage Male and Female Workers Sign Up For the Party of Il'ich, 1924 (fig.113), he created a vigorous picture of the Soviet workforce and emphasized its political meaning by including slogans which urged workers to join the Communist Party of Bolsheviks. To further inspire the viewer, a portrait of Lenin, then the people's favorite leader, was added in the upper right, effortlessly overseeing the photomontage's busy field of action. A monumental figure of a worker, placed diagonally in the upper left, tops the entire composition. His disproportionately large right hand works a lathe, while his left hand is shown idle. But Klutssis transgresses reality here, adding a third, disembodied hand which helps the worker to operate the lathe. Another robust worker is seated in the lower right, his work tool is overlaid by multiple images leaving his hand pointing in a disjointed gesture, toward the lower left. There, a firmly installed female head boldly faces the viewer. In composing this photomontage, Klutssis was trying to create a sharper and more conflictual perception of his subject matter, relying primarily on the elaborate formal play of verticals, horizontals, and diagonals.

By 1930, when Klutssis produced his major series of posters, "Struggle for the First Five-Year Plan," he was firmly committed to using nonorganic, fragmentary images. In Let Us Fulfill the Plan of the Great Projects (fig.54), Klutssis eliminated the surplus details characteristic of Male and Female Workers Sign Up for the Party of Il'ich and summarized the idea of work in the iconic image of a hand. An arm (actually Klutssis's) stretches from the

lower right to the upper left and confronts the viewer with an open palm, pushing the whole image toward the viewer. The two-dimensionality of this poster is further advanced by slogans written in white on both sides of the hand. Crowds of workers, all packed into the lower right of the composition, are similarly dominated by repetitive rows of smaller versions of the main hand image. As in Let's Give photo-stills, this poster design is based on a severe reduction of the narrative mechanisms. For example, here, Klutis has removed any view of the construction sites which inspire the slogans. This more abstract treatment of industrial subject matter places Klutis's image on the level of a codified metaphor, transgressing the immediate meaning of its message.

Two more landmark posters from the series "Struggle for the Five-Year Plan" were published with Klutis's photomontage article. In We Shall Repay the Coal Debt to Our Country, 1930 (fig.114) and In the Storm of the Third Year of the Five Year Plan, 1930 (fig.108). Klutis worked out a representational model of a worker. For In the Storm of the Third Year, he grouped several steelworkers close to one another in profile in a tight space on the left side.²⁰⁰ Their arms are engaged in a simultaneous movement toward the site of production which, however, the artist has cropped from the composition. In the lower left, Klutis placed a large gloved hand holding a heavy tool. In the lower right, there is a small fragment of an industrial landscape, heavy with smoke; this contributes an element of concreteness to

²⁰⁰The preliminary design shows that Klutis originally used four figures, granting them much more space in the composition. In the final poster, two figures merge, giving the image a more abstract appearance.

the otherwise loosely rendered and spatially vague imagery.²⁰¹ The poster's red background pushes the workers to the foreground, whereas the fragment of a slogan pasted over the closest figure, pulls them back. Overall, this representation turns the workers into signs of a productive process rather than actual producers.

For We Shall Repay the Coal Debt, commemorating the thirteenth anniversary of the October Revolution, Klutskis showed coalminers as the main force behind the building of a Socialist society. Several preliminary designs for this poster, executed over black-and-white photographs, demonstrate how Klutskis made decisions about space and color.²⁰² In one design (fig.115), Klutskis colored the coalminers' outfits red (the middle image) and blue (the side figures) and retained all the parts of all the bodies; as a result, the figures appear tangible and the space realistic. In another design, which became the prototype for the final poster, the left and right coalminers are cropped and the color of their costumes eliminated (fig.116). In the final poster, the viewer encounters coalminers as mighty images emerging from the vibrant red background and marching down a staircase. Their bodies, together with other details, are distinctly flattened, depriving the image of concreteness and endowing it with universality.

²⁰¹Curiously, the landscape part of the poster does not exist in the preliminary photomontage design. Knowing IZOGIZ's growing involvement in the editing process of poster production, one may suggest that the addition of a concrete detail could have been an instruction from the editors.

²⁰²Klutskis's use of a photograph as a preliminary sketch for a poster is important and explains why he made photographs of all his posters. In June 1929, he wrote, "I got involved in rephotographing all my works for Kurella ... For the first time I realized that a photograph of serial graphic work is more contrasting than an original. I have received a set of wonderful negatives and prints from them." Letter of June 4, 1929. Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

In the press coverage of the exhibition in Gor'kii Park, Klutssis and Sen'kin's posters were praised as examples "which convince the viewer of the great potential of photomontage."²⁰³ Soon after, however, Klutssis's posters were criticized for their abstract and fragmentary nature. In 1931, the Central Committee of the Communist Party publicly expressed its dissatisfaction with the activities of many artistic organizations, including IZOGIZ, which was primarily responsible for the commission of photomontage posters.²⁰⁴ In response, the Communist Academy's Institute of Literature, Art, and Linguistics organized a debate over the political effectiveness of posters in general and photomontage posters in particular. Klutssis, Sen'kin, Elkin, and Tagirov actively participated in these discussions. Klutssis gave a lecture titled "Photomontage as a Tool for Agitation and Propaganda," based on his article. In this revised text, he continued to insist on the distinction between photomontage's advertising and political tendencies, but intensified his argument against abstract art saying that "photomontage appeared as the proletariat's counter-attack against abstract art."²⁰⁵ This polemical statement, together with Klutssis's description of photomontage as a universal political method utilized for mass propaganda by professionals and amateurs alike, clearly shifted the mission of photomontage from the realm of the merely

²⁰³Lissitzky and Telingater were criticized for their attempts to hide the more political bent of their designs behind the novelty of the form. Like Klutssis himself, the authors of this review separated the photomontage practitioners into two camps, one more formalist and the other more concerned with the factographic aspects of representation. Feodor Konnov and Iakov Tsirelson, "Vystavka Oktiabria," *Iskusstvo v massy*, no. 7 (1930), p. 10.

²⁰⁴IZOGIZ was a publishing house established in Moscow in 1930. It produced posters, magazines, books, and textbooks on art.

²⁰⁵Gustav Klutssis, "Fotomontazh kak sredstvo agitatsii i propagandy," in *Za Bol'shevitskii plakat* (Moskva/Leningrad: OGIZ-IZOGIZ, 1932), p. 186.

artistic to the domain of overtly political. Klut'sis's lecture is particularly notable for its affinity with the views later expressed by Walter Benjamin in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Like Benjamin, Klut'sis underlined the primary importance of the photographic method in its ability to "use photo mechanical properties of a camera for creation of representation." "In this," Klut'sis continued, "is the principal difference between photomontage and other forms of art where representational forms are created by manual techniques. ... Industry of machines which consistently realizes mechanization of manual labor, penetrates into the techniques of representational arts."²⁰⁶ Both Benjamin and Klut'sis viewed photography as the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, aligning its dominant position with the rise of socialism, and identifying the way it insistently gives ideological meanings to artistic production.

A number of photomontage practitioners, including Sen'kin and Elkin, responded directly to Klut'sis's lecture. Sen'kin agreed with Klut'sis's politicization of photomontage, asserting that "we must fight for photomontage as political art, which has nothing to do with dadaist mysticism and advertising."²⁰⁷ Other speakers underlined the importance of Heartfield and wanted to invite him to teach and exhibit in the Soviet Union.²⁰⁸ In response, Klut'sis claimed that "political photomontage as an ideological weapon of the attacking class, made a decisive influence on the

²⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 92 and 94.

²⁰⁷S. Sen'kin, "Preniia po dokladu," in Za Bol'shevitskii plakat, p. 122.

²⁰⁸Tagirov, "Preniia po dokladu," Za Bolshevitskii plakat, p. 118. Heartfield's exhibition opened in Moscow in November of 1931.

communist press in Germany and, particularly, on Heartfield. He turned from a formalist, dadaist, and mystic to a prominent political artist-photomontagist."²⁰⁹

Critic N. Bekker's response to Klutssis's lecture was particularly important because he specifically challenged Klutssis's posters of the First Five-Year Plan. Bekker accused Klutssis of the "deindividualization of a worker," claiming that a poster artist must differentiate between various types of workers because "there is no unified face of the proletariat." Bekker noted that Klutssis's posters do not designate "that we have old workers who used to be social-revolutionaries, mensheviks; that we have workers who just recently came from a village. That is why the working class should not have one face, we must differentiate it."²¹⁰ Bekker specifically attacked Male and Female Workers All to the Election of the Soviets for showing only the process of voting and complained that "it looks as if we only vote but do not work."²¹¹ This last remark echoed the earlier complaint that Rodchenko's Pioneer With a Horn made it look as though "pioneers just blow a horn." Bekker opposed the nonorganic qualities in photographic representation and objected to the replacement of concrete narratives and actions by utopian symbols and connotations.

The particular use of slogans in Klutssis's posters and his adherence to what Bekker designated the "deindividualization of a worker" should be viewed in the context of the writing on language and ideologies published at the time in Russia by critics Mikhail Bakhtin and Vladimir Voloshinov. In

²⁰⁹Gustav Klutssis, "Preniia po dokladu," in Za Bolshevitsky Plakat, p. 129.

²¹⁰Ibid., pp. 111-112.

²¹¹Ibid., p.112.

his study Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (1929), Voloshinov pointed out that

signs can arise only on interindividual territory. It is territory that cannot be called "natural" in the direct sense of the word: signs do not arise between any two members of the species Homo Sapiens. It is essential that the two individuals be organized socially, that they compose a collective (a social unit); only then can the medium of signs take shape between them. The individual consciousness not only cannot be used to explain anything, but, on the contrary, is itself in need of explanation from a vantage point of the social, ideological medium.²¹²

Whether directly or not, the views expressed in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language undoubtedly had an impact on the practitioners of such a key "ideological medium" as photomontage. In his major posters of 1929-31, Klutssis constructed what Voloshinov calls "interindividual territory" by grouping workers and other individuals in close connection with each other and by fragmenting "natural" aspects of each composition, including bodies and other descriptive elements. The most striking example of this is Klutssis's poster Speed Up the Tempo of Industrialization, designed in 1930 for the sixteenth Party Congress (fig.117). Here, similar to Lissitzky's poster for the Russian Exhibition in Zurich, two faces, one male and one female, constitute the main part of the image. However, if Lissitzky's androgynous image tops the constructivist exhibition stands, Klutssis's double portrait looms over a smoky industrial landscape. The woman's face is placed behind the man's and partially merges into it, giving the impression of an

²¹²First published in Leningrad in 1929 in the series Voprosy metodologii i teorii iazyka i literatury. As cited in Vladimir Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 12,

androgynous or "interindividual" image.²¹³ For the same Party Congress, Klutsis worked out another model of "interindividuality," based not on the images of anonymous men and women, but on the recognizable portraits of Lenin and Stalin. In Under the Banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction, 1930 (fig.118), for the first time Klutsis explores the relationship between Stalin and Lenin as political leaders competing for the dominant position in post-revolutionary Soviet society. In this composition, Stalin's head is largely obscured by that of Lenin, Klutsis's favorite leader.

The difference between the slogans used in the final versions of these two posters and those used by Klutsis in the preliminary designs, attests to Voloshinov's argument that in the Marxist function of language the word is "an essential ingredient accompanying all ideological creativity whatsoever."²¹⁴ Apparently, the long meetings of the IZOGIZ were often dominated by arguments over the precise choice of verbal messages.²¹⁵ The replacement of "The Plan for Socialist Attack" by "Under the Banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction" and the substitution of "Speed Up the

²¹³Lissitzky's earlier discussed poster with a similar composition may also be interpreted in the context of Voloshinov's ideas. Such an approach would question Peter Nisbet's attempt to view this image as a continuation of the formalist method of overlapping photographic images practiced by Lissitzky in the mid-1920s. See his El Lissitzky (Cambridge, Mass: Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1987), p. 52.

²¹⁴Voloshinov, Marxism and The Philosophy of Language, p. 15.

²¹⁵Klutsis's letter of September 18, 1930, saying that he had many problems with IZOGIZ's expectancy of Male and Female Workers and Under The Banner of Lenin, testifies to such problems. Later Klutsis specifically criticized the growing IZOGIZ bureaucracy when he wrote that "the underqualified editors made the decisions in all departments of [IZOGIZ] through which the work had to pass before it would finally be accepted or rejected." See his "Schet khudozhnika, za tvorcheski kontakt khudozhnika i redaktora," Brigada Khudozhnikov, no.2 (1932), p. 13.

Tempo of Industrialization" for "We Will Build Our Own World" in Klutssis's posters signifies the increasing governmental control over language and a shift from daring revolutionary slogans to predetermined and repetitive bureaucratic postulates.²¹⁶

As with straight photography, a more active involvement of political institutions in official debates about uses of photomontage began to influence the artists' choice of themes and compositions. Klutssis's initial response to this pressure can be detected in We Shall Provide Millions of Qualified Workers, 1931 (fig.119), one of his last posters fully dedicated to the representation of anonymous workers. In contrast to his major works of 1930, this poster employs a vastly expanded space. A long line of male and female miners recede into a deep background populated by a carefully rendered landscape of factory buildings. Klutssis has discarded his interest in the "deindividualization" of a worker and presents the diverse faces of the proletariat. The composition lacks many of Klutssis's familiar photomontage techniques--including fragmentation, overt diagonals, exaggerated and disembodied details, and flattened spaces--though these are still present in a preliminary photomontage for the poster (fig.120). As a result, the nonorganic and fragmentary nature of We Shall Repay Coal Debt or In the Storm of the Third Year is replaced by "a living picture of totality." The spectator's experience of the process of construction is replaced by a coherent visualization of a more "finished project." Thus, in Klutssis's work,

²¹⁶All these changes can be detected from various Klutssis's preliminary designs for these posters.

the entire conflict between nonorganic and totalizing imagery was eventually played out.

As a result of the government's need to promote and document the progress of Stalin's ambitious projects, experimental photographic reportage flourished during the period of the First Five-Year Plan. This revitalized the mass media and created wide opportunities for experiments and the broad expansion of avant-garde ideas. The status attained by photography and photomontage between 1928 and 1932, was comparable only with that of painting and graphic arts in the brief period immediately after the Revolution. At both times, artists had special opportunities to conduct extensive experiments thanks to the government's desire to utilize them for the promotion of its sociopolitical message and its temporary disregard for the formal methods employed in such work. When the First Five-Year Plan was completed in 1932, one year ahead of schedule, the government's attention to cultural affairs intensified and the nature of the mass media photographic image began to change. These new circumstances brought about entirely new photographic practices and initiated the next and final phase in the history of the photographic avant-garde in the Soviet Union.

Chapter 5

Restructuring of a Photographer

Although visibly fragmented in the years between Lenin's death and the end of the First Five-Year Plan, the Soviet cultural world began to acquire an artificial sense of unity by the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan in 1933. One year earlier, in 1932, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party had issued its "Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations," which dissolved many art groups and institutions and began to infiltrate the principles of Socialist Realism. These developments drastically reduced the possible affiliations for artists and forced many diverse practitioners onto a common ground. In 1936, one year before the completion of the Second Five-Year Plan, a special committee was authorized to take charge of all cultural affairs. This brought to a final halt any deviations from the agenda of Socialist Realism. Thus, the period between 1932 and 1936 constituted a final stage of the Soviet photographic avant-garde, a phase that has remained the least studied and the most controversial.

According to art historian Benjamin Buchloh: "By 1931 the goals of factography [in the Soviet Union] had clearly been abandoned."²¹⁷ I would argue that it was not until 1932 that factography (as well as the use of fragmentary photographic imagery in the work of Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Klutskis, and others) began to be replaced by Stalinist or mythographic imagery and more organic compositions. Although this insistence on a more

²¹⁷Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October*, no. 30 (Fall 1984), p.117.

precise chronology may seem insignificant, in fact, it is critical to any understanding of the nature of this formal transition, making clear that it was in no way abrupt and was motivated by a complex series of cultural and political events.

The main preoccupation of artists such as Klutssis, Lissitzky and Rodchenko, in the last years of their careers (Klutssis was shot in 1938, Lissitzky died in 1941, and Rodchenko was gradually pushed to the background of Soviet cultural activities) was their work for the publishing house IZOGIZ. In 1932, Lissitzky was hired by IZOGIZ as a designer for the magazine SSSR na Stroike (USSR in Construction). Rodchenko also signed on with IZOGIZ as its Moscow photo correspondent. And Klutssis, following his participation in the exhibition Posters at the Service of the Five-Year Plan, went to work for the IZOGIZ poster department.

The ambitious goal of the IZOGIZ magazine USSR in Construction was to serve as propaganda well beyond the Soviet borders.²¹⁸ Having successfully completed the First Five-Year Plan, Stalin wanted to convey to the West a positive view of Soviet life and to counteract possible misrepresentations propagated by his enemies. In the introduction to the first issue the editorial board, consisting of such highly respected people as the Socialist Realist writer Maxim Gor'kii, remarked that "In order to deprive our enemies inside and outside of the Soviet Union of the opportunity to distort and discredit the testimony of words and numbers, we decided to turn to svetopis' (writing by light) to the work of sun--to photography."²¹⁹ The

²¹⁸USSR in Construction was published from 1930 to 1941 in Russian as well as in such foreign languages as English, German and French.

²¹⁹L. Kristi, "Zametki o 'SSR na stroike," Sovetskoe foto, no.2 (1940), p.8.

editorial board of USSR in Construction sought the active involvement of key mass media designers like Lissitzky and Rodchenko and of such writers as Tret'iakov and Eduard Tisse. Starting from the third issue the magazine became thematical and shortly after single photographs with short inscriptions were replaced by long photoessays. In his description of USSR in Construction Mezhericher, who in 1934 defined the magazine as one which "justly made the Soviet country proud,"²²⁰ commented on these compositional changes:

[USSR in Construction] was founded for the popularization of industrialization by means of photography. But along with the growth and development of the magazine, the task of popularization has grown into that of an ecstatic artistic reflection of socialist reality. Friends of the magazine who have watched over it since 1930 have seen how over the period of time the form and function of a photographic snapshot itself has changed. At first [the magazine] which attempted to be simply a documentary inspired a just criticism ... Then in an attempt to have more expression and to relate the grand scales and tense tempo of construction, the snapshot began to grow and acquire a compositional force.²²¹

Mezhericher observed that USSR in Construction offered a new type of photographic representation, which he called "monumental artistic photography."²²² This phrase describes accurately the new style in photography in the early 1930s born of the shift from factographic to mythographic representation.

²²⁰L. Mezhericher, "Na Putiakh k sotsialisticheskomu stilu fotografii," Sovetskoe foto, no.2 (1934), p. 14.

²²¹Ibid., p. 15.

²²²Ibid.

The images of USSR in Construction consisted of photographs of industrial sites, collective farms, and other areas of vast production. Unlike Let's Give, 30 Days, and other popular magazines of the late 1920s, in which documentary photo-stills were generally printed in the form they were submitted by the photographers, in USSR in Construction the photographs were regarded as raw material to be manipulated and connected by a chief designer such as Lissitzky or Rodchenko. By combining the works of many diverse photographers in one issue, on one page, or sometimes even in a single photomontage, the magazine downplayed individual authorship and succeeded in erasing the differences between the methods defended by various practitioners of photography before 1932. By foregrounding a unified artistic spirit, the magazine fulfilled the government's desire to use previously antagonistic photographers to demonstrate the ideology of totality.

Lissitzky, who continued to work on USSR in Construction "even when his illness made [him] lie in bed,"²²³ was instrumental in shaping the magazine's graphic image. He later wrote: "I fully devoted myself to the magazine. The word 'design' does not convey the full creative substance of our work. I dare to think that the work on the 'character' of certain magazine issues, such as 'Cheluskinty' or 'Constitution of the USSR' and others, was

²²³El Lissitzky, "Avtobiografiia," Moskva, 1941, OR GTG (Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaiia Galereia), Fond 76/1, 199.

no less intense than on a painting. The public resonance was no less wide."²²⁴ Lissitzky's description of Dziga Vertov's film Three Songs of Lenin (1934) echoes his own representational strategy for USSR in Construction Lissitzky wrote, "With the strength of a deep love toward our days, actions, class, party, leaders, masses, there have been collected many separate, very simple moments and facts. And with great artistic feeling [they have been] woven into an affecting sonata. Here, everything--poetry, plastic form, musical theme, human voice, time and space--has been brought into unity"²²⁵ According to Vertov's own 1936 account of this film, he had "succeeded in making [the film] accessible, comprehensible to millions of spectators. But it was not done ... at the cost of rejecting processes found in the past. What matters above all is the unity of form and content. It is not permissible to trouble the audience with some trick or process which does not come naturally out of the content and which is not demanded by circumstances."²²⁶

In his designs for USSR in Construction, Lissitzky like Vertov believed that he did not betray the methods of representation that he had practiced earlier. In fact, in his autobiographical notes, he makes no distinction

²²⁴Lissitzky, "Avtobiographiia," July 1941, TsGALI (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva), fond 2361, op.1, ed. khr. 58. "Cheluskinsy" is the name of a group of people who went to the Arctic on the ice-breaker Cheluskin. The whole issue of USSR in Construction (no. 9, 1933) was dedicated to this event. It is most likely that Kulagina referred to this particular issue when she wrote in her diary: "Lissitzky came over. Today I saw his issue of SSR na Stroike whose well-made photomontage amazed [many]. It is very ordinary. Anyone of us could do it just as good. Probably someone in TSK [Central Committee] praised Lissitzky and [others] blew up the publicity." Kulagina diaries, January 9, 1933

²²⁵Lissitzky, "Iliada Leninizma," June 14, 1934, TsGALI, fond 2361, op.1, ed. khr. 53.

²²⁶Dziga Vertov, Cinema in Revolution, ed. Luda and Jean Schnitzer and Marcel Martin (London: Da Capo Press, 1973), pp. 86-87.

between the importance of his early avant-garde work and his late work for propagandistic publications. In this later production, Lissitzky began to use straight photography and photomontage, less as a means to explore Brechtian discontinuities of language than to promote an ideology of unity. By creating what he called "synthetic compositions," Lissitzky sought to "give an idea about what Soviet power and the Communist Party created for twenty years."²²⁷ By this time, Lissitzky had withdrawn from fieldwork (partially because of his bad health), but he used the work of other photographers to construct photomontage layouts. Once again, however, the technique of photomontage was shifted from its avant-garde function of fragmenting and deframing to the new purposes of synthesizing and totalizing.

The structural and iconographic changes occurring at the time in mass-media representations entailed a broader shift in the status of the author-as-producer. This situation is detectable from Lissitzky's use of the image of a hand in several issues. In the issue dedicated to the Soviet Arctic (no.9 1933), one page shows a photograph of a hand writing a telegram to "the heroes of the Arctic" (fig.121). The telegram is signed "Maxim Gor'kii." In this case, the function of the author's hand is quite different from that of the modernist engineer represented in Lissitzky's early self-portrait The Constructor. This hand is also unlike that of the Benjaminian author-as-producer who sides with the proletariat, as in Lissitzky's cover design for the periodical Artists' Brigade, (1931) (fig.56). Instead, Gor'kii's hand stands for a new model of the instructive author, one who sides with the proletariat not by participating in production activities but by affirming the deeds of the proletariat from a

²²⁷Lissitzky, "Iliada Leninizma," June 14, 1934, TsGALI, fond 2361, op.1 ed. khr. 53.

distance.²²⁸ In another montage produced for USSR in Construction (no. 2 (1934), Lissitzky shows Stalin standing atop Lenin's mausoleum and waving to the masses (fig.122).²²⁹ This time, the hand of the instructive author is replaced by the hand of a leader, who presents himself as the ultimate author of the social system.²³⁰

Lissitzky considered the design of the 1937 anniversary issue of USSR in Construction, dedicated to the "Constitution of the USSR," of great importance. In this issue, every aspect of the subject matter conveys the spirit of unification referring, mainly, to the union of the new Soviet republics.²³¹ Using a great variety of ready-made photographs, Lissitzky composed each double spread of this issue as a theatrical stage with portraits of Stalin, his aparatchiks, colossal workers, heroic navigators, exuberant athletes, happy mothers, and children (figs.123-126), set amid the grandiose imagery of industry, modern cities, lavish agriculture, and newly erected monuments. This is not, however, Brechtian theater which as Bois explained "requires the viewer to constantly ask himself or herself questions, to doubt the assurance

²²⁸In the case of Gor'kii, such letters were written from an exquisite "art nouveau" house in the center of Moscow which was expropriated after the Revolution from the wealthy banker S. P. Riabushinsky.

²²⁹All texts for this issue were written by Tret'iakov and Eduard Tisse.

²³⁰This last image (fig. 116) can be compared with Lissitzky's photomontage The Current is Switched On printed in USSR in Construction, no.10 (1932), dedicated to the Dneprostroï Dam. Here, Stalin is shown next to a worker's hand which operates the switch. Thus, the image still suggests the equality between proletariat and the leader as far as the productive forces are concerned.

²³¹The Stalin Constitution of 1936 replaced the constitution of 1924. Altogether, fifty-one nationalities were granted some form of limited statehood, but no political or economic independence was given to the local units.

of his or her apprehension of the real."²³² Rather, these compositions unlike his earlier unexpected, sharp, and multileveled photographic compositions, return us to the version of the theater as a pacifier which entices the public by presenting it with a single and nonconflictual model of reality.

Lissitzky extended these compositional choices in his work on Stalin's most ambitious propaganda project, the construction of the pavilions for the Agricultural Exhibition (fig.127). Although he signed a contract for this job in 1934, Lissitzky only began to work on it later.²³³ In his notes for the project, he refers to the photomontages in the "Constitutional" issue of USSR in Construction as possible prototypes for the mural paintings he planned for the walls of the pavilions. He writes, "At the front of the hall, to the right and left, are two [exhibition] stands which address the subject of land. ... One stand has a painting in the middle that is based on my montage in the anniversary issue of USSR in Construction, with only the addition of a banner with Stalin's portrait."²³⁴ This reference, as well as the color illustrations of Socialist realist paintings which begin to appear in photographic magazines such as USSR in Construction, marked the return of the cult of painting and the end of photography's primacy among Soviet

²³²As cited in Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," *Art in America* (April 1988), p. 167.

²³³In his autobiography, Lissitzky writes: "In 1934, I was assigned to be the chief artist of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition. But I had a fight with the original organizers and refused to do the job. Then, while staying in the sanatorium, I decided to begin the design of the main pavilion." Lissitzky, "Avtobiografiia," July 1941, TsGALI (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva), fond 2361, op.1, ed. khr. 58.

²³⁴El Lissitzky, "Khudozhestvennoe oformlenie glavnogo pavil'ona VSKhV, 31 May, 1938," TsGALI, fond 2361, op. 1, ed. khr. 59.

visual representations.²³⁵ But even more significant are the notes in which Lissitzky describes the main pavilion of the Agricultural Exhibition, for here we find further illustration of his advancing from factographic practice to "synthetic compositions" which endorsed Stalin's vision of reality.²³⁶ Lissitzky writes, "Taking into consideration a special political meaning of the main pavilion, I aimed to avoid small forms of the didactic material [this was the base for the *Pressa* designs] and instead [tried] to find a consonant to the achievements of our epoch of socialist construction a clear, comprehensible to all, monumental form."²³⁷ Although in this late period of his career Lissitzky still spoke about the importance of form and "formal search," at this point he tended as Barthes noted to "endow form with the substance of form."²³⁸

It is difficult to explain the continuous change in Lissitzky's work. How does one move from the minimalist designer of the Abstract Cabinet in Hanover in 1927, to the photomontage exhibition designer of *Pressa* in 1928 to the Socialist realist designer of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition pavilions of 1938?²³⁹ Perhaps we find a partial answer to his "numerous identities" in a statement of Lissitzky made shortly before his death in 1941: "Our generation put a task before itself to work for a commission, but the

²³⁵The issue of USSR in Construction dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of Soviet Georgia (no. 4-5, 1936) is the example of this change.

²³⁶A number of avant-garde artists, including Kulagina and Sen'kin, took part in designing the pavilions of the Agricultural Exhibition.

²³⁷Lissitzky, "Khudozhestvennoe oformlenie glavnogo pavil'ona VSKhV," TsGALI, fond 2361, op. 1, ed. khr. 59.

²³⁸This phrase is from Roland Barthes's description of Socialist realism in Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p.112.

²³⁹For a discussion of this issue, also see Bois, "El Lissitzky," p. 164.

experience showed that the full-fledged work of art can only be created if one puts a task before himself (internal social commission)."²⁴⁰ In this view, the apparent stylistic discontinuity in Lissitzky's career can be explained by his persistent mental commitment to what he called an "internal social commission." In other words, Lissitzky's dedication to the development of form had less to do with invention or formalism per se than with his desire to use existing forms to achieve their fullest social application. To fulfil this notion of an "internal social commission" Lissitzky committed himself to many forms of expression, accepting contracts for exhibition planning, for designing magazines and photo albums, and for making posters. As far as his employer, the Soviet government, was concerned, Lissitzky was a political asset. In 1928 he was appointed to design *Pressa* because the government believed that his fame in the West would ensure the positive reception of Soviet propaganda material. A decade later, the Soviet cultural establishment continued to entrust Lissitzky with ambitious projects, such as USSR in Construction or the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, with the conviction that as long as the pro-Communist international community knew that such artists as Lissitzky were safe and employed it would not believe "the rumors" about Stalin's ferocious purges.²⁴¹

In an essay published in 1936, Rodchenko sought to explain his own transformation from a radical leader of the October group to IZOGIZ's official photo correspondent. He wrote, "After the attacks on my [photograph] Pioneer, the October Association expelled me in an attempt to

²⁴⁰Lissitzky, "Svedeniia o tvorchestve khudozhnika knigi," Moskva, 1941, OR GTG , fond 76/4.

²⁴¹In literature, the same role of representative from the East to the West was given to the writer Il'ia Ehrenburg.

disassociate itself from formalism. The leadership passed to Boris Ignatovich who failed in all positions and the group fell apart. I plunged into photo reportage and the photographing of sport events as the most difficult, in order to cure myself from easel painting, aesthetics, and abstraction."²⁴² At the time, the Soviet cultural establishment was desperate for skilled mass-media designers and was willing to overlook Rodchenko's close association with formalism in order to enlist him as a photo correspondent. His price for this new status was a fast reconciliation with photographers who, just a short time before, had been openly antagonistic toward him. Rodchenko's effort to create an amiable atmosphere during the collaboration between the photographers participating in the magazine's design is reflected in Lavrentiev's description of various meetings. "In Rodchenko's studio," he writes, "there was a kind of a center for creative photography in action. Here, photographic excursions of Petrusov, Khalip, Prekhner, Ignatovich, and other Soviet photographers were planned. Here, their works for the magazine were accepted"²⁴³ Like Lissitzky, Rodchenko designed his issues of USSR in Construction mainly using photographs supplied by many participating photographers. The issue dedicated to the construction of the White Sea Canal (no. 12, 1933) is an exception in that it includes only Rodchenko's own photographs.

Regarding Rodchenko's journey to the White Sea Canal construction site, Lavrentiev writes, "In 1933, A.M. Rodchenko returned from a creatively successful trip to the White Sea Canal where with a Leica he took more than

²⁴²The photograph Rodchenko refers to is Pioneer With a Horn. See Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6 (1936).

²⁴³Aleksandr Lavrentiev, "Rodchenko v SSSR na Stroike," Sovetskoe foto, no. 1 (1981), p. 39.

three thousand shots."²⁴⁴ Lavrentiev's tendency to present Rodchenko's photographing of the White Sea Canal as primarily an aesthetic undertaking conflicts with Rodchenko's own perception of this project. "Gigantic will brought the outcasts from the past here to the canal. And this will was able to raise such enthusiasm in the people which I did not see in Moscow. ... I was lost and amazed. I was taken by this enthusiasm. I forgot about all my creative upsets. I was simply photographing. I did not think about formalism. I was shocked by the sensitivity and wisdom with which reeducation of people had been realized."²⁴⁵ Rodchenko's spirited description of the life at the canal site matched the remarks of prisoners themselves published in USSR in Construction. They praised the Soviet system for transforming them from senseless criminals into productive workers. Their morality tales, recounting the changes in their character and lifestyles, were illustrated by juxtaposing photographs of drunks and prostitutes with the images of

²⁴⁴Ibid. p. 38. For years, the publication and exhibition of Rodchenko's photographs from the "White Sea Canal" issue of USSR in Construction was limited to the "more formally successful images." This politics of representation (controlled by Rodchenko's family) excluded more political photographs and distorted the reception of this project. See also Lavrentiev's discussion of Rodchenko's photographs of the White Sea Canal project in his essay "Photo-Dreams of the Avant-Garde," in David Elliott, ed., *Photography in Russia 1840-1940*, (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1992), pp. 61-72.

²⁴⁵Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," Sovetskoe foto, p. 20. The 227--kilometer-long White Sea Canal, was first planned by Stalin in 1931. The canal connected the Baltic Sea to the North Sea, and served as an essential route for all Soviet northern territories. It also crossed over Karelia, which, being rich of various woods, granite, iron, copper and gold, was a vital territory for the Soviet Union.

constructors and caretakers.²⁴⁶ The presence of political leaders on the first and the last pages of the magazine prevented the reader from missing the ideological implications of the construction project and its representation. At the beginning of the magazine is a portrait of Stalin for whom the canal was named. He presides over the vast waters of the White Sea (fig.128). At the end, Stalin reappears in the company of Kirov, Voroshilov, and other apparatchiks, who, by means of photomontage, are placed on a shipping lock (fig.129). Stalin holds binoculars and looks forward to a future beyond the photo-still's frame.

Unlike Lissitzky, who rejected experimental photographic image in the "Constitutional" issue of USSR in Construction, Rodchenko only partially abandoned the methodology of formalist photography in the "White Sea Canal" issue. Lavrentiev notes that in the photograph Barges Are Entering a Shipping Lock (fig.130), Rodchenko used "two prints made from one negative" and that he "only slightly departed from symmetry by adding several figures of the builders near one of the ranges."²⁴⁷ In a number of other images in this issue, Rodchenko remained loyal to the spirit of experimentation and retained his familiar formalist devices, such as

²⁴⁶At Stalin's suggestion, the Party entrusted construction of the White Sea Canal to the O. G.P.U. (United State Political Administration), the name for the K.G.B from 1921 to 1934. As a result, the laborers on the canal consisted primarily of political prisoners and criminals. At the end of the construction, the O. G. P.U. freed 12,484 people whom they considered "corrected and now useful for socialist construction." Also, prison terms were reduced for 59,516 people who "showed themselves as energetic workers at the construction." From "Resolution of the Central Committee of the USSR, August 4, 1933, Moscow," in Belomorsko-Baltiiskij kanal imeni Stalina: istoriia stroitel'stva, ed. M. Gor'kii, L. Averbakh, S. Firina (Moskva: 1934).

²⁴⁷Lavrentiev, "Rodchenko v SSSR na Stroike," p. 39.

fragmentation, close-ups, (fig.131) sharp diagonals, and slanting compositions (fig.132). Some photographs are virtually deserted, and focus on the canal's locks as an object of photographic experimentation rather than as a signifier of hard labor and demise (fig.133). Rodchenko's depiction of life at the canal construction site seems at first to represent a nonconflictual reality, in which all energy is trained on the fight against nature. At first glance, there are no signs of forced labor. However, on closer inspection, one notices the omnipresent guards maintaining strict control over the canal's construction (fig.134).

Given the IZOGIZ's zealous censors, it is unlikely that Rodchenko was completely free to sort as he wished the three thousand photographs from his trip to the canal. As a result, the "White Sea Canal" issue shows only fragments of the reality of life at the canal site. Fragmentation, in this case, was not a deliberate attempt to fracture too-conventional total picture of reality, as with the October photography. Nor was the concept of unified reality which was promoted achieved by including all possible factographic details, as with ROPF's production. Rather, both positions were replaced by an officially endorsed method of fragmenting the facts, giving only a partial view of reality and leaving out unwanted photographic images. A number of issues of USSR in Construction were designed collaboratively by Rodchenko

and Stepanova.²⁴⁸ In the issue dedicated to the "brave Soviet parachutists" (no.12, 1935), the two artists introduce a circular design, as the basis for their page layout. This allows them to freely accommodate a variety of scenes from the parachutists' everyday activities as well as various political messages. On one page, a portrait of Stalin is embraced by half a circle which in turn is superimposed over a triangle-shaped image of clouds with numerous parachutes floating down (fig.135). Stalin looks up and romantically observes the scene. In another collaborative issue dedicated to the Soviet timber industry (no. 8, 1936), Rodchenko and Stepanova also used a circular format, combining descriptive scenes with the close-ups of piles of lumber. As in Rodchenko's earlier series on the same subject, here the viewer's attention is more often drawn to the textures of the wooden boards than the activities surrounding their production. But, unlike those earlier fractured images, here the constant interjection of the circles helps the viewer to grasp the meaning of the design. These circles carefully record the symbols of Soviet power, such as official buildings, the Soviet flag (fig.136), a train displaying the state emblem (fig. 137). In Rodchenko's work for USSR in Construction, the often strained combination of conventional photomontage and inventive structural principles testifies to the ongoing struggle over representation in Soviet photography, a dispute over whether

²⁴⁸Stepanova's own first photomontages were primarily made for the magazines devoted to film practice. These include the 1922 cover of Kino-fot dedicated to Charlie Chaplin, and two covers for Sovetskoe Kino (1926 and 1927). In 1932 she became involved in designing such political magazines as Struggle of Classes, where, among positive images of Soviet industrialization, she published photographs and photomontages depicting the dismal reality of German cities. Among the most dramatic images included in this publication was John Heartfield's photomontage of the dead German communist leader Karl Liebknecht.

Soviet life should be depicted as a series of disconnected spontaneous facts or as a carefully controlled and heroic unity.

Rodchenko's career as a photographer culminated in his participation in the 1935 Exhibition of Works of the Masters of Soviet Photo Art, (fig.138) and in the discussions which were later published in Soviet Photo on the status of photographic practice. Both events took place in Moscow at the exhibition hall called Vsekokhudozhnika on Kuznetskii Most. The exhibition was the last one to include avant-garde photography and to downplay portraits of political leaders.²⁴⁹ Each participant was asked to submit twenty photographs, which were then judged by a committee of critics, photographers, and film makers, including Mezhericher, Arkadii Shterenberg, Fridliand, Rodchenko, and Eisenstein. All together there were four hundred photographs selected. Previously, avant-garde photographers had tended to manifest their stylistic and ideological diversity by breaking into groups, but this exhibition (like USSR in Construction) was notable for its "spirit" of unification. Former members of the October Association, such as Rodchenko and Langman, were exhibited alongside ROPF's members, including Fridliand, Shaikhet, and Al'pert. The unsigned introduction to the catalogue (most likely written by its editors Mezhericher, G. Boltianskii, and M. Greenberg) criticized factography for its "documentary impartiality and mechanical, indifferent, and 'chronicle like' fixation of facts."²⁵⁰ Virtually ignoring the major photographic debates of the 1920s about photography's separation from the principles of easel painting, the catalogue defended

²⁴⁹This exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with photographers' biographies, portraits and a list of exhibited photographs.

²⁵⁰Vystavka rabot masterov sovetskogo fotoiskusstva, exhibition catalogue, Moskva, 1935, p. 13.

photography which possessed the qualities of painting and encouraged new photo reportage based on "expressive, artistic form."²⁵¹ Finally, it called for a merger between the old pictorial school and the new tendencies in photography in order to have "a Soviet photographic art that is unified, growing, and rich with perspectives ."²⁵²

Although there was a clear official support of pictorial photography with synthetic expressiveness, the exhibition displayed a number of overtly formalist images. Among these were Langman's visually complex Skating Rink (fig.139), his severely tilted snapshot of a collective farm field (fig.140), and his portrait titled Comrade Ordzhonikidze at the Inauguration of Kramatorsky Plant (fig.141). The last is especially surprising since it uses a radical composition to portray a bureaucrat. Sergo Ordzhonikidze, the People's Commissar of Heavy Industry is viewed from below, apparently giving a public speech. But only the microphone before him betrays this fact; no rapt audience members are shown. Above him hang the typical Party banners, but their slogans are so obscured and fragmented that the ideological meaning can be only partially deciphered.

The inclusion in this exhibition of Langman's images as well as Rodchenko's Pioneer Girl (which had been widely criticized for its formalism in 1931) provided a clear demonstration of the Party's desire to subdue adversary moods, at least among those photographers who they needed to direct the new project of Socialist Realism. Rodchenko himself was surprised by this inconsistency, and attempted to explain why he felt he had been attacked in press in 1931: "It was advantageous to involve me provocatively

²⁵¹Ibid.

²⁵²Ibid., p. 14.

in the 'debate' in order to obtain material for scolding the left formalists ... But does the party want this, and should we have such relationships between critics, magazine staff and the photographers?"²⁵³ At least two conclusions can be drawn from Rodchenko's speculation and the presence of "formalist" photography in the exhibition of 1935. First, the general public and most artists (including Rodchenko) believed that the cultural conflicts of the period were generated by various artistic factions rather than by Party policies. Second, the surprising willingness of the Party to tolerate formalist works as late as 1935 indicated that the struggle--hitherto on the level of aesthetics--now had shifted to a political project whose aim was to simulate, at any cost, an atmosphere of creative unanimity. Hence, what was exhibited in 1935 was less important than the status of the artist in relation to the Party's political interests.²⁵⁴

Rodchenko's A Jump Into Water (fig. 142) and Make Way For Women (fig. 143), both included in 1935 exhibition, demonstrate how he had begun to depart from his characteristic formal devices. In A Jump Into Water, one of the three images with this title, the curled body of a swimmer is caught high in the arc of a dive. Although the diver occupies the upper right of the photograph, Rodchenko has refrained from actually placing him in the corner. At the bottom of the photograph is substantial number of clouds. Another, far less-known version of this image reveals the fact that initially

²⁵³A. Rodchenko, "Master i kritika," Sovetskoe foto, no.9 (1935), p. 4.

²⁵⁴This may explain why artists devoted to Stalinist imagery, such as Klutis were still being executed. The undesirable facts of their biographies (for Klutis, it was his having belonged to the Latvian Rifles detachment during the Revolution and thus witnessing various historical events which Stalin attempted latter to suppress outweighed their devotion to the Bolshevik course.

Rodchenko was contemplating a different composition (fig.144). In this version, Rodchenko kept only enough of the clouds to fill up the lower left corner and he placed the diver diagonally in the upper right corner. Through this formal device, Rodchenko established a distinct upward direction, completely ignoring the reality of the body descending downward, toward the swimming pool. As in his earlier photographs, in this little known version of A Jump into Water with a diagonally positioned jumper, Rodchenko turned a concrete event into a picture of utopian aspiration. His Make Way for Women records a line of young females in tank tops and shirts walking in line between the two rows of similarly dressed men. The composition is notable among Rodchenko's photographs because it depicts the sporting event from a conventional point of view. But, even more, it records Rodchenko's response to the criticism that his pioneers always looked upward. Here, the female athletes stride boldly forward.

Ignatovich, who refused to participate in the exhibition because he disagreed with the selection of the participants, strongly criticized the artificial atmosphere of unanimity. In Soviet Photo, he asked, "How did it happen that our rich, multilayered Soviet photo reportage, which only recently had gone through the period of hot creative debates and fights, suddenly lost face at this exhibition and appeared in form and content as anemic and insipid."²⁵⁵ Ignatovich complained that the committee was crippled by its clear favoritism toward the "so-called artists," which prevented it from providing "a proper display of the left wing of Soviet photo

²⁵⁵B. Ignatovich, "Ob odnoi opasnoi tendentsii," Sovetskoe foto, no.8 (1935), p. 13.

reportage."²⁵⁶ He also noted that there were many old photographs and few recent ones in the exhibition, and that the participants were mainly distinguished older photographers rather than young beginners. Ignatovich attacked Rodchenko specifically: "Even old 'lef' Rodchenko gave up and exhibited his tastelessly painted Rumba [1926] (fig.145) and a sweet winter landscape."²⁵⁷ Ignatovich's open criticism of such officially sanctioned events as the Exhibition of Works of the Masters of Soviet Photo Art attests to the fact that in 1935 it was still possible both to exhibit "formalist" photography and to express overtly controversial opinions about it in public.

Ignatovich's own production from this period was still based on a serial approach he had developed in the late 1920s for his reportage Let's Give. However, in his late series, such as Photoessay About the Shoe Factory "Parizhskaia Kommuna" (1934) and Searchlight Plant "Frezer" (1935), he introduced substantial changes in his compositional devices. The shoe factory series begins with a discernible image of the plant's headquarters, showing both its buildings and industrial paraphernalia (fig.146). Inside the shops, men and women are captured sitting close to each other, operating sawing machines to turn piles of leather into shoes (fig.147). Unlike

²⁵⁶Ibid.

²⁵⁷Ibid. In the next issue of Sovetskoe foto, Rodchenko replied to Ignatovich's criticism: "Ignatovich in an ardor of badly covered hatred toward his 'bothersome' teacher, furiously attacked my photos Rumba and Jazz. [They] were made by me back in 1926. These are my designs for the film Albidum. Thus neither Jazz nor Rumba, as Ignatovich wants to convince everyone, are my last achievements. The new in these photographs is only coloring which I did as an experiment for polygraphic reasons." Rodchenko, "Master i kritika," p. 5. This argument between Ignatovich and Rodchenko illustrates that indeed many conflicts were instigated by the photographers themselves, often out of simple creative competition or fallen friendships.

Ignatovich's earlier recordings of labor (figs.67-70) in which the working process and the workers were substantially concealed for the sake of a creating puzzling space for the viewer, here the photographer offers a mundane picture of shoe production with a meticulous documentation of the producer and the produced. The Searchlight Plant 'Frezer' series further advances this tendency toward clearer and more readable compositions. Here, every formalist technique (such as close-ups or diagonals), is eliminated and strictly conventional angles of photographing are employed. In well-designated spaces, workers accomplish projects in a close communication with each other, establishing a sharp contrast with the earlier alienating and fragmented depictions of Soviet workplaces (fig.148). Ignatovich's two series set a precedent for all future Soviet reportage.

Following the 1935 exhibition, there was a public discussion (in the space of the exhibition) titled "About Formalism and Naturalism in Photo Art." This discussion is significant as the last public event in the history of Soviet avant-garde photography in which the content was not entirely submerged in ideologically charged rhetoric. The official press noted that, in this discussion, "each [photographer] told about his own creative searchings and mistakes, and then, with surprising sincerity and honesty, admitted the failings of his colleagues and criticized their mistakes."²⁵⁸ Langman, Khalip, Fridliand, Al'pert, and Rodchenko participated in the discussion. Rodchenko played the role of the mentor compelled to criticize the "mistakes" of Shaikhet, Fridliand, Al'pert, Langman, and his former friend Ignatovich. Other participants charged Rodchenko with formalism. As a result of this

²⁵⁸"O formalizme i naturalizme v fotoiskusstve," Sovetskoe foto, no.4 (1936), p. 18.

debate, Rodchenko wrote his last important text, "The Restructuring of an Artist."

As the title suggests, in this public discussion formalism and naturalism were the major topics, with specific attention to the question of "surpassing the elements of formalism and naturalism in photography [and] about the struggle for Socialist Realism."²⁵⁹ Such major photography critics of the period as Sergei Morozov, Mezhericher, and Il'ia Sosphenov were main participants of this discussion. Rodchenko was praised for his departure from the "narrow formalist principles of work" and commended for his photographs of the "White Sea Canal" construction with which, according to Morozov, Rodchenko "voted for realism."²⁶⁰ However, in Morozov's opinion, Rodchenko was still defending factography and "displayed a sarcastic attitude toward photographic material organized in advance (as if 'staged')." ²⁶¹ In spite of this criticism, however, Morozov attempted to justify various formalist methods still found in Rodchenko's and Langman's photography. For example, he supported Langman's close-up and tilted representation of the plowed earth, from the series he made during a trip to Kazakhstan, by asserting that "the land is a very socially meaningful object" and "this snapshot, unlike many similar ones, shows an exemplary treatment of the land."²⁶² Photographs from Langman's Kazakhstan (fig.149) series were also praised in Soviet photo: "Comrade Langman's Kazakhskie photographs ... prove that he is successfully traversing the paths of Socialist

²⁵⁹S. Morozov, "Na putiakh k realizmu, k narodnosti," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6 (1936), p. 3.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*

²⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶²*Ibid.*

Realism. [And, although he still uses] his familiar formal methods, such as exaggerated fakturness [attention to surface] and distorted compositional proportions, ... his use of these devices is not unjustified."²⁶³ In other words, Morozov in Soviet photo suggested that formalist methods might be applied as long as the photographer remained "against fetishism of methods, against submission of content and subject matter to them."²⁶⁴ Mezhericher's analysis of Rodchenko's photograph Jump on a Horse 1936, (fig.150) similarly illustrates how this critic redefined formalist methods.

I cannot say that [Rodchenko] is fully freed from the formalist remnants. Among the works which were hung here during the first days of the discussion there were two in which we see sharp and characteristic of Rodchenko methods of composing a still; but at the same time these are the works which we cannot any more call formalist One of them shows a jump over the barrier. If we look closely at the photograph we can see that it is significantly tilted; but this is not a trick but a method brought about by a necessity to strengthen and to underline the elasticity of the sprint of the movement of the horse over the obstacle ... The method can and must be sharp but in each case it must subordinate to the content and raise its impact. ²⁶⁵

Morozov, Mezhericher, and the editors of Soviet photo all recognized that, in Rodchenko and Langman's late photographs, formalist devices did not yield the same results in 1935 as they had in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Then, both photographers had striven for a sort of "zero degree" or "neutral mode" of photography as Barthes explained in order to disintegrate bourgeois

²⁶³Sergei Morozov, "Na putiakh k realizmu, k narodnosti," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6, (1936) p. 8.

²⁶⁴Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶⁵L. Mezhericher, "O trekh opasnostiakh," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6 (1936), p. 32.

consciousness.²⁶⁶ Now, the reductive elements of the formalist method were mere ornaments for the embellishment of the new Socialist Realist content.

The second half of the discussion was dedicated to the analysis of the naturalist method, which was defined as "a preoccupation with biological side of the phenomenon at the expense of the impairment of its social content."²⁶⁷ According to Mezhericher, "naturalism and formalism often interweave in photography" and, hence, "naturalist characteristics may be found in the work of Shaikhet and Al'pert as well as in that of Rodchenko and Ignatovich. The most widespread sign of naturalism is the submission of the whole meaning in a snapshot to details."²⁶⁸ As an example, he refers to a third version of A Jump into Water (fig.151), shown at the 1935 exhibition. Mezhericher criticizes this photograph for "having in the foreground the striking detail of legs covered by massive hair and with bent toes."²⁶⁹ Rodchenko responded ironically that his swimmer was not "a ballerina and thus his legs are not shaved."²⁷⁰ This led to Mezhericher's retort: "In the depictions of swimmers or instructors of Soviet sport the reader wants to see a beautiful trained body. In Rodchenko's photograph, the character is killed by biological detail."²⁷¹ Such objections to detail were understandable since specificity stood in direct confrontation with the official goal, namely, to

²⁶⁶These terms derive from Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 5.

²⁶⁷Morozov, "Na putiakh k realizmu, k narodnosti," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6, p. 5.

²⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*

²⁷⁰Aleksandr Rodchenko quoted in Sergei Morozov, "Na putiakh k realizmu, k narodnosti," Sovetskoe foto, no.5-6, (1936), p. 6.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*

concentrate on the representation of the total, idealized image of Soviet man. If one does not retouch the hairy legs of a swimmer, then one must also leave unconcealed in every official portrait of Stalin his chicken-pox scars. Naturalist representations were also dangerous for the viewer because they might initiate "undesirable" emotions, particularly erotic ones.

In the discussion "About Formalism and Naturalism in Photo Art," the notion of the "photo picture" was given precedence over that of the "photo-still." However, the Socialist realist version of the photo picture had little to do with the way it was defined by ROPF members in 1931. In fact, ROPF's understanding of the implementation of photography in the context of the all-inclusive narrative was criticized in this discussion. A photographer himself and a close colleague of Ignatovich, Il'ia Sosfenov wrote, "In front of our photo art there are the tasks of deepening the content. 'Left' montage inside the photo-still and 'right' series, to different degrees, turned out to be unable to express the huge circle of the new ideas brought forward by the epoch of the Second Five-Year Plan."²⁷² In place of these two principles of photography, the ideologues of Socialist Realism proposed what may be called the "staged photo picture," a deliberately artificial style that was equally hostile to the ROPF motto "that's how it is in real life"²⁷³ and to the October photographers' commitment to sacrifice the all-inclusive content to the protocol of fragmentary reality.

This new model of the Socialist realist "photo picture" was overtly conventional and excessively romantic, and accounted for the majority of the

²⁷²Il'ia. Sosfenov, "Tekhnologiia formalizma," *Sovetskoe foto*, no.5-6 (1936), pp. 30-31.

²⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 30.

photographs published in Soviet photo as illustrations of the discussion. Among these, were many portraits of political leaders, a genre that was beginning to receive the greatest acclaim and encouragement. For example, Ignatovich's photographs of Comrade Stalin with Pioneer Girl Mamlakat (fig.152) and Comrade Stalin with Maria Demchenko at the Meeting of Komsomol were noted as "the best works of Ignatovich of the last year or two."²⁷⁴ Rodchenko professed that, for him, the photograph he made of the Meeting at the Canal with the Participation of Comrades Kaganovich and Yagoda was "exceptionally significant." He noted, "The picture is simple, spontaneous, there is a new composition in it, which I have not yet had."²⁷⁵ This emphasis on simplicity coincided with the beginning of an official promotion of the twin concepts of narodnost' (for the people) and partiinost' (as the party rules), which would become main requirements for all Socialist Realist works.

Rodchenko's Meeting at the Canal and the series of photographs he made during the sport parade in 1936, were hardly "spontaneous." For the latter assignment he was given a restricted access to record an official parade which included sport scenes, dances, a display of the achievements of the Republics, military might, and portraits of prominent political heroes, such as the chief of the KGB, Felix Dzerzhinsky (figs.153). The minimalist photo-stills of the October period, with their images of people caught off guard, are

²⁷⁴Morozov, "Na Putiakh k realizmu, k narodnosti," p. 10. In view of these two photographs, as well as Rodchenko's use of Stalin's portraits in the "White Sea Canal" series, Lavrentiev's statement that "Among the famous Soviet photo correspondents of the 1930s it is perhaps only Ignatovich and Rodchenko who did not publish their portraits of Stalin" is inaccurate. See Aleksandr Lavrentiev, Rakursy Rodchenko (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1992), p. 182.

²⁷⁵ Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," Sovetskoe foto, p. 20.

here replaced by photo-pictures of romanticized dancers and virtuoso athletes. These new Soviet heroes are not simply "found" jumping into water, blowing into a trumpet, or exercising in the morning, but recorded performing, after days of rehearsal, on the stage of Red Square. This new photo reportage was based on maximum expressiveness, overt theatricality, and careful staging, and resulted from strictly defined commissions with a specific political aims. This final twist in the nature of photo reportage is reflected in statements by Mezhericher and Fridliand. Mezhericher asks: "Is photo reportage art or not? Newspaper pages have changed. A demand for a beautiful artistic snapshot which is pleasant to the eye, has grown above all."²⁷⁶ Fridliand responds, "The reader is not satisfied by the dry protocol like photograph which reflects the craftsman like indifference of a photographer. The reader demands that he be shown the face of his wonderful country with the maximum expressiveness."²⁷⁷ At this point, most critics and photographers attempted to judge political and ideological positions of their colleagues from purely formal proprieties of a work of art. In the 1930s, this "criterion" was rapidly becoming a vital weapon against anyone who continued to diverge from conventional methods of representation.

The first signs of a shift from factographic to mythographic imagery in photomontage and posters is apparent from the work of Klutis specifically from his photomontage The Feasibility of Our Program Is Real People, It's You And Me, 1931 (fig.154). In this montage, Stalin is inserted amid the

²⁷⁶L. Mezhericher, "Kakim dolzhen byt' fotoreportazh," Sovetskoe foto, no.3 (1935), p. 25.

²⁷⁷Fridliand quoted in Leonid Mezhericher, "Kakim dolzhen byt' fotoreportazh," Sovetskoe foto, no.3 (1935), p. 25.

ranks of marching coalminers. This jarring montage displaces collective anonymity on both the visual and the verbal level: hitherto anonymous workers are now joined by a concrete image of the political leader, and the Five-Year Plan's anonymous slogans are replaced by a simple statement signed by Stalin. In this case, however, both linguistic and compositional structures remain more democratic, since there is little distinction of scale between the leader and the workers. Klutis wants to suggest that Stalin acknowledges that his role in the construction of socialism equals, rather than surpasses, that of the masses (fig.155)²⁷⁸. By making Stalin part of the masses this poster marks the first step toward the state's total usurpation of the proletariat's historical position as the author of socialist reconstruction. This, in turn, displaced Klutis's own authorial model, which was based on submission to the ideals of the proletariat and on the suppression of individual codes and gestures.

In his discussion of the function of the author, Roland Barthes writes that "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality ... to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs,' and not me."²⁷⁹ Klutis's entire photomontage production, until Stalin's image takes a frontal position in The Feasibility of Our Program, sought to suppress his own role as author in favor of the working-class viewer to whom his production was addressed. The anonymous workers and slogans that fill his posters convey the "impersonality" of that production; the method itself, photomontage, performs the agitational function. In this

²⁷⁸A sketch for this poster indicates that Klutis had already considered making Stalin much larger than the coalminers.

²⁷⁹Barthes, "The Death of the Author," Image, Music, Text (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 143.

work, Klutsis resurrects the author, not as the individual creator but as the state's authorial "ego," personified by Stalin. In his next two posters, Victory of Socialism in Our Country is Guaranteed, 1932 (fig.156), and At the End of the Five-Year Plan Collectivization of the USSR Must Be Basically Over, 1932 (fig.157), Klutsis further expanded the role of the myth in constructing his image of state power. Stalin's image now dominates both workers and collective farmers. The anonymous slogans in these posters, which once emphasized social facts and immediate issues, have been replaced by general propaganda statements authorized by Stalin.

Klutsis's posters The Feasibility of Our Program and Victory of Socialism became highly popular and were widely displayed on streets of Moscow (fig.158), used for educational purposes (fig.159), and appeared as illustrations for politically charged articles about posters.²⁸⁰ These posters were also central images at the exhibition "Posters at the Service of the Five-Year Plan" held at the Tret'iakov Gallery in 1932 (fig.160). The catalogue's author, P.S. Kaufman, stated that the exhibition demonstrated "a hard path from a passive illustrative poster or the bourgeois advertising one to an expressive one which is clear and intelligible to the masses and that it was organized in response to a resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Regarding Poster Production."²⁸¹ Nikolai Dolgorukov, Elkin, Klutsis, Sen'kin, and two women, Pinus and Kulagina, participated in

²⁸⁰Specifically Victory of Socialism in Our Country is Guaranteed was printed with the article "Za Bolshevitsky Plakat" which activated the idea of "politization of all types of agitational material." See this article in Odnodnevnaia Gazeta Ob'edineniia Rabotnikov Pevolutseonnogo Plakata, ORRP i IZOGIZA, August 5, 1932, p. 1.

²⁸¹"Plakat na sluzhbe piatiletki," exhibition catalogue, Tret'iakov Gallery, ORRP-IZOGIZ, Moscow-Leningrad, 1932, p. 7.

the show, each presenting from two to seventeen posters--the largest number being contributed by Klutsis. The exhibition was organized thematically, with only one section dedicated to advertising posters which were made for export. Regarding posters made for domestic usage, the catalogue noted that the "poster's main and new quality is that in addition to carrying its usual service of notification and information, it attempts to combine this function with politically instructive mass work. Thus a mere informative poster turns into a tool of political agitation."²⁸² Another section of the exhibition was called "discussional" and included posters in which, as catalogue pointed out, "the alien influences, formalist tricks, advertising approaches, inability to choose the right images, and political illiteracy are clearly expressed."²⁸³

As with Klutsis's work, the posters exhibited by Sen'kin and Kulagina at the Tret'iakov Gallery demonstrated significant compositional and iconographic changes. In Sen'kin's Under the Banner of Lenin for the Second Five Year Plan, 1932 (fig.161), a gigantic figure of Lenin is positioned atop tiny figures of workers, as if suggesting their diminishing role in Socialist construction. In comparison to Sen'kin's earlier dynamic representations of Lenin, in this poster the leader appears to be static and pompous. The slogans take the form of longer statements printed in a more ordered format. Kulagina's Female Shock Workers Enter the Rows of VKP (b), 1932 (fig.162), uses a female worker, rather than a leader, as a central image.²⁸⁴ But, even in this case, the artist depicts the woman holding an issue of Pravda in order to point out the new link between the Central Committee of

²⁸²Ibid., p. 8.

²⁸³Ibid., p. 9.

²⁸⁴This poster is sometimes attributed to Natalia Pinus.

Communist Party and mass-media production. In her diary, Kulagina noted the impact of this political change on the production of posters.

On the 21 [of August], all posters have not yet been put into production; [they] were sent to TSK [Central Committee of Communist Party]. And of course, two of mine are rejected. Try to work here! There are so many difficulties while [posters] pass through IZOGIZ. ... I am sure that if my first posters were sent to TSK, they would be banned.²⁸⁵

This new policy of sending poster designs to the Central Committee for approval was a result of the Party's distrust of IZOGIZ activities, and its decision to "purge the apparatus of IZOGIZ" and to "investigate the question about the production of ideologically harmful posters and paintings."²⁸⁶

Although Kulagina was able to give primacy to a female worker in this poster, this image is distinctly different from her earlier representations of women. The genuine involvement of women in everyday activities as represented in her earlier posters is here replaced by a sense of artificial happiness and a glorification of Stalin's political course. Similarly, Pinus's poster Women on Collective Farms Are a Substantial Power, 1933 (fig.163), produced in collaboration with Klutsis illustrates the process of the subordination of women's desires, which were hitherto invested in labor, to Stalin's authority. The poster shows two female collective farmers, one on a tractor and another mowing, under the patriarchal gaze of Stalin. There is no ambivalence here: Stalin is offered as the ultimate referent for their effort and accomplishment. Kulagina's description of a discussion between Klutsis and

²⁸⁵From Kulagina diaries, August 24, 1934, Family Archive, Moscow.

²⁸⁶"Postanovlenie TSK VKP (b) o plakatoi literature," in Za Bolshevitski Plakat, OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moskva/Leningrad, 1932.

an IZOGIZ editor on the subject of Klut'sis's poster Youth to the Planes, 1934, suggests that by that time female images were treated as secondary and as ineffective in the creation of mythographic scenarios: "Today Rabinovich talked to Gustav about his poster Youth to the Planes. [Rabinovich commented, 'Haven't you gotten too excited about showing women in the foreground? In the background, you show courageous and efficient [male] youths; but in the foreground, slightly sugary women with smiles.'"²⁸⁷

Many of Klut'sis's late montages record what may be designated as the struggle for a "political authorship." As an artist responsible for mass-produced posters with political messages, Klut'sis's livelihood depended on the consequences of Stalin's megalomaniac aspirations, which were specifically dependent on reshaping the story of his role in the Revolution. Stalin had at least two objectives in recharting the course of Bolshevik history: the first was to displace the idea that Lenin was the sole "author" of the Revolution and instead to propagate a double Stalin/Lenin authorship; the second was to eliminate any individual or document that would contradict his own account of these events. In the last photomontages Klut'sis made before he himself fell victim to political falsification, we can see the struggle to make these adjust the Soviet mythological apparatus.

Klut'sis had first explored the relationship between Stalin's and Lenin's images in the poster Under the Banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction, 1930. In this composition, the artist attempted to convey the sense of ambiguity associated with Stalin's role in the revolutionary events. This depiction changes abruptly, however, and in his 1933 montages for the first color issues of Pravdas, Klut'sis was clearly struggling over the positioning of

²⁸⁷From Kulagina's diaries, November 26, 1934, Klut'sis Family Archive, Moscow.

the two leaders. Klutskis no longer placed Stalin's image behind that of Lenin; in only one montage are the two political figures in the same row. The rest depict Stalin well to the front. For example, in the August 18th, 1933, issue of Pravda (fig.164), Stalin appears alone against a background of blue skies filled with rows of airplanes and dirigibles. Saluting the air force of the Soviet Union, he stands at the height of the biggest plane, named after Maxim Gor'kii.²⁸⁸ There are no signs of Lenin or the masses. If Stalin's feet were not covered by the text of the accompanying article, the picture of the Kremlin, small and distant in relation to the leader, could be seen spread at his feet.²⁸⁹ Klutskis wrote to Kulagina about this Pravda design, "As I see it, I have finished the front page for Pravda of August 18. Now it is the most busy time: this and that have to be changed. But it seems that it will go ahead. We will print it in two colors, to the fear of enemies. ... Everything has to be done at a crazy pace."²⁹⁰

Another Pravda montage, dating from November 7th, 1933 (fig.165), the Sixteenth Anniversary of the Revolution, served as an illustration to a front-page article called "The Masses Create History." Lenin returns in this

²⁸⁸In her diary, Kulagina made the following note on July 28, 1933, "For the 30th Anniversary of Pravda, Gustav made a montage for it in two colors and in a large size." Kulagina also noted that by this time the commemorations of Lenin had become less enthusiastic. "This year Lenin's days went poorly. No posters, no decorations. IZOGIZ was making Lenin posters but where are they?" Kulagina diaries, January 23, 1934. Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

²⁸⁹If one compares this image with John Heartfield's montage The Meaning of the Hitlerian Salute executed in the same year, it is clear that if Klutskis was mythologizing Stalin and Soviet reality, Heartfield harshly criticized Hitler and his policies.

²⁹⁰Klutskis's letter to Kulagina from August 16, 1933. Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

composition but only in the background. His portrait is formal and dull in contrast to the fervent image of Stalin in the central position, completely free from the shadow of his predecessor. In this holiday montage, Stalin adopts a Napoleonic pose with his face turned away from Lenin, gazing out over a "utopian" visual field crowded with Soviet aircraft, factories, mechanized harvesters, and determined, energetic faces. Although the masses reappear in this montage, their presence seems superfluous. The inference that Stalin is the sole creator of history is inescapable.

Significantly, Klutskis not only turned to drawing to produce the Pravda photomontages, but he even retained the hybrid of drawing and photomontage in the final publication. For example, in the August 13 Pravda montage, some of the planes are drawn rather than collaged from photographs, and in the November 7 Pravda montage, the whole industrial landscape is drawn. This return to more conventional artistic methods reflected a widespread discontent among influential Soviet artists toward photomontage. In 1932, Kulagina noted, "There is a reaction against photomontage at all fronts."²⁹¹ And Aleksandr Deineka, a prominent artist who also actively contributed to such magazines as Let's Give, said of Klutskis's designs for Pravda, "Pravda is afraid of drawing."²⁹²

The Pravda photomontages implicitly document the ongoing struggle on the political stage. But other works from the period demonstrate much

²⁹¹Kulagina diaries, August 26, 1932. Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow.

²⁹²Kulagina diaries, November 1, 1933. Klutskis Family Archive, Moscow. Kulagina even suggested that newspapers organized a campaign saying that photomontage forced out drawing. Deineka played an active role in various mass media magazines including Daesh where his color drawings were printed next to photographs of Rodchenko and Ignatovich

more explicitly the purges inspired by Stalin's inexhaustible desire for absolute power and for self-mythologization. In the mid-1930s, at the time of a Party purge many of its members began to disappear. The three great public trials featured sixteen Bolshevik leaders, including Gregorii Zinoviev and Leo Kamenev. Since many of these prominent Bolsheviks were part of the earlier Soviet history it was essential for Stalin's goal of self-mythologization to eliminate these people not only physically but from representations and historical documents. A number of Klutskis's surviving posters, photographs of posters from the 1920s, and original montages are self-censored in reaction to the fall of various prominent Bolsheviks. His photomontage from 1925 publication Herald of Labor with Gregorii Zinoviev's slogan "Marx Plus Lenin Equals Bolshevism, The Ideology of the Third International" exists in the family archive with this slogan being crossed out, probably in 1936, in the midst of Zinoviev's ongoing trial. Similarly, a poster called The USSR Is the Winning Brigade of the World Proletariat 1931 (fig.166) includes in the foreground several rows of prominent Bolsheviks, with Voroshilov, Stalin, and Ordzhonikidze among them, and in the background crowds of people of various nationalities. The portrait of one of the Bolsheviks in the second row is defaced; again no doubt a later reaction to the ongoing purges. A final example of this sort of self-censorship is a large 1935 montage by Klutskis in which a lively and powerful bust-length photograph of Stalin is placed before a sculpture of Lenin (fig.167). In the original version, Stalin's figure was flanked by a group of apparatchiks but, as the remnants of the torn-off photographic portraits suggest, Klutskis eliminated some of them, perhaps in fear of being accused of supporting the "people's enemies." A preliminary sketch (fig.168) for this montage, depicts two rows of empty heads that surround a recognizable portrait of Stalin. This

drawing dramatically demonstrates that by 1935 Stalin's image was the only one guaranteed to survive. The empty ovals, reserved for the heads of the tyrant's servants, were subject to perpetual replacement. At this point, Klutsis's role as a photomontage artist was fully controlled by the government, and his compositional choices began to equal life-and-death decisions.

Klutsis's last official commission involved traveling to Paris in 1937 as one of the designers of the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair. As with Pressa exhibition, Lissitzky was chosen to lead a brigade of artists who made designs for the interior of the Soviet pavilion. After the numerous exhibits had been prepared, the Soviet government sent to Paris "powerful trains, made by Soviet workers at the local plants, with sculptures and paintings by masters of art, wonderful books by writers and scientists, crafts by Soviet female folk artists, a map of the Soviet Union made from precious stones, etc."²⁹³ The whole pavilion consisted of six halls, each of which was devoted to the demonstration of Soviet achievements in a particular cultural (painting, music, theater, film) or productive (collective farms and science) field. According to the commissar of the Soviet Pavilion, N. Mezhlauk, "The overall exhibition of the whole pavilion of the USSR as well as its separate halls have to be perceived by the viewers as a harmonious whole."²⁹⁴ Here, photography began to fulfill its new role, namely as a supplement to painting, a tool whose only function was to demonstrate in a overtly legible fashion,

²⁹³N.Ch., "Fotografiia v sovetskom pavil'one parizhskoi vystavki," Sovetskoe foto, no. 8 (1937), p.11.

²⁹⁴TSGALI, fond 2361, op. 1, ed. khr. 61, 1937.

Soviet "achievements on a full scale."²⁹⁵ Despite the rather conventional arrangement of the Pavilion, Klutxis expressed excitement about it in his letters to Kulagina:

Our Pavilion is wonderful from far, close-up, and inside. Remarkable sculptures by [Vera] Mukhina. All this should have been bigger in size ... The interest in our Pavilion is exceptional. It is full of people all the time. It looks really good in its lightness, clearness, and new ideas. Unknown hands, probably French male and female workers, bring unusually bright roses and cover the bust of Il'ich [Lenin] and the sculpture of comrade Stalin. There are angry [visitors] as well. Primarily these are white officers, emigrants. My panel turned out wonderfully. Installed here it makes the whole ensemble alive and gives meaning to an abstract obelisk and other surrounding pieces.²⁹⁶

The panel which Klutxis mentions in this letter was his large photomontage frieze hung above the entrance to the Pavilion (fig.169). It depicted an immense hall filled with numerous multinational workers and peasants, all voting for Stalin's Constitution. Stalin stands at the podium victoriously, presenting his speech. Behind him are politburo members lined up in front of Lenin's sculptural bust. Compared with the *Pressa* frieze, (fig. 57) which vividly revealed fragments of the Soviet Union's multisided reality, this photomontage attempted to convey a single political event in an overtly conventional composition. The characters of this photomontage appear theatrical and motionless, as if attesting to the departure of spontaneity from Soviet photographic representation. And significantly, here, it is the leader, not the worker, who is being celebrated.

²⁹⁵N.Ch., "Fotografiia v sovetskom pavil'one parizhskoi vystavki," p.11.

²⁹⁶Klutxis's letter to Kulagina from Paris, May 30, 1937, Klutxis Family Archive, Moscow.

The period of the Second Five-Year Plan constituted an ambiguous space of the transition between the two distinct cultural eras, during which the representational strategies of the photographic avant-garde were infected by the virus of overtly politicized iconography and the initial steps of Socialist Realism did not escape the interference of the avant-garde methods. The First All-Union Exhibition of Photo Art organized at the State Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1937 provided a closing chapter to the history of innovative photography. In the Soviet press, the exhibition was referred to as Socialist Realism "displaying the deployment at full strength of all the possibilities given to a photographer."²⁹⁷ Rodchenko was the exhibition's chief designer, and among the other participants were, Shaikhet, Langman, Ignatovich, Fridliand, and Al'pert. Attempting to be historical, the exhibition included around 1,500 objects referring to the October Revolution (whose twentieth anniversary it commemorated) and Civil War, as well as exhibiting numerous portraits of Lenin, Stalin, prominent politburo members, and distinguished workers. Photographs of industrial sites and collective farms, landscapes and still lifes were also included. Rodchenko's own stand was generally praised except for his photograph Field Flowers, 1937 (fig.170). Because of its play of light and shadow around the face of a girl sitting at the table with a bouquet of flowers, this image was predictably denounced as an attempt "to satisfy formalist ideas."²⁹⁸ Similarly repetitive was the criticism of Langman's fragmenting depiction of a female tea collector from above and from the side. What was new in the criticism of this show, however, was an insistence on evaluating photography in purely painterly terms and

²⁹⁷S. Morozov, "Zhanrovaia tematika," Sovetskoe foto, no. 2 (1938), p.17.

²⁹⁸V.G. "Otdel'nye oshibki," Sovetskoe foto, no.4 (1938), p.4.

downplaying the importance of its documentary value. The critic Morozov, for example, while discussing a photograph of a mother with a child, concluded that although the image depicts an existing woman "in its wholeness and artistically rendered image it 'overgrows' a document and approaches the significance of a painting."²⁹⁹ Morozov's comment documents the vital moment when painting fully reasserted its superiority over the photographic image and photography was called upon mainly to multiply as Jean Francois Lyotard has described "the effects of reality or ... the fantasies of realism."³⁰⁰

By the end of the Second Five-Year Plan, the totalitarian terror had begun to affect the cultural community. Around that time, Mezhericher, Klutsis, and Tret'iakov were arrested, to name only those who fit the official title "the enemies of Soviet photography."³⁰¹ Disturbed by these events, Rodchenko wrote in 1938, "These are strange times. Everyone is whispering. Everyone is afraid. It is nervewracking that everyone has someone among their friends who is arrested. I do not know for what and where they are."³⁰² This veil of terror coincided with the "transcendental illusion" attained in

²⁹⁹Ibid. p.14.

³⁰⁰Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1979), p. 74.

³⁰¹Klutsis was arrested in 1938 just as he was about to depart for the New York World's Fair. He was accused of being a member of the Latvian nationalist faction and, shortly thereafter, executed. Originally, Klutsis's certificate of death, issued to the family in 1956, stated that he had died on March 16th 1944, of a cardiac arrest. But in 1989 Klutsis's son requested information about his father's "real course of death" and received the response that Klutsis was shot shortly after he was arrested in 1938.

³⁰²Aleksandr Rodchenko as cited in Lavrentiev, Rakursy Rodchenko, p. 183.

mass-media representations. The connection between the two is argued by Lyotard when he writes, "The price to pay for such an illusion is terror ... We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and communicable experience."³⁰³ The ultimate union of all Soviet republics, celebrated in the "Constitutional" issue of USSR in Construction, unleashed the terror of a government now confident of its total power. But to assume that the totalizing images which populated mass-media representations in the late 1930s were solely serving the government's interests is to fully disregard the place of the public in the process of transforming factography into mythography. When Rodchenko speculated whether it was the party or the cultural community who undermined avant-garde manifestations such as formalism, he completely ignored the role of the public and their interests as far as representation is concerned. This was a mistake. As Lyotard reminds us,

When power assumes the name of a party, realism and its neoclassical complement triumph over the experimental avant-garde by slandering and banning it--that is provided the "correct" images, the "correct" narratives, the "correct" forms which the party requests, selects, and propagates can find a public to desire them as the appropriate remedy for the anxiety and depression that public experiences."³⁰⁴

³⁰³Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp. 81-82.

³⁰⁴Ibid., p. 75.

In the end, just as Stalin succeeded with his campaign of purges because thousands of informers from the public were willing to work for him, the avant-garde succumbed to Socialist Realism because the masses which were subjected to the dismal living conditions and harsh labor were no longer captivated by the ambivalence of the fractured images of the avant-garde. Instead, the public found comfort in the "therapeutic" Socialist Realist representations which by means of the overt heroicizing of the masses's life and work, successfully neutralized the pains of their actual reality.

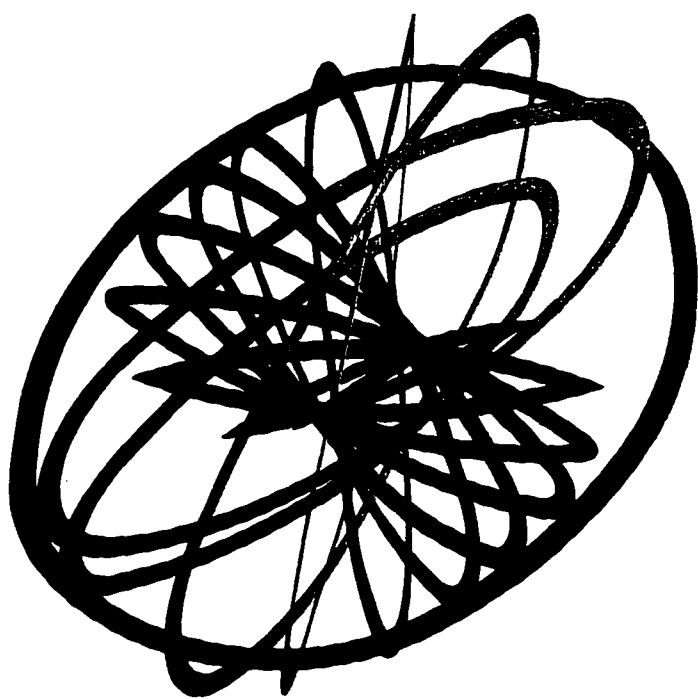


Fig.1

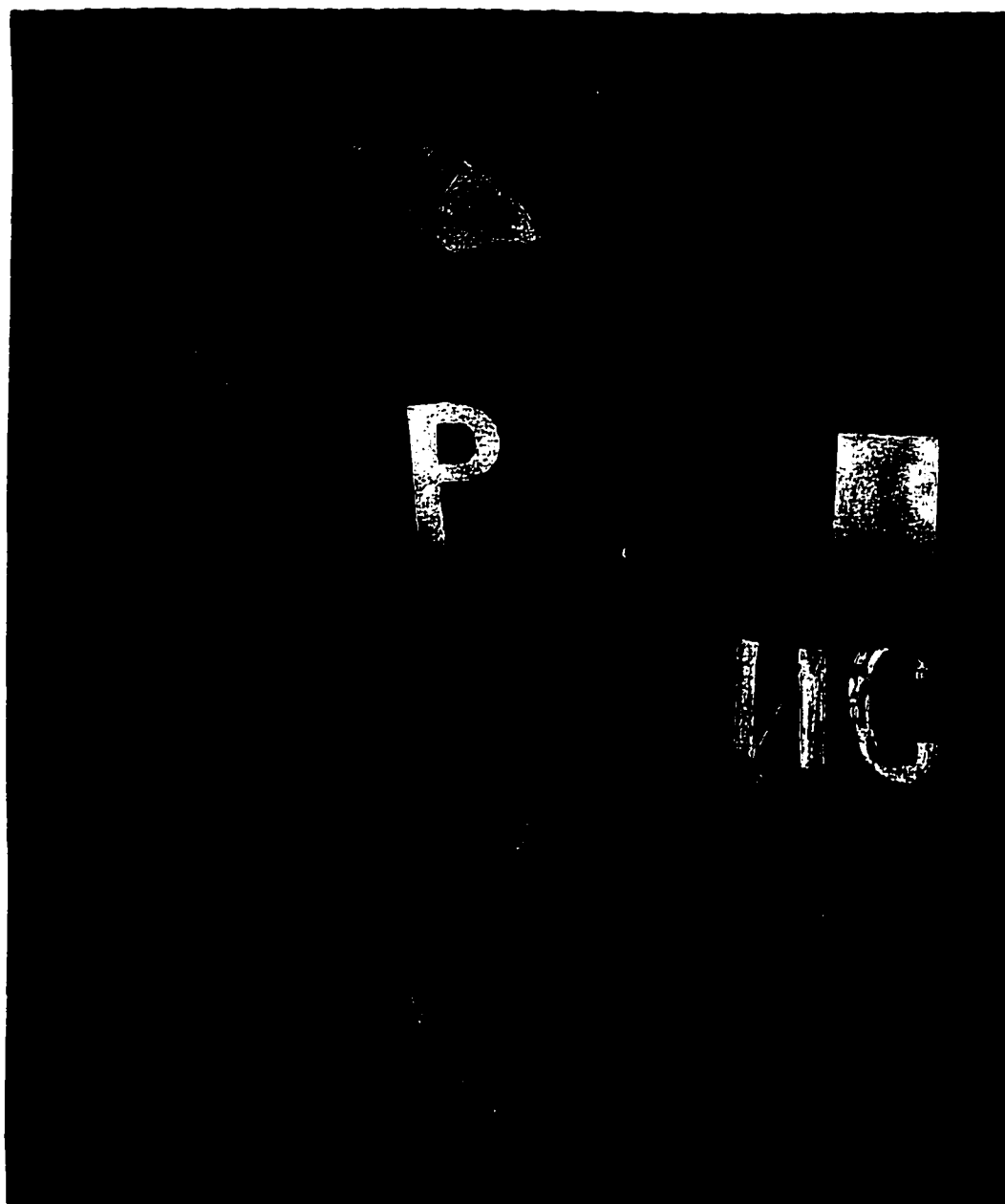


Fig. 2

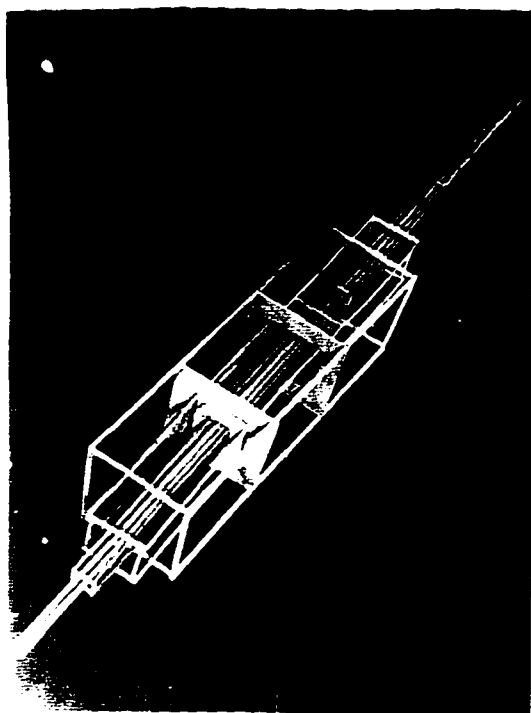


Fig. 3

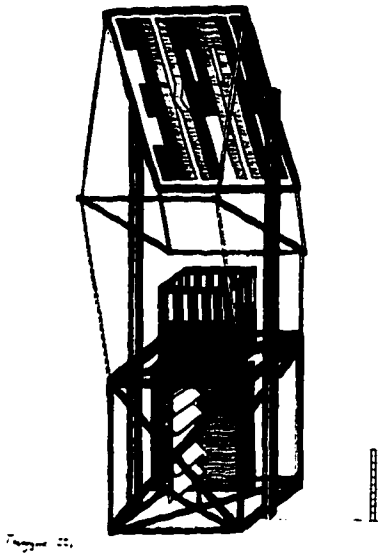


Fig. 4

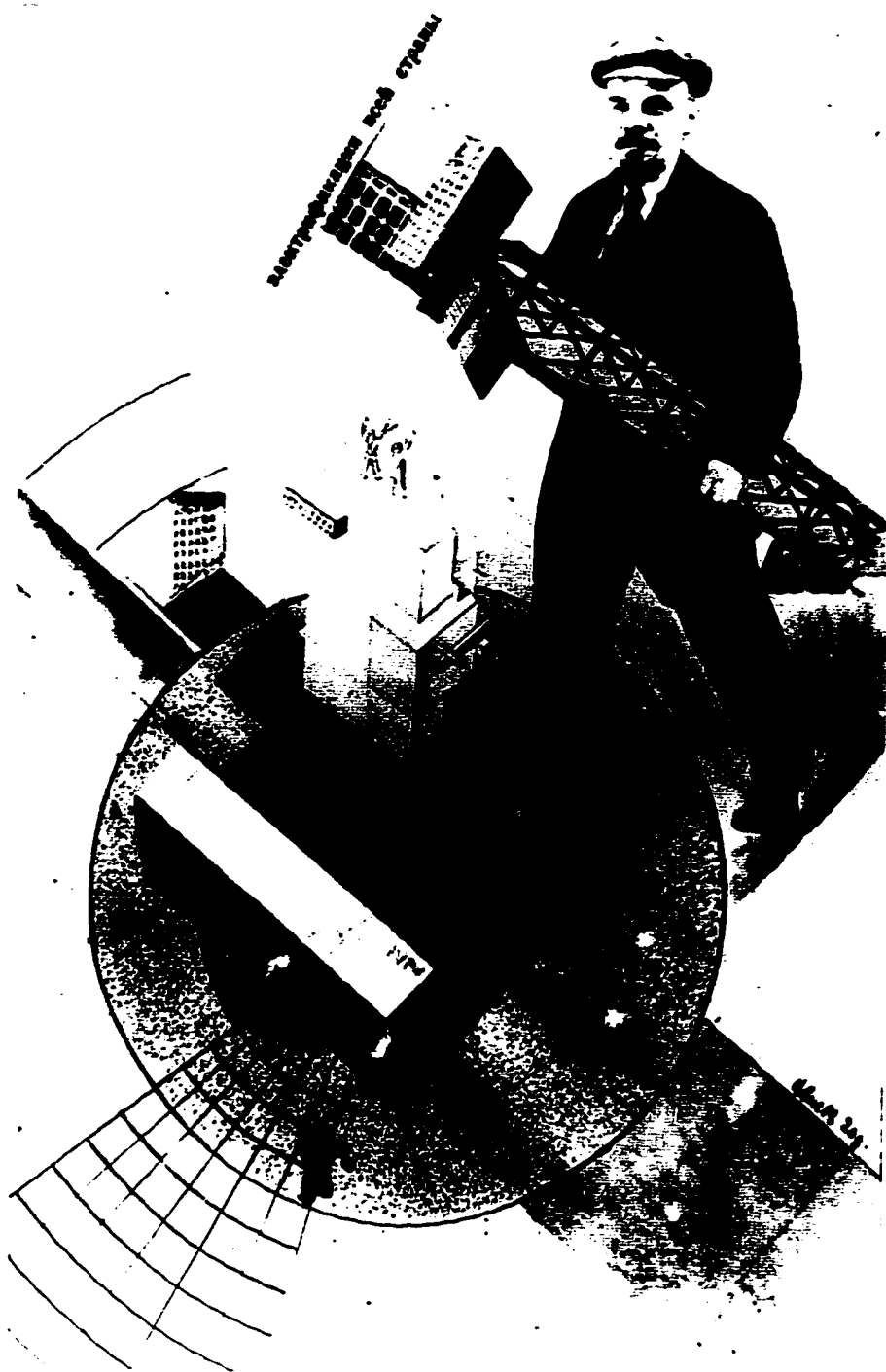


Fig. 5

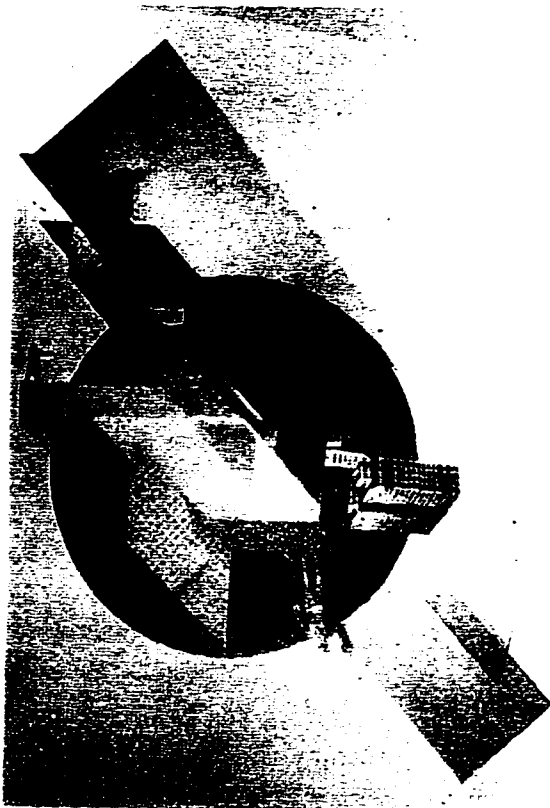


Fig. 6

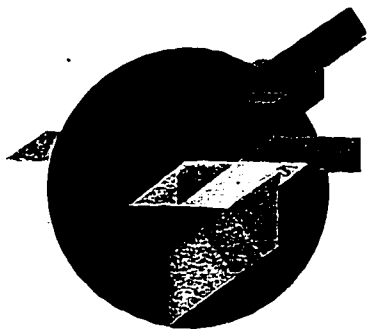


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

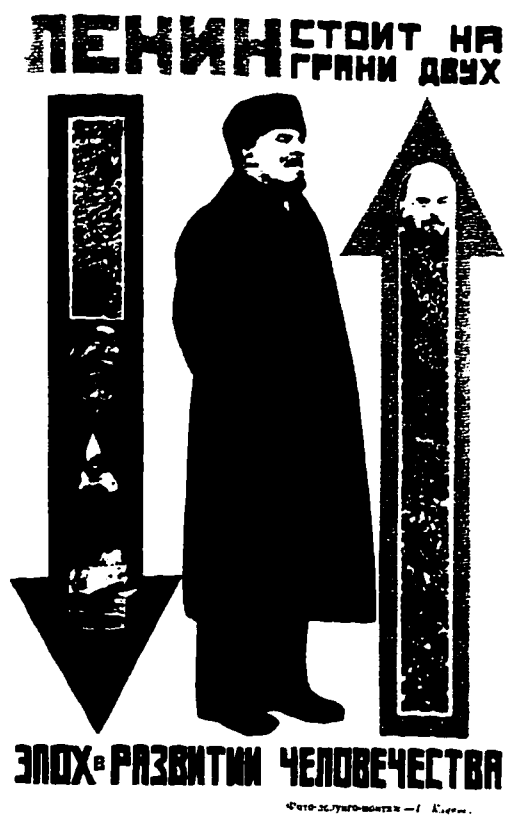


Fig. 9



«Договорились» — Г. Букин.

Fig. 10



Fig. 11

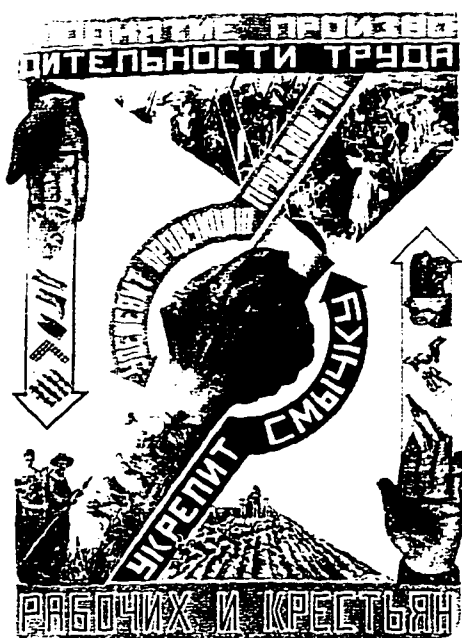


Fig. 12



Fig. 13

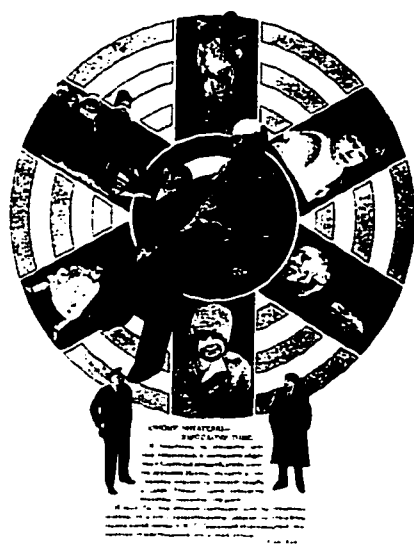


Fig. 14

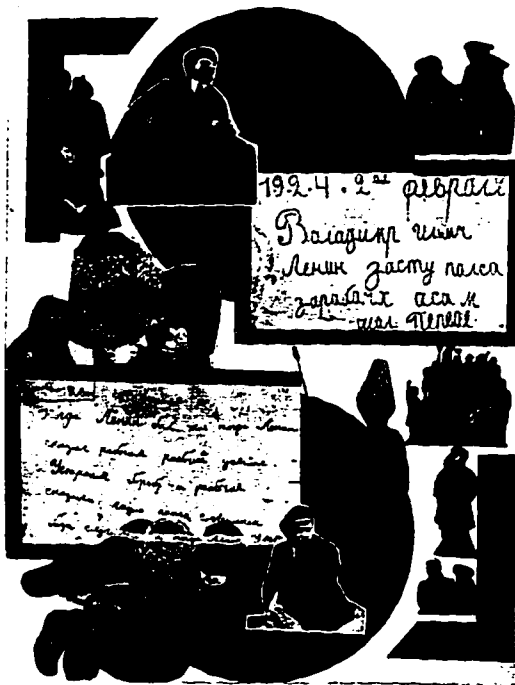


Fig. 15



— В 1922 г. я была в Горьком. Мой папа служил в санатории, где был Владимир Ильич. Однажды, когда Владимир Ильич собирался ехать в город, в его парадной букет цветов и принесла мне.
 Владимир Ильич взял цветы и спросил меня:
 — Хорошо тебе живется на озиминке?
 Эльза Веспр, 9 лет.

Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Бодрые, сильные, по пути науки и знания, скорей, бегом
к заветам Ильича—к Коммунизму.

Fig. 18



Fig. 20

Беспредметная графика.



1915 г.

РОДЧЕНКО.

МЫ

В а р и а н т м а н и ф е с т а .

Мы называем себя киноками в отличие от «кинематографистов» — стада старьевщиков, недурно торгующих своим тряпьем.

Мы не видим связи между лукавством и расчетом торговцев и подлинным киночеством.

Психологическую русско-германскую кино-драму, отяжелевшую видениями и воспоминаниями детства, мы считаем нелепостью.

Американской фильме авантюры, фильме с показным динамизмом, инсценировкам американской пинкертоновщины — спасибо кинока за быстроту смен изображений и крупные планы. Хорошо, но беспорядочно, не основано на точном изучении движения. Ступенью выше психологической драмы, но все же бесфундаментно. Шаблон. Копия с копии.

Fig. 21



Fig. 22

УГОРОБЛА

СВЯТАЯ ПОЖЬ

Посыль старт...

ДЕВЬИ ГОРЫ

Или... Или...

ЩАДИТЕ ГРУДОВЫЯ ДЕНЬГИ!

СПЕРМАЦЕТОВАЯ ЖИРНАЯ ЛИЧНАЯ ПУДРА.

С РАСКРЫТЫМ СЕРДЦЕМ

ЖРИЦА ВЕСЕЛЬЯ

запоздалая радости.

Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 30



Fig. 31

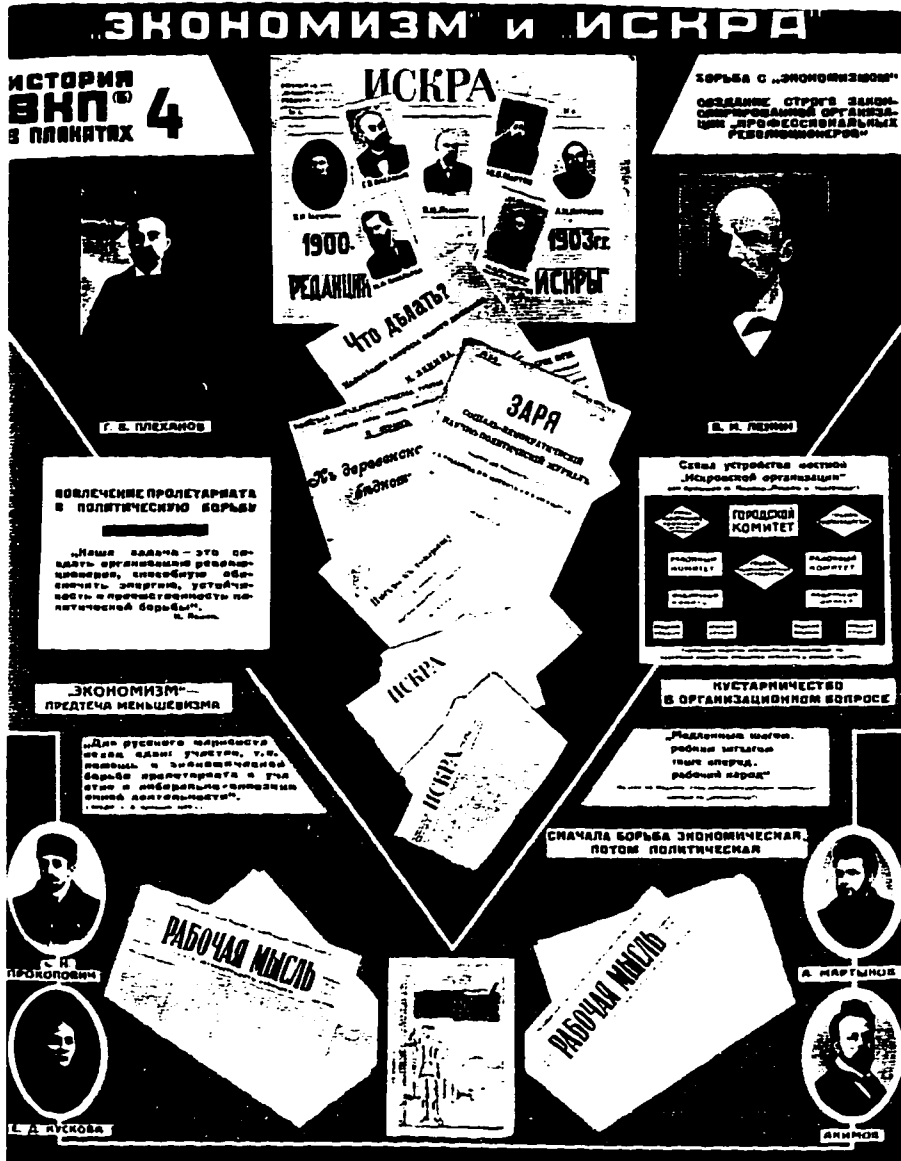


Fig. 32

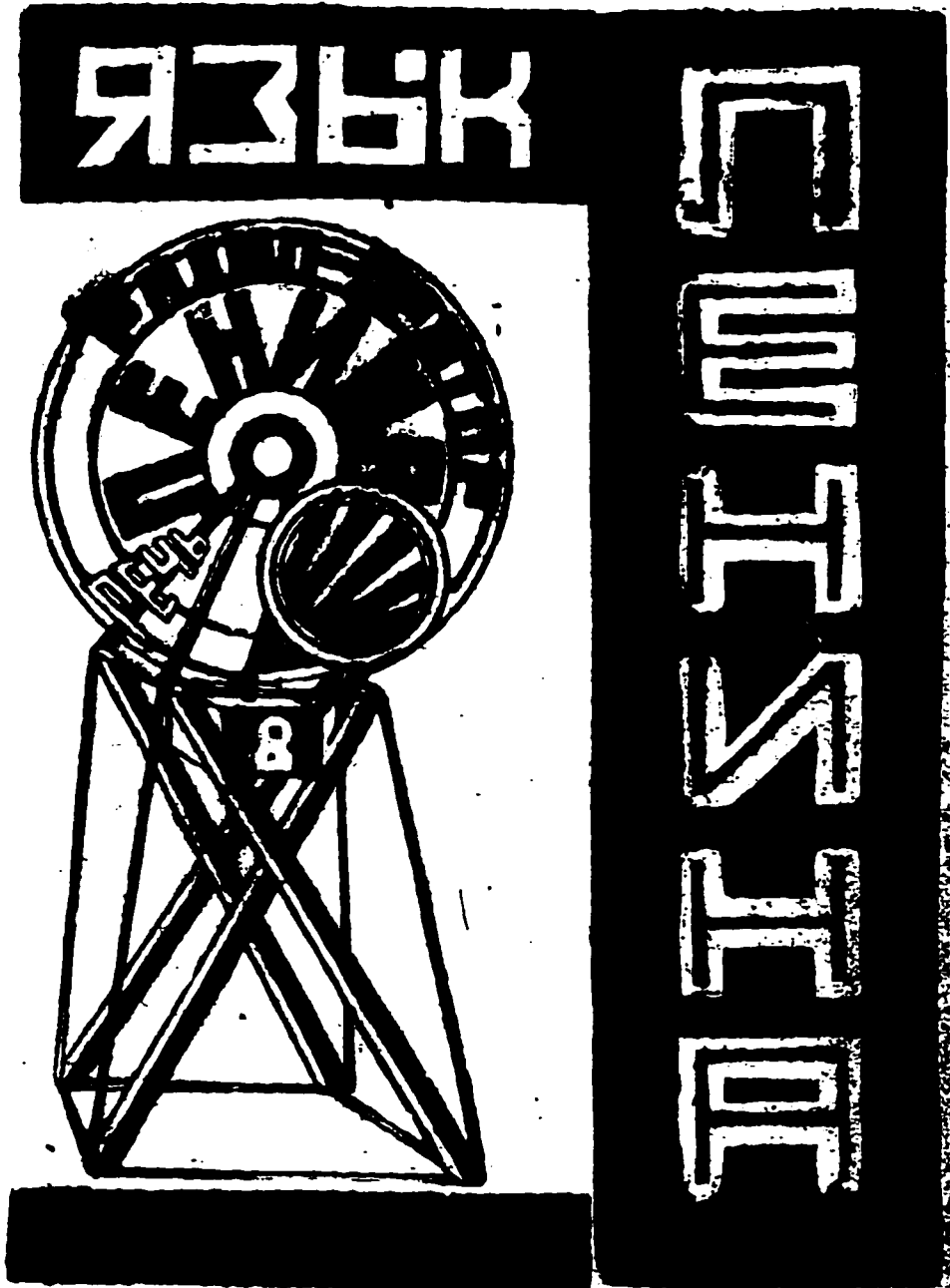


Fig. 33

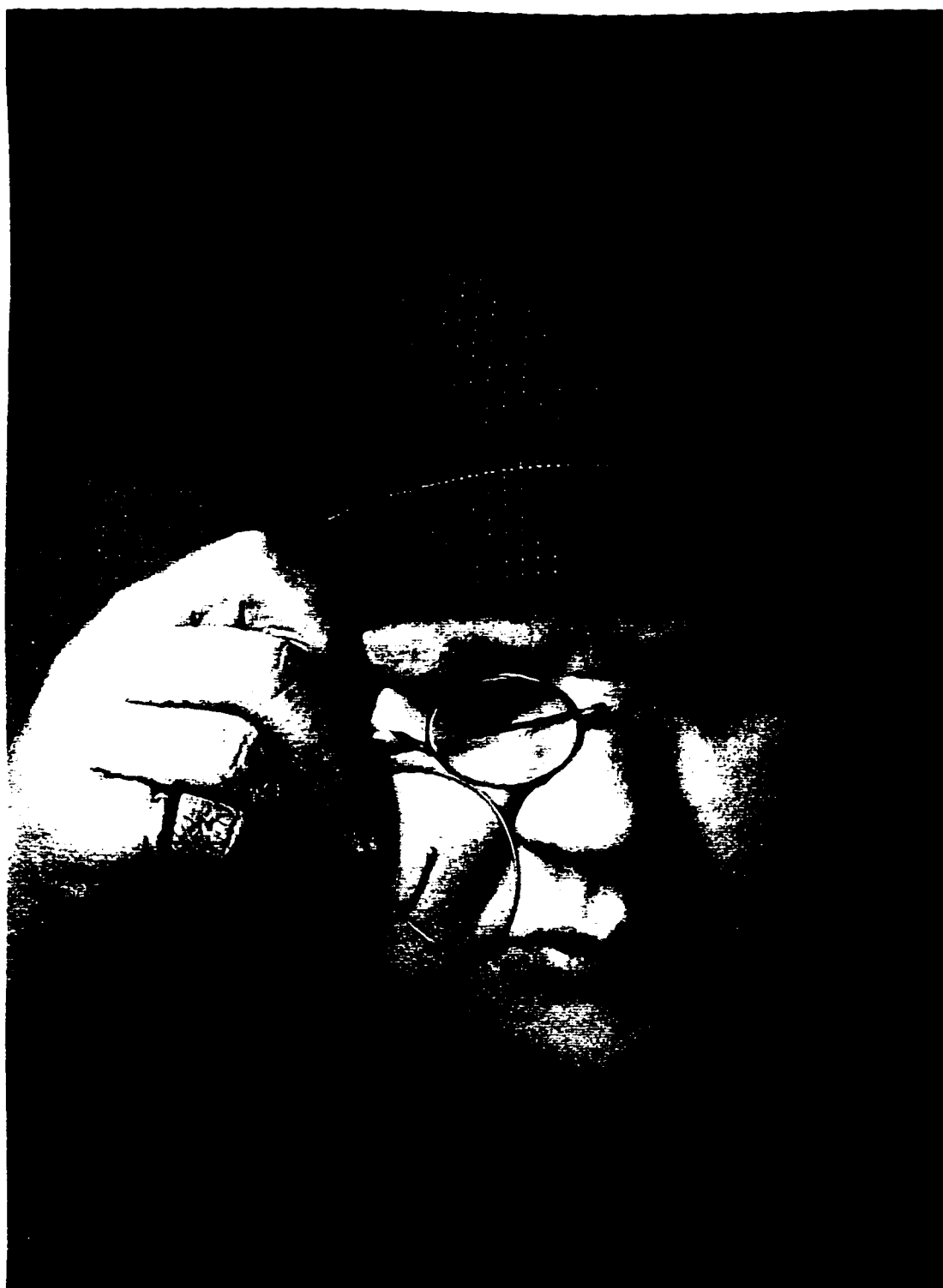


Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37

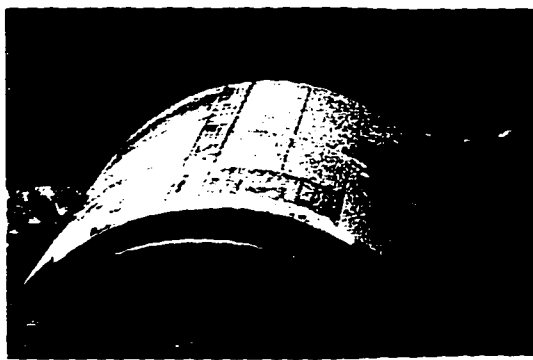


Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40

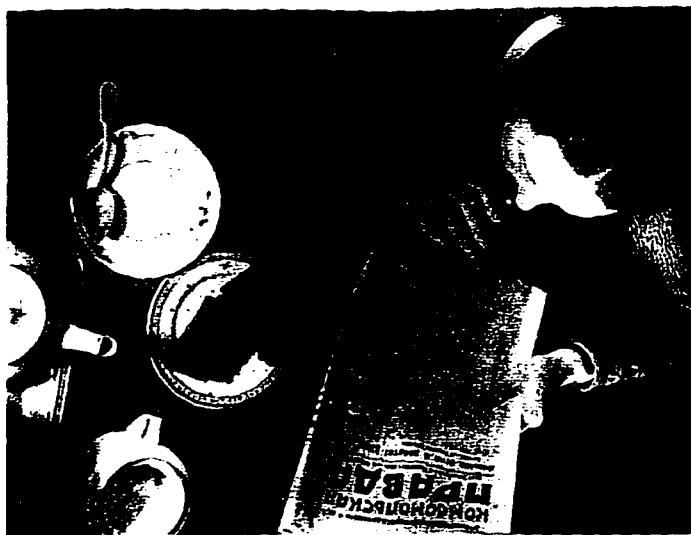
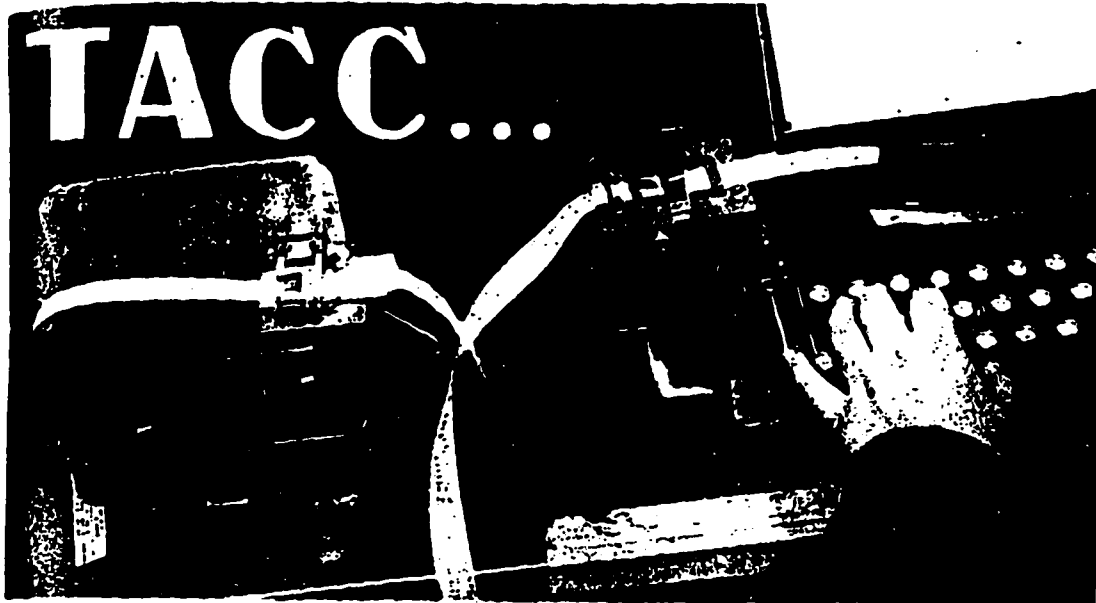


Fig. 41



Клейниמידт—буквопечатающий телеграфный аппарат. Передает информацию из Москвы в Ленинград, Харьков, Нижний, Смоленск и Ярославль

Событие, факт — далеко не всегда такая яркая, видимая всем или, как говорят в Рязани, «влипающая в глаза» вещь, как это кажется. Есть события, оглушительные по последствиям, но есть события, развивающиеся в тишине, до времени незаметные и скрытые. Яркое событие надо не прозевать, а скрытое во время обнаружить и обо всем этом немедленно сообщить в Москву.

Такова работа корреспондентов ТАСС и РОСТА.

Их сотни. Они сидят или, переезжая, бегают по всем крупнейшим городам Союза, по заводам, по селам, по выложенным столицам Европы и Америки. Они участвуют в перелетах, в поисках метеоритов, в экспедициях на полярные острова, в маневрах и присутствуют при дипломатических переговорах. У них очень тяжелая и увлекательная профессия — все знать.

Необычайная сложность жизни СССР и напор строительства — все это должно быть заключено в простые, понятные и лаконичные строчки телеграмм.

Корреспонденты составляют поистине необычайную людскую коллекцию, — от иностранных корреспондентов в круглых очках и с вечным пером, утомленных пар-

ламентскими прениями, до застенчивых провинциалов, не расстающихся с охотничьими сапогами, и обветренных моряков, дающих радио со своих кораблей.

Кроме корреспондентов, в Москве ТАСС и РОСТА обслуживают также репортеры. По вечерам они собираются в штаб-редакцию со своими распухшими блокнотами и приносят с собой сырость Хамовников, где началось наводнение, или легкий запах пыли кулис Большого театра, где заседает съезд советов.

Среди них много коллекционеров. Одни коллекционируют автографы, другие — книги, третьи — газетные курьезы, четвертые — плакаты. Очевидно, быстрый и спешный подход к фактам вызывает жажду пристального внимания в свободное время к этим же фактам, закрепленным в вещах или на бумаге.

Телеграммы корреспондентов и заметки репортеров попадают к редакторам — людям, изнемогающим под водопадом слов.

Основное свойство редактора — быстрота, умение ориентироваться в материале и смелость.

Газетный материал не терпит трусов. Оперирование с ним требует свойств

Fig. 42



Fig. 43

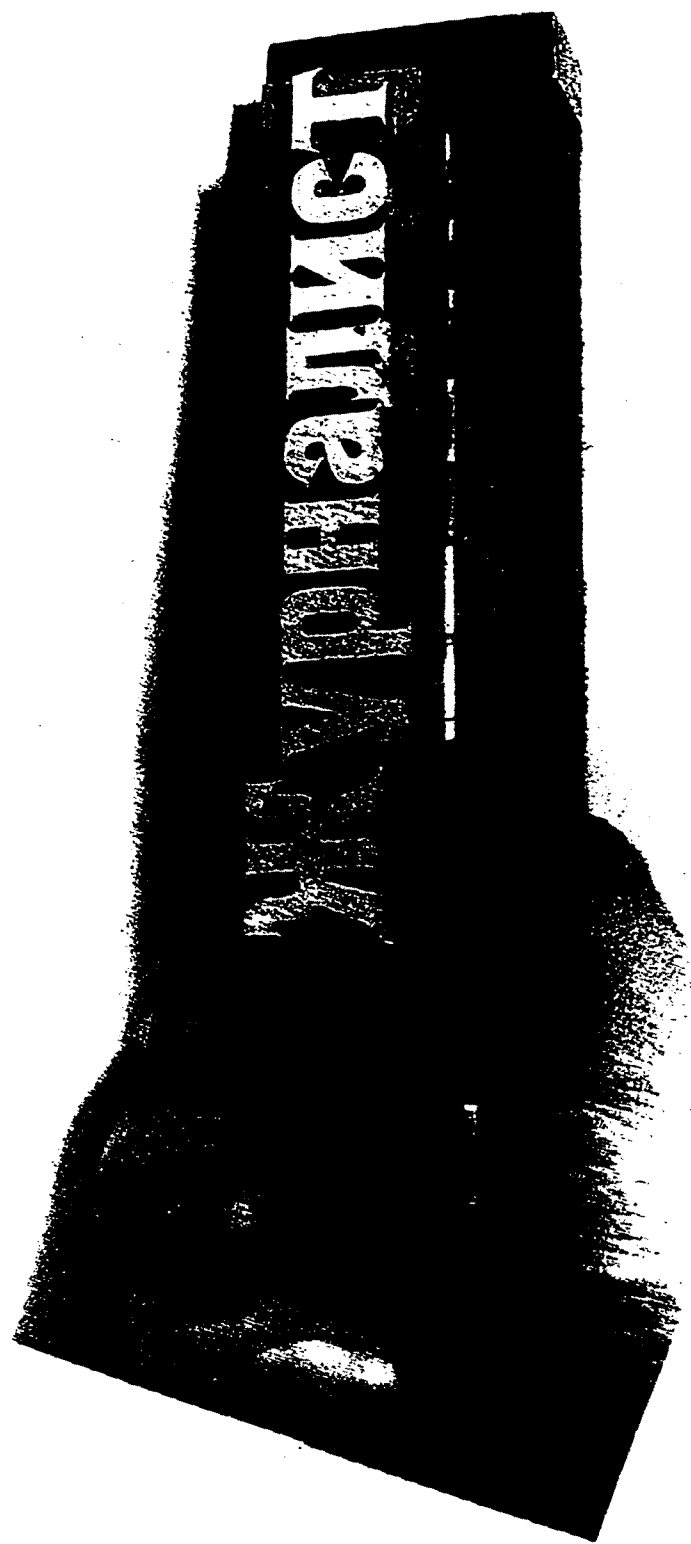


Fig. 44

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.



Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52

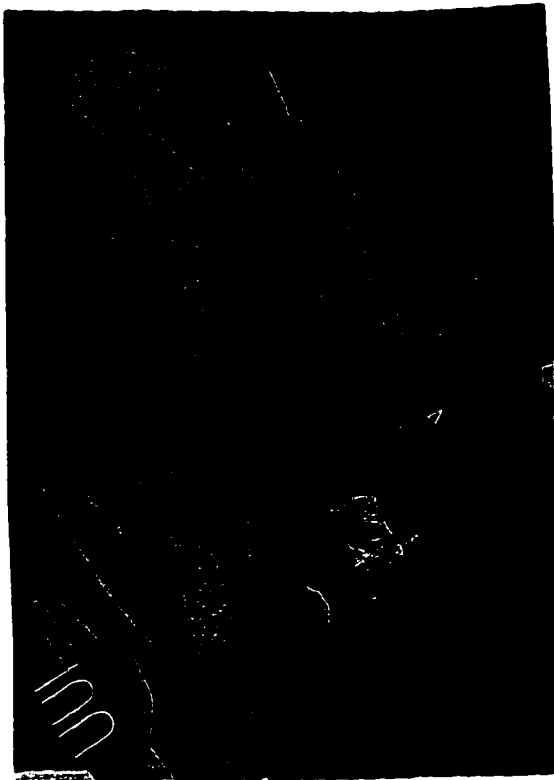


Fig. 53

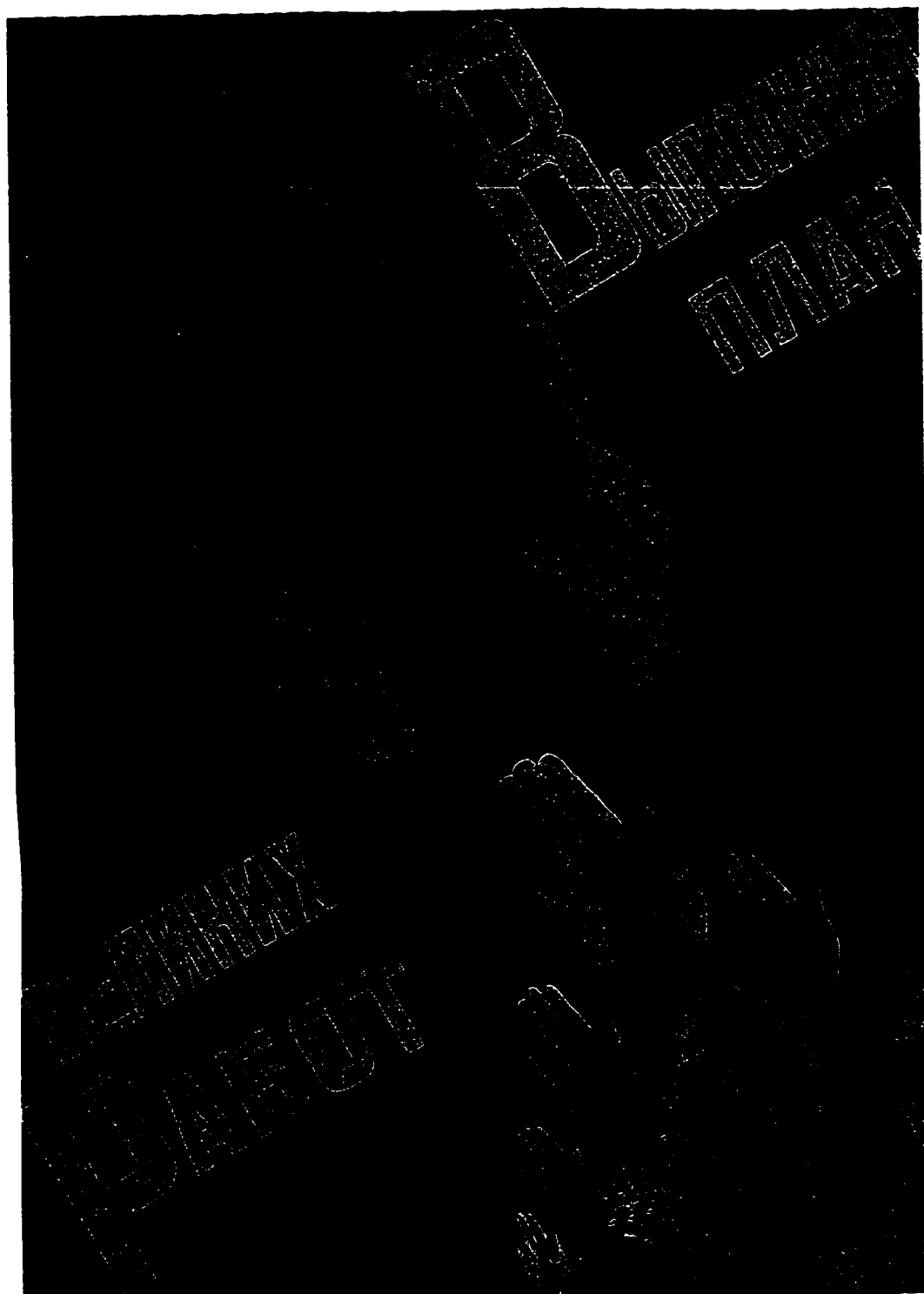


Fig. 54

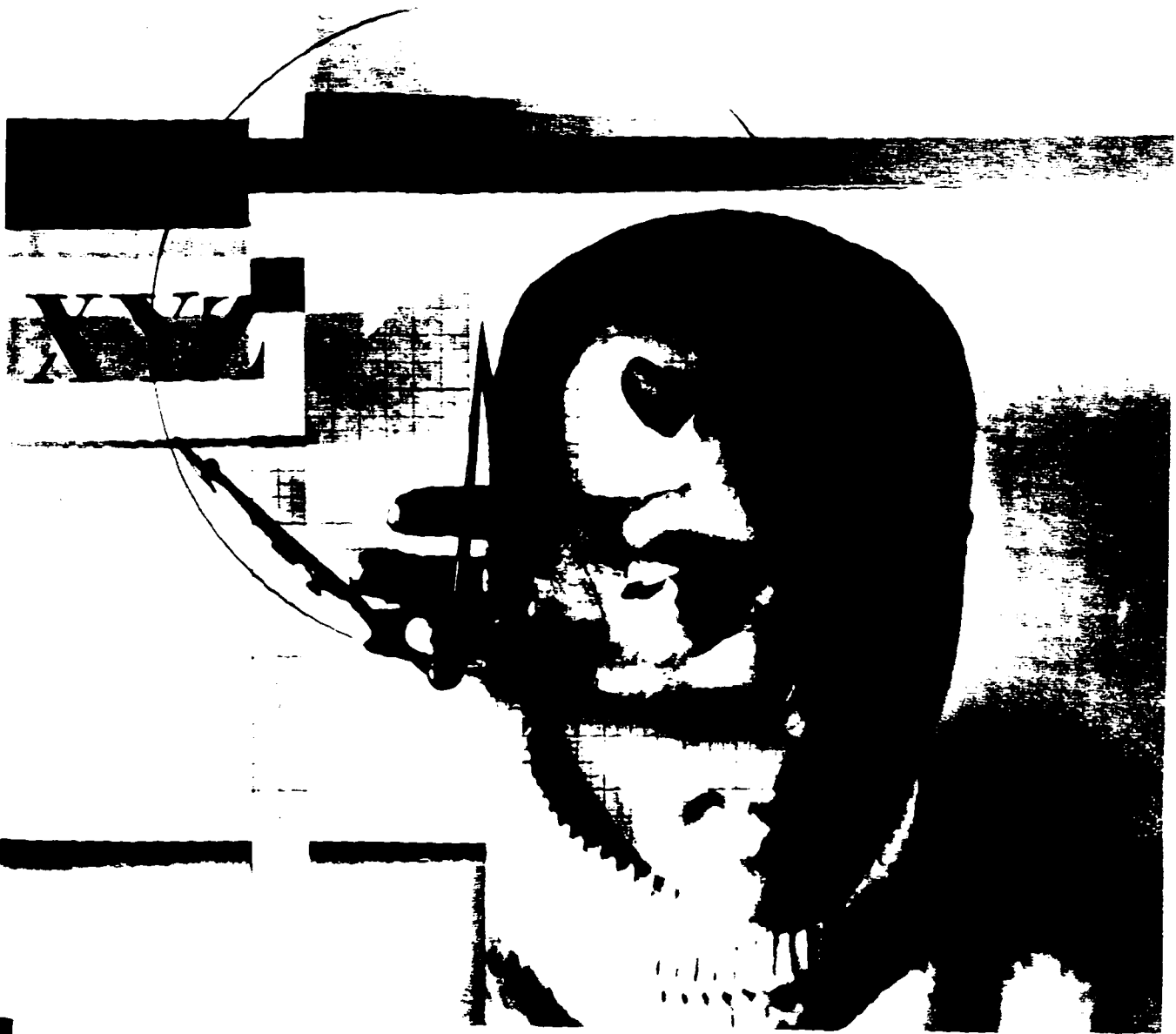


Fig. 55



Fig. 56



Fig. 57



Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60



Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63

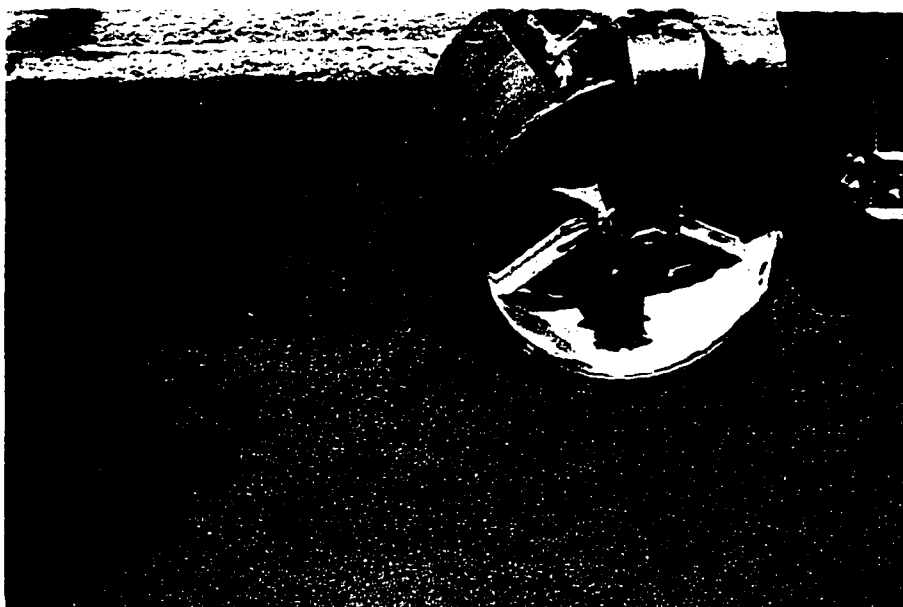


Fig. 64

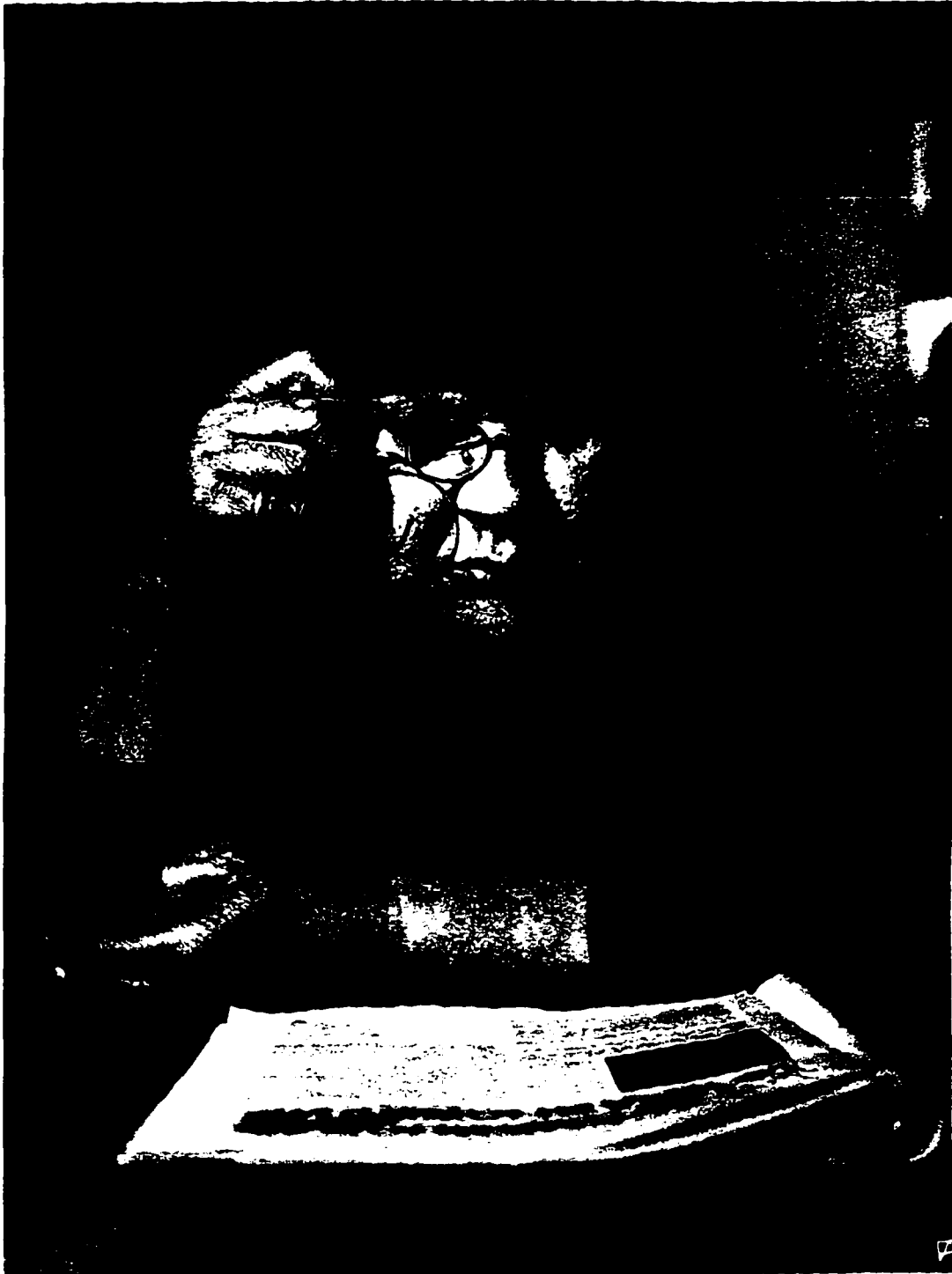


Fig. 65



Fig. 66

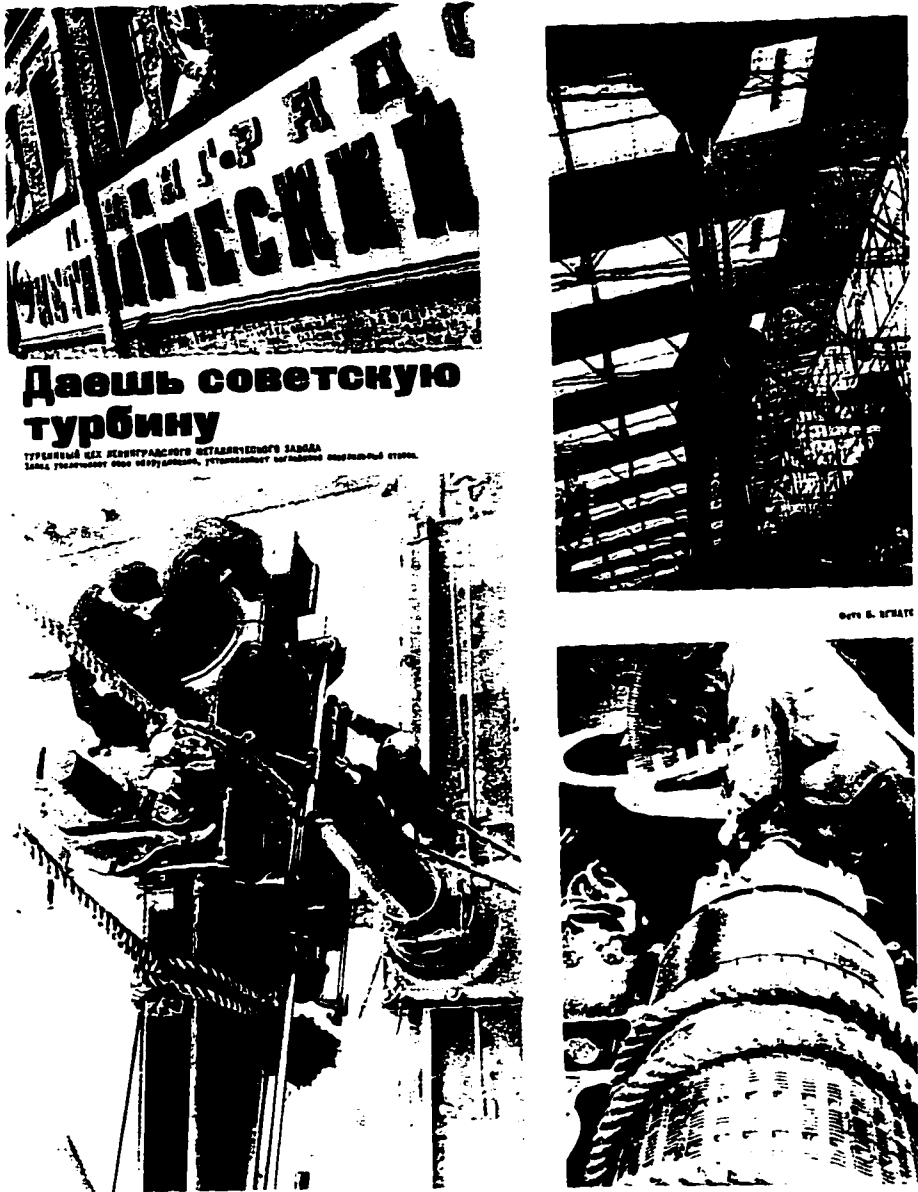


Fig. 67



Fig. 69

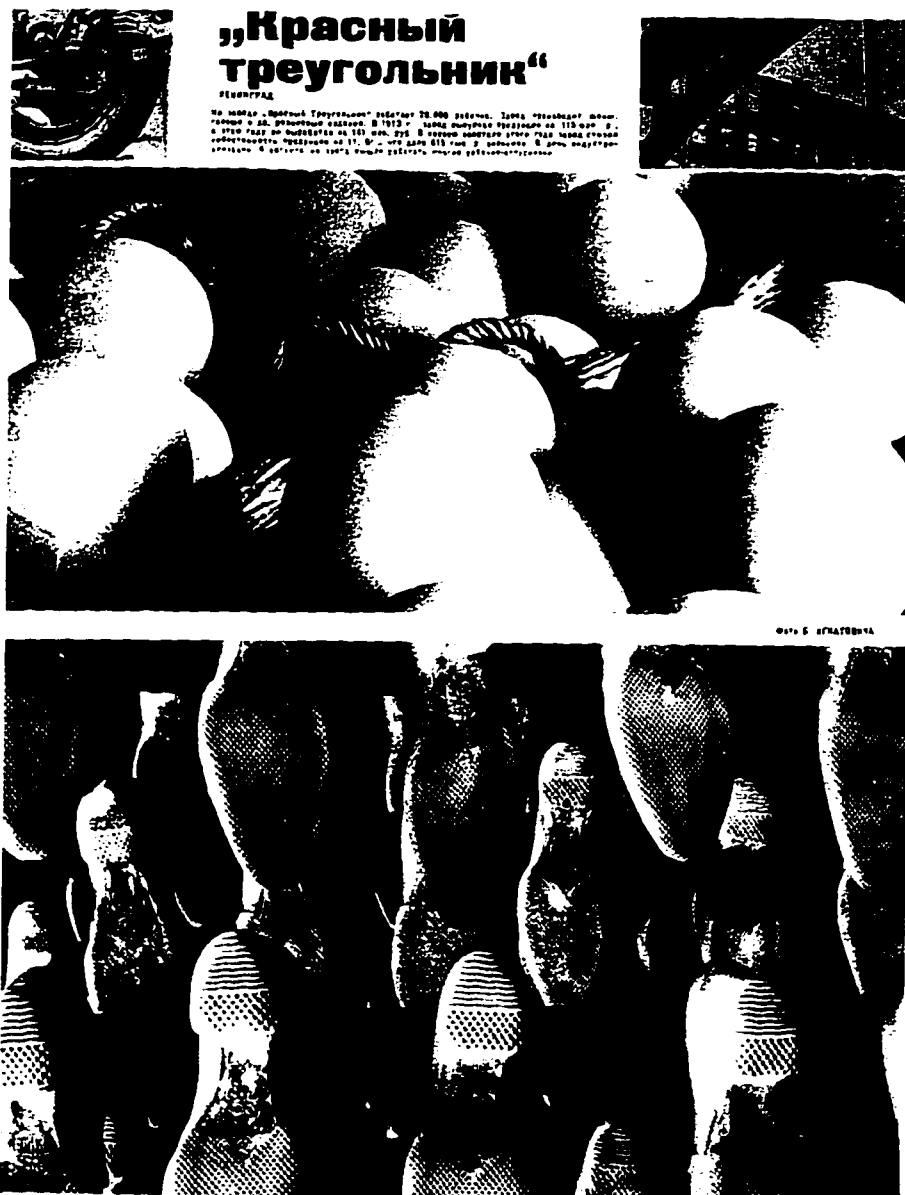


Fig. 70



Fig. 71



Fig. 72



Fig. 73

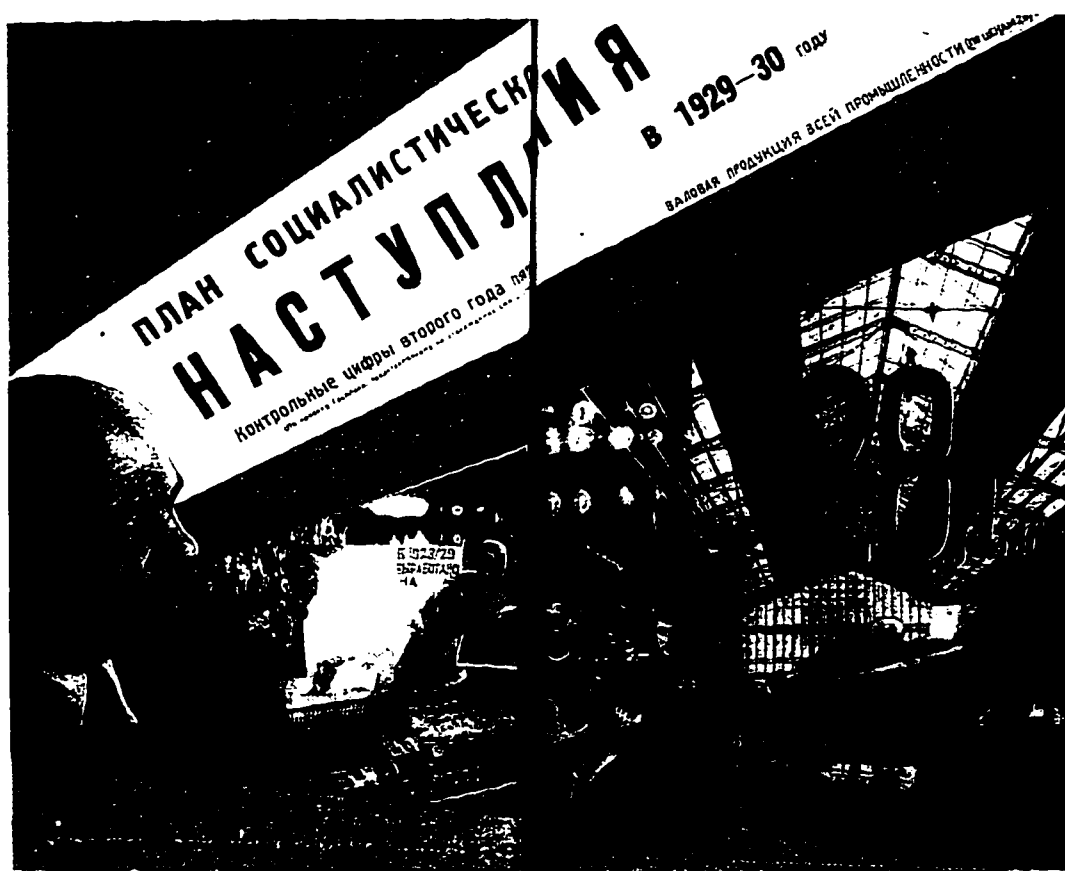


Fig. 74



Fig. 75



Fig. 76



Fig. 77



Fig. 78

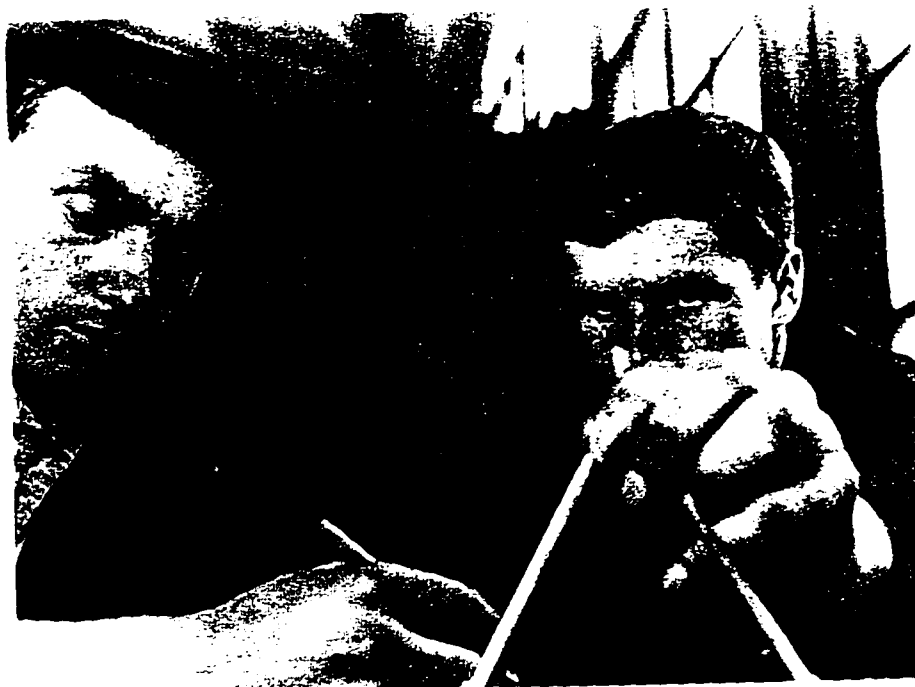


Fig. 79

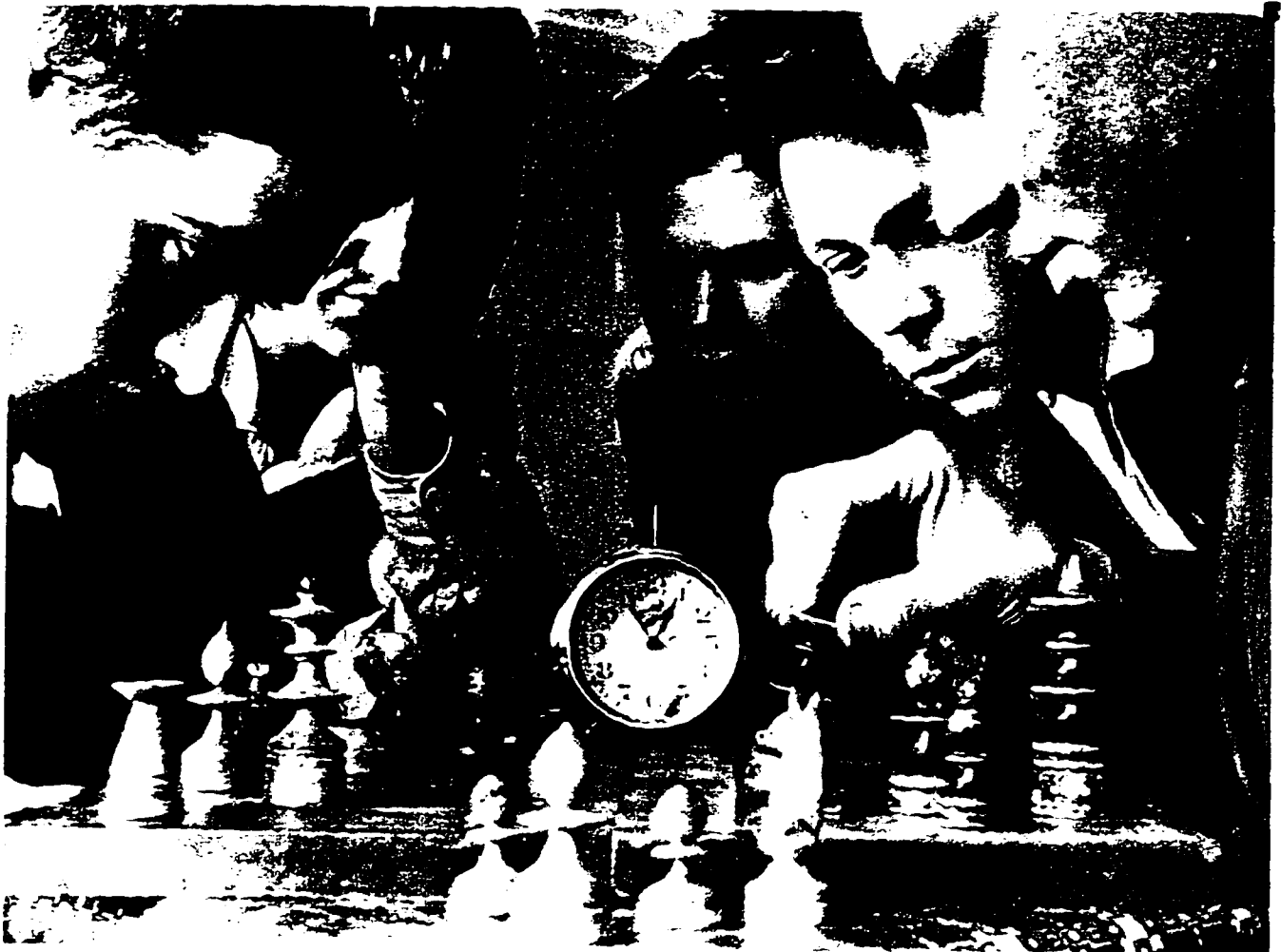
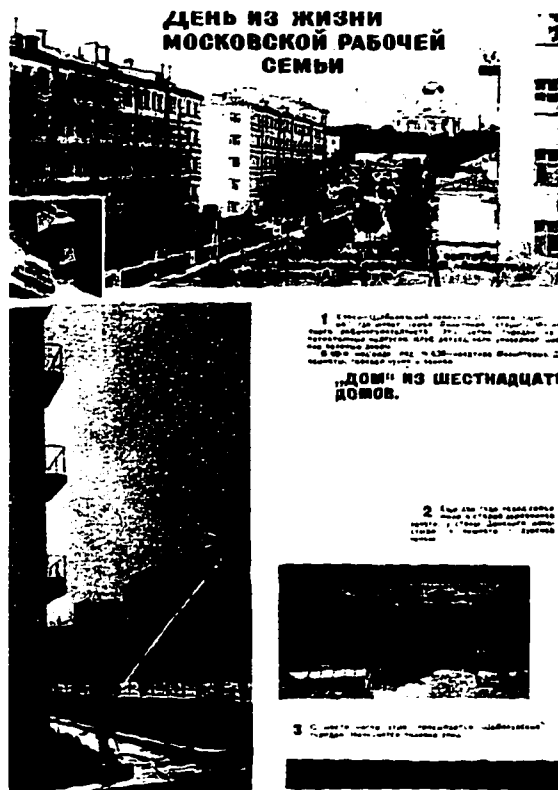


Fig. 80



**ДЕНЬ ИЗ ЖИЗНИ
МОСКОВСКОЙ РАБОЧЕЙ
СЕМЬИ**

1 В этот рабочий вечер в семье Ивановых, как и во многих других семьях Москвы, царит уют и тепло. Дети уже спят, а мама и папа сидят за столом, читая газету. В это время по улицам Москвы гуляют тысячи людей, возвращаясь с работы.

**«ДОМ» ИЗ ШЕСТНАДЦАТИ
ДОМОВ.**

2 На этой фотографии вы видите, как выглядят дома в районе, где в настоящее время ведется строительство. Это район, который будет называться «Домом из шестнадцати домов».



3 С этого места вы можете увидеть, как выглядят дома в районе, где в настоящее время ведется строительство. Это район, который будет называться «Домом из шестнадцати домов».

Fig. 81



Fig. 82

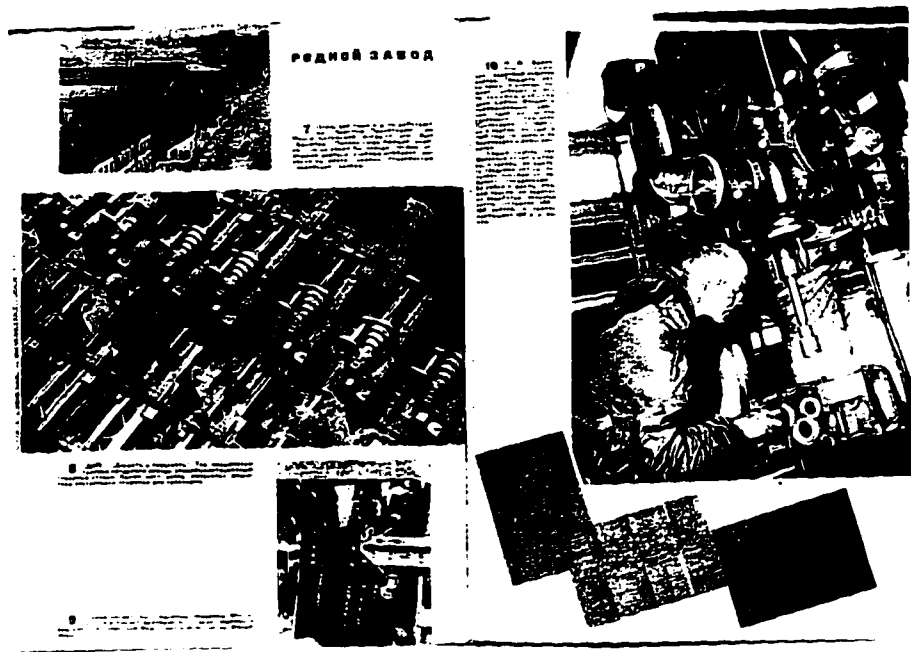


Fig. 83



Fig. 84



Fig. 85



Fig. 86

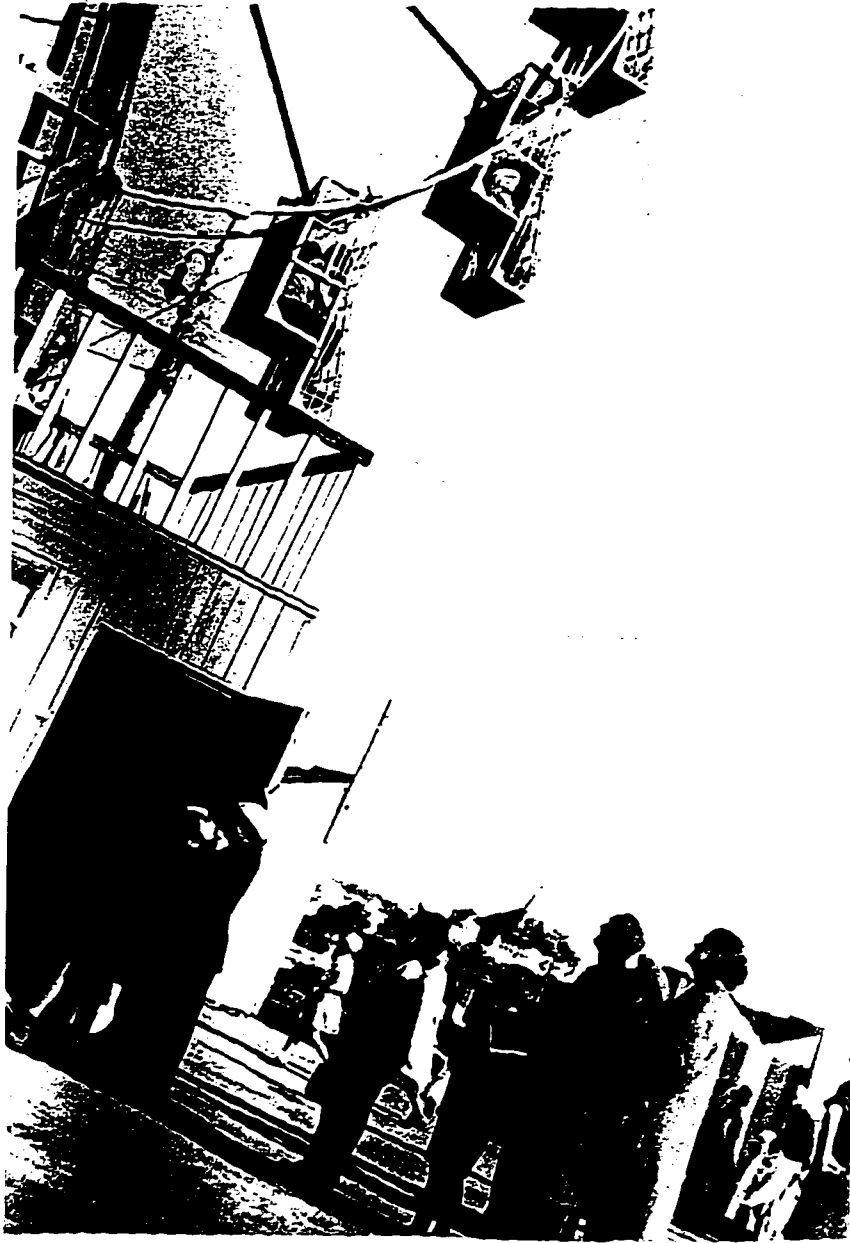


Fig. 87



Fig. 88



Fig. 89



Fig. 90



Fig. 91



Fig. 92

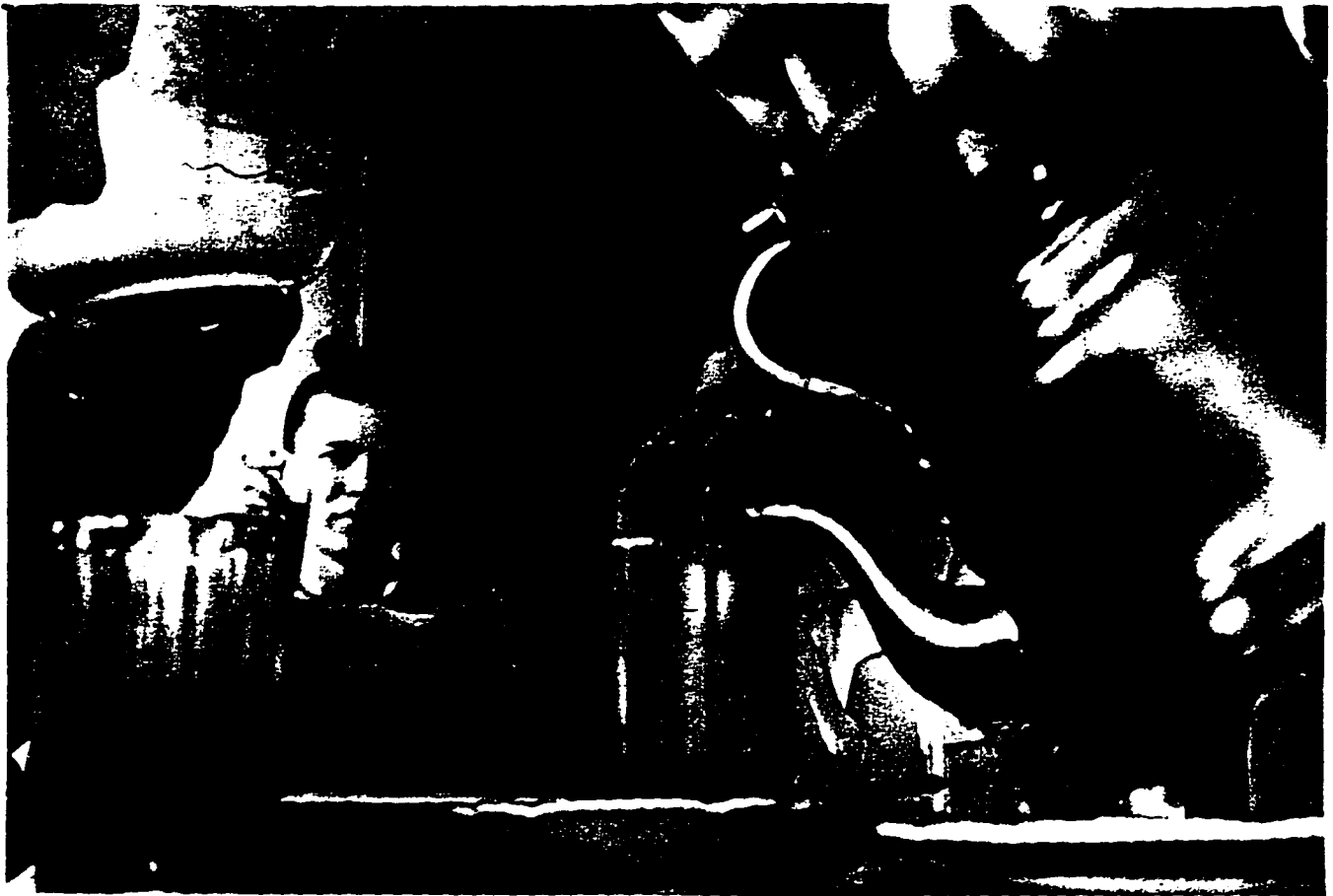


Fig. 93



Fig. 94



Fig. 95



Fig. 96



Fig. 97



Fig. 98



Fig. 99



Fig. 100



Fig. 101



Fig. 102



Fig. 103

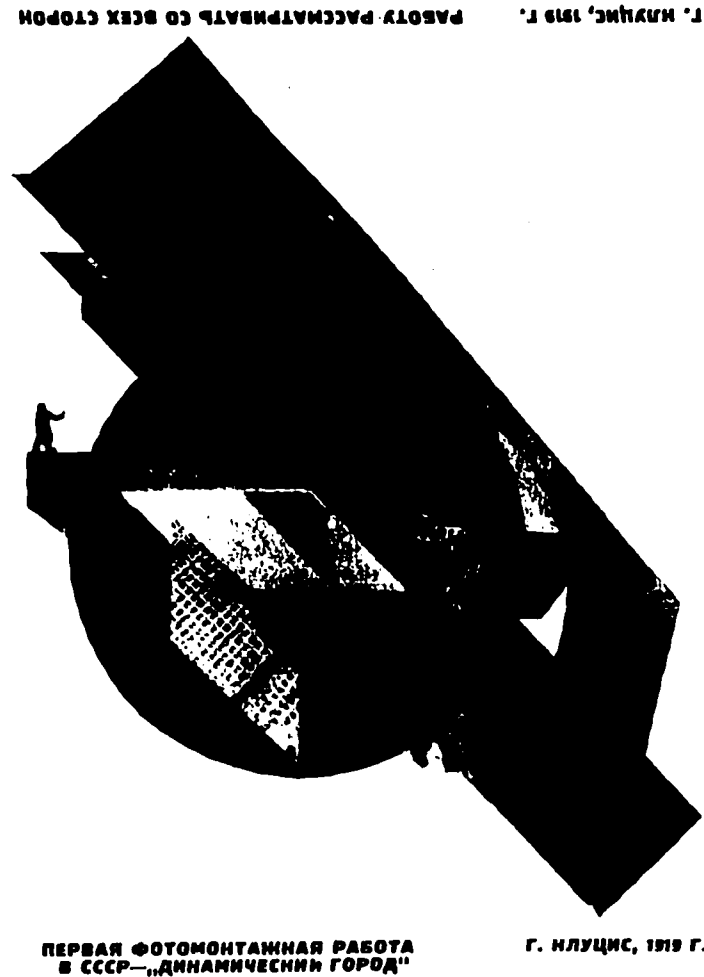
многократных экспозиций, фотограмма, фотопись — это разновидности фотомонтажа в его формально лабораторном разрезе. Фотообъектив, светочувствительная эмульсия, свет, химикаты, цвет плюс полиграфическая техника содержат в себе громадные возможности, очень мало еще раскрытые и использованные. Путем распределения и акцентирования разномасштабных фотоснимков и выделения их конкретности цветовых соотношений можно выразить нужную тему, заставить фото, позунг и цвет служить задачами классовой борьбы, заставить фото рассказывать, агитировать, объяснять. Фотомонтаж организует по принципу максимальной контрастности неожиданностью расположения и разномасштабностью.

Фото фиксирует застывший статичный МОМЕНТ.

Фотомонтаж показывает динамику жизни, развертывает тематику данного сюжета.

Фотомонтаж, организуя одновременно ряд формальных элементов — фото, цвет, позунг, линию, плоскость, — имеет одну целеустремленность — достичь максимальной силы выразительности. Фотографические снимки используются как изобразительное искусство и вместе с тем как составная часть целостного организма. Фотомонтаж можно сравнить из других искусств только с кино, которое массу кадров соединяет в целостное произведение.

Фотомонтаж как новейший метод искусства возник в СССР в 1919—1921 гг. Его возникновению предшествовала длительная лабораторная и производственная работы в поисках новых методов оформления. В результате этого опыта возникла первая фотомонтажная работа в СССР, так называемая «Динамический город» худ. Г. Клуцис, где фото впервые было использовано как элемент фантуры и изобразительности и



Г. КЛУЦИС, 1919 Г.
РАБОТУ РАСМАТРИВАТЬ СО ВСЕХ СТОРОН

ПЕРВАЯ ФОТОМОНТАЖНАЯ РАБОТА
В СССР—„ДИНАМИЧЕСКИЙ ГОРОД“

Г. КЛУЦИС, 1919 Г.

Fig. 104

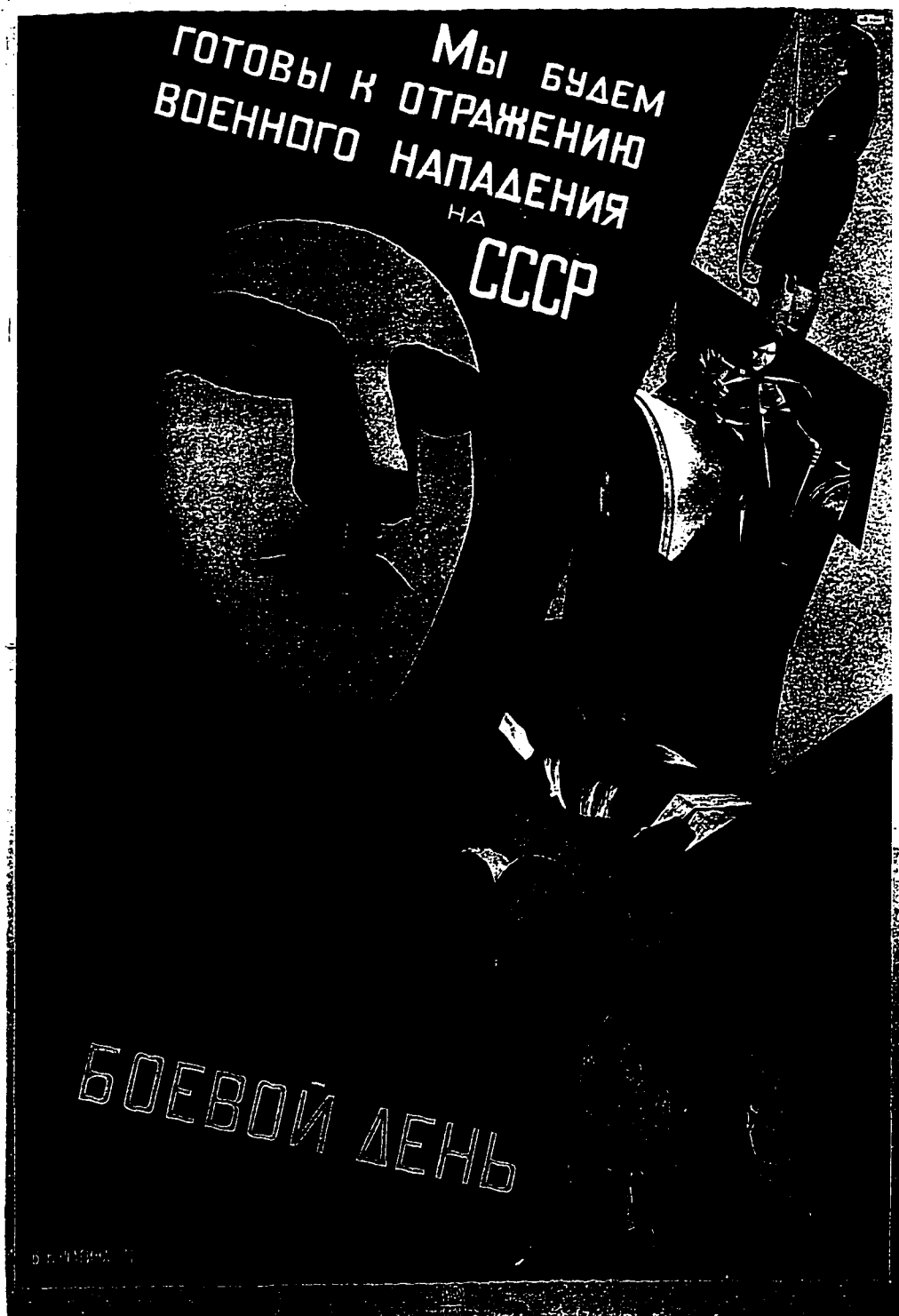


Fig. 105



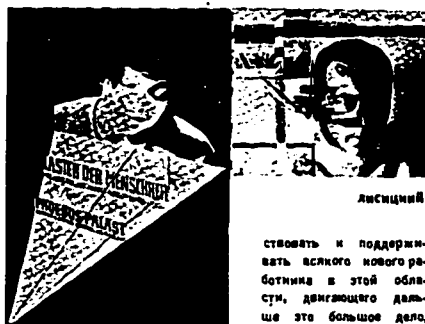
Fig. 106



Fig. 107



Fig. 108



Лисицкий

ствовать и поддерживать всякого нового работника в этой области, двигающего дальше это большое дело, недостаточно еще оцененное нашей марксистской критикой и общественностью. категорически необходимо бороться с многочисленными эпитонами и шрплатанами, вульгаризирующими и использующими этот метод для ослепления своей уже устарелой техники в халтурных целях.

Чихольд

Пролетарская индустриальная культура, выдвигающая самые выразительные средства воздействия на миллионные массы, использует метод фотомонтажа как самое боевое и действительное средство борьбы.

Fig. 109



Fig. 110



Fig. 111

по массовой политической и культурной работе, конструктором, владением фотографией, строящим свою композицию на совершенно новых законах, не применяемых в искусстве до сих пор. Новые приемы построения вызваны новыми элементами изобразительности и новой социальной установкой.

Пролетарская революция поставила ряд совершенно новых комплексных заданий перед пространственными искусствами: оформить социалистические города, дома-коммуны, парки культуры и отдыха, зеленые города, аграрные поселки, рабочие клубы, рабочий быт, одежду, массовые зрелища, рабочие комнаты. Новые задания вызвали к жизни новые виды и формы художественного труда. К числу их принадлежит и фотомонтаж.

Метод фотомонтажа органически чужд той художественной лжи, которая выдает приспособленческую халтуру импрессионистических и натуралистических эпигонов за выражение образов революции. Фотомонтаж обладает богатейшими техническими приемами выразительности. Приемы

Г. ИЛЮЦИС, 1928 Г.

Г. ИЛЮЦИС, 1928 Г.

Г. ИЛЮЦИС, 1928 Г.

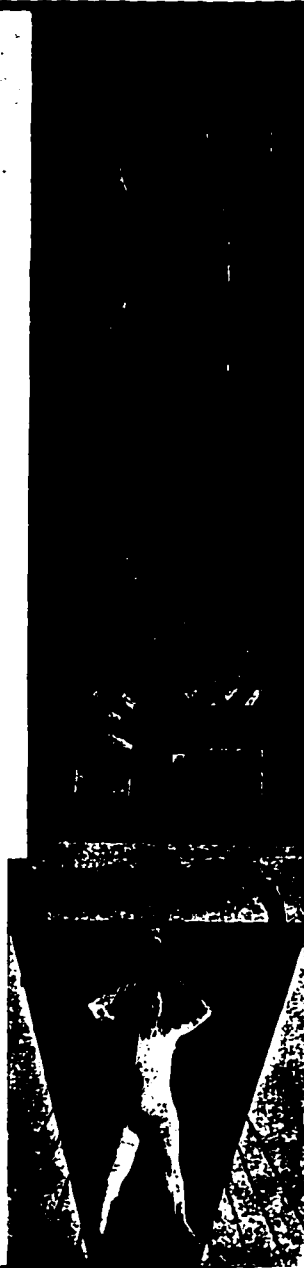


Fig. 112



Fig. 113



Fig. 114



Fig. 115



Fig. 116



Fig. 117



Fig. 118

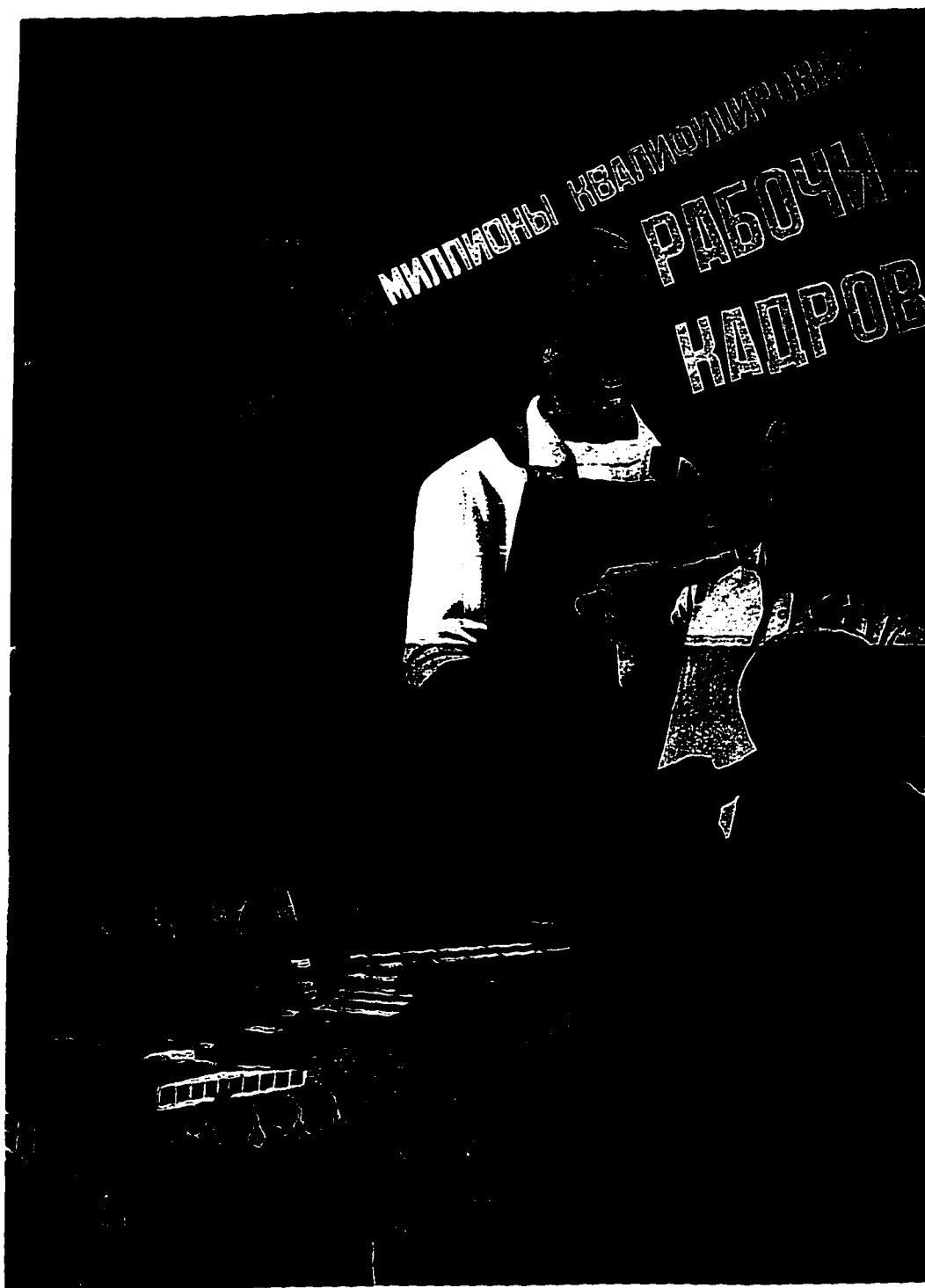


Fig. 119



Fig. 120



Fig. 121



Fig. 122

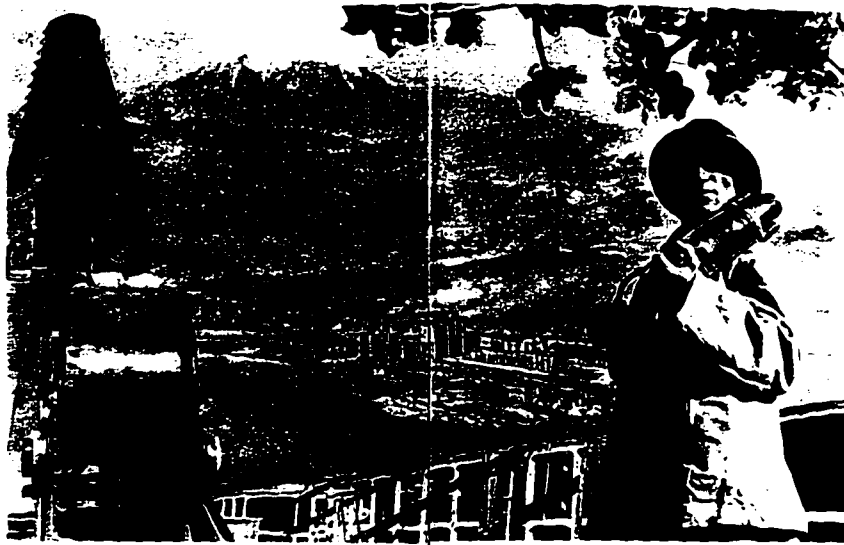


Fig. 123

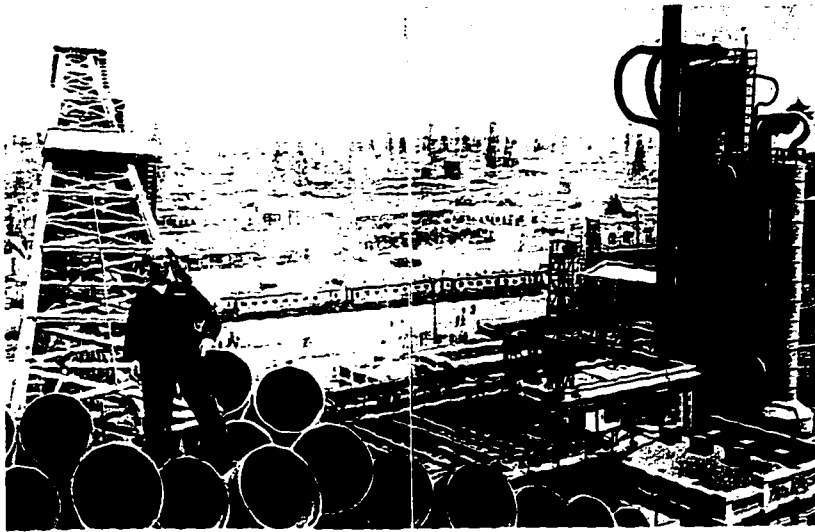


Fig. 124

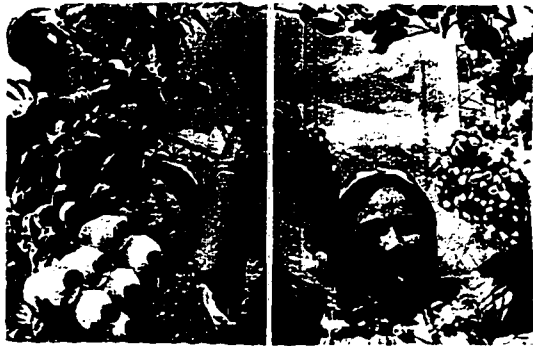


Fig. 125



Fig. 126

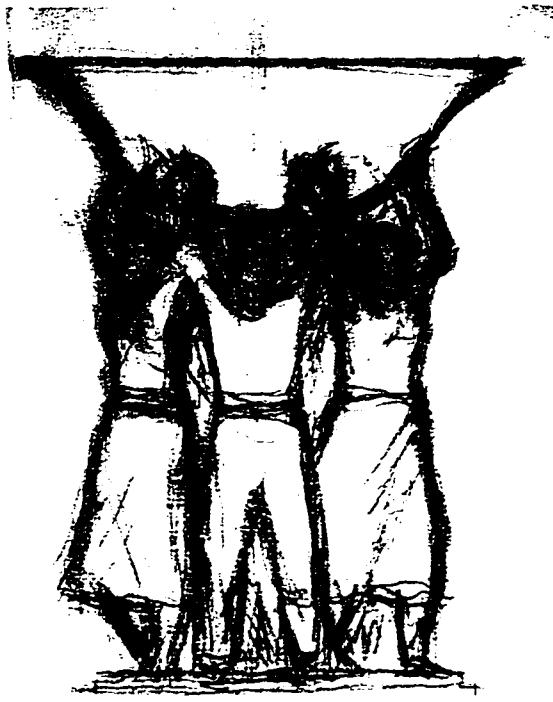


Fig. 127



Fig. 128

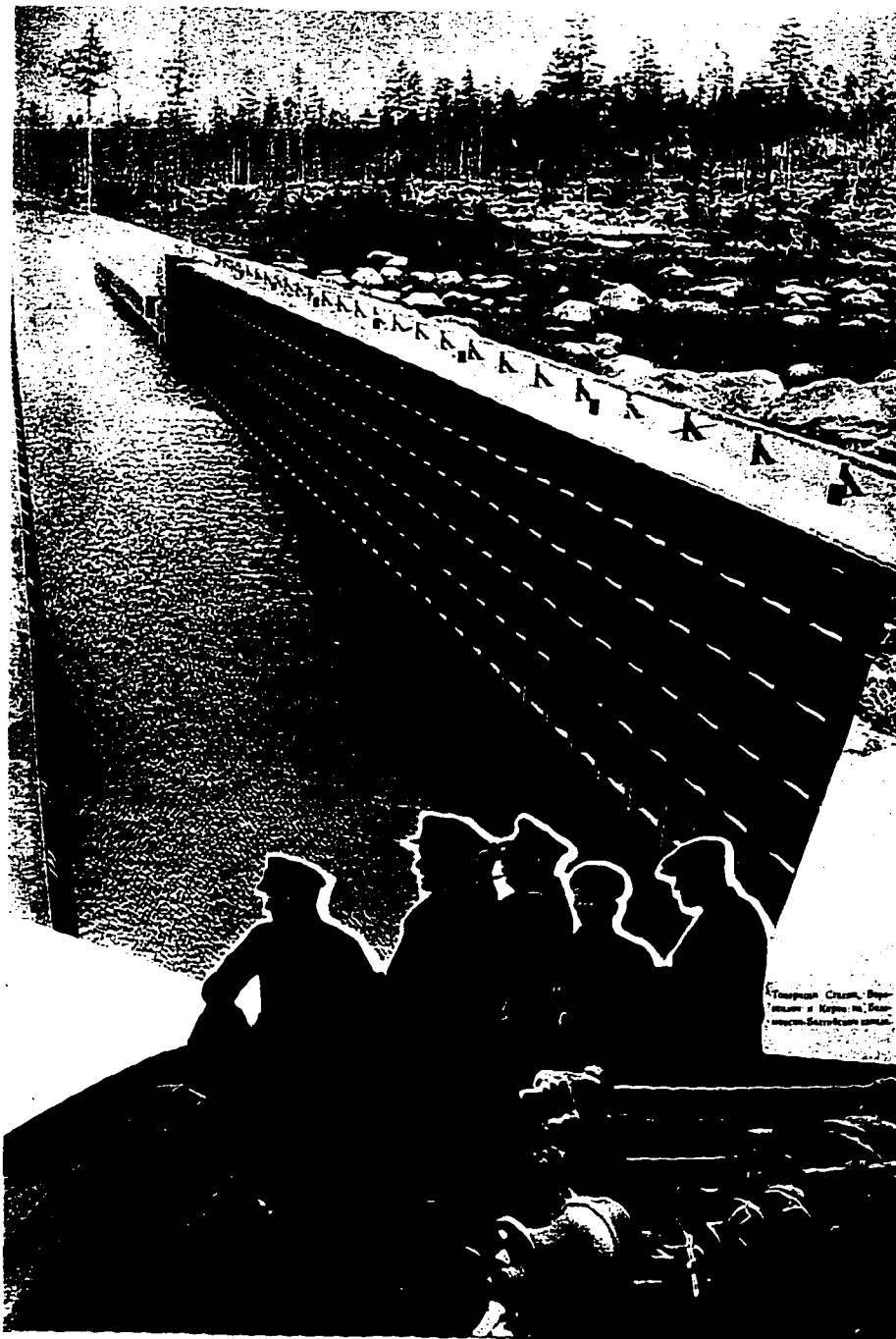


Fig. 129



Fig. 130



Fig. 131



Fig. 132



Fig. 133



Fig. 134



Fig. 135

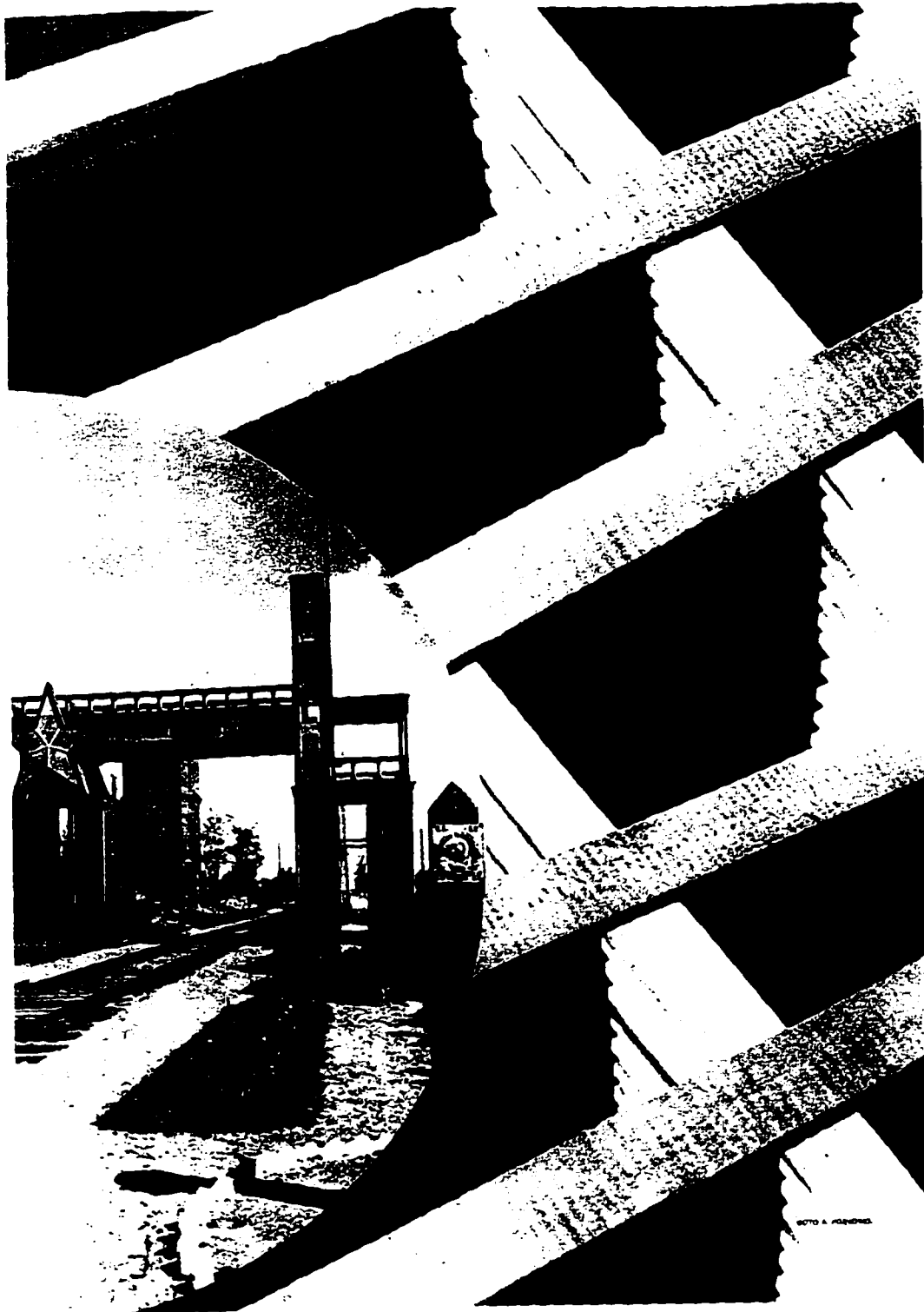


Fig. 136

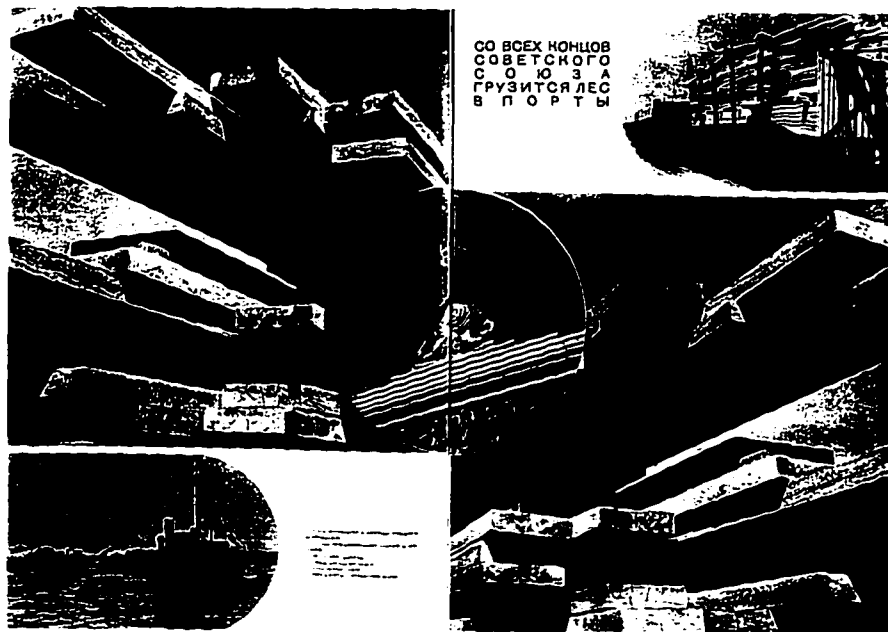


Fig. 137

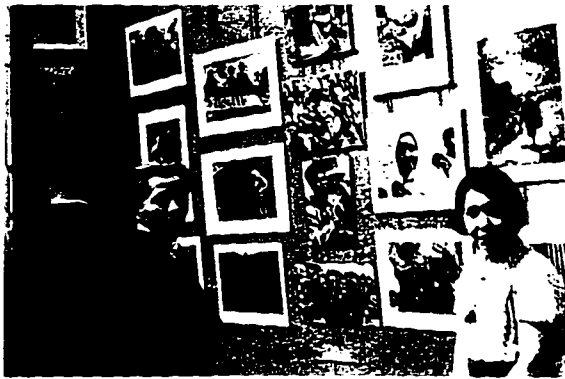


Fig. 138



Fig. 139



Fig. 140



ЛАЙГМАН Е. М. • п. Общественные на пуске Кривогогого. 1-11

Fig. 141

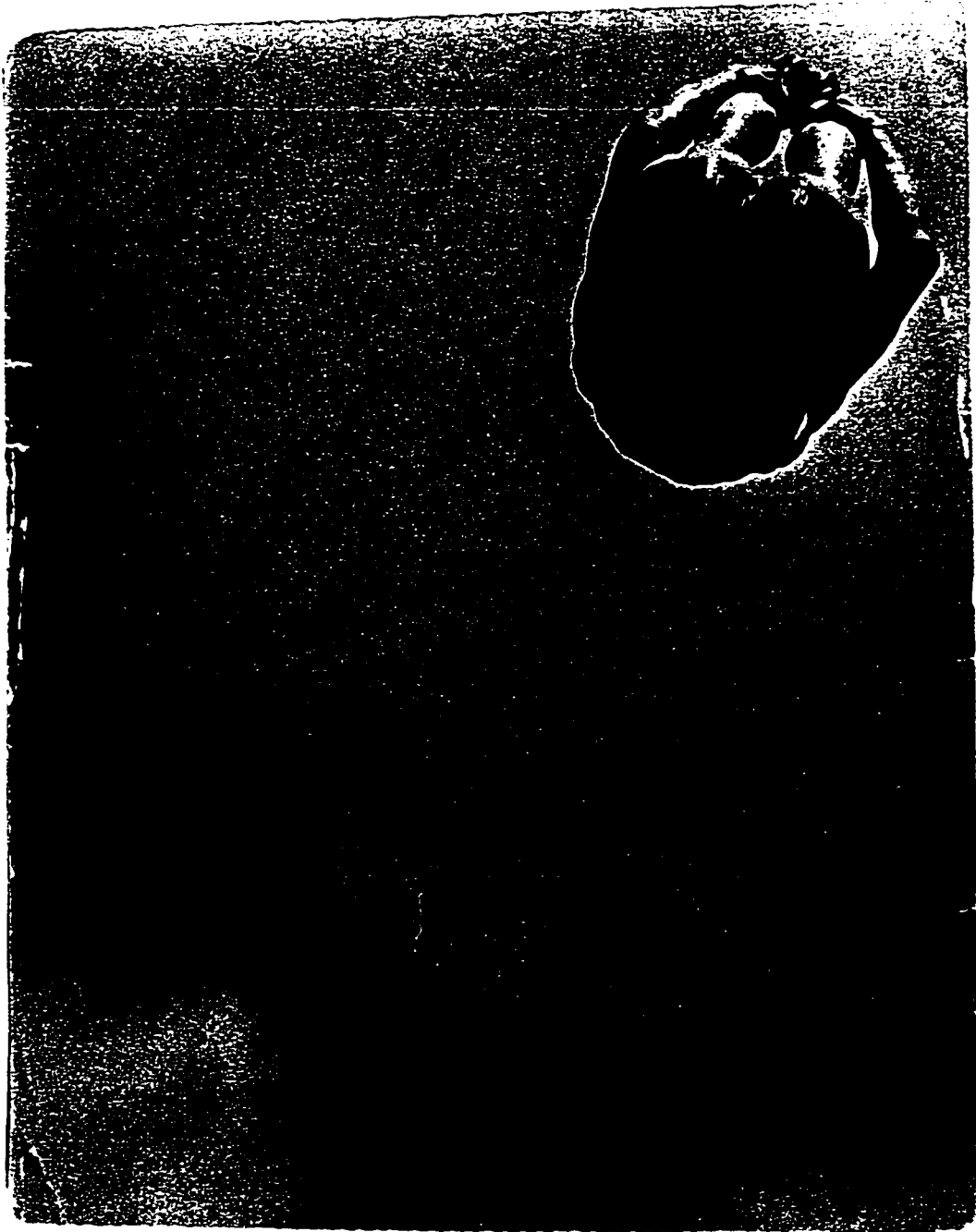


Fig. 142



Fig. 143

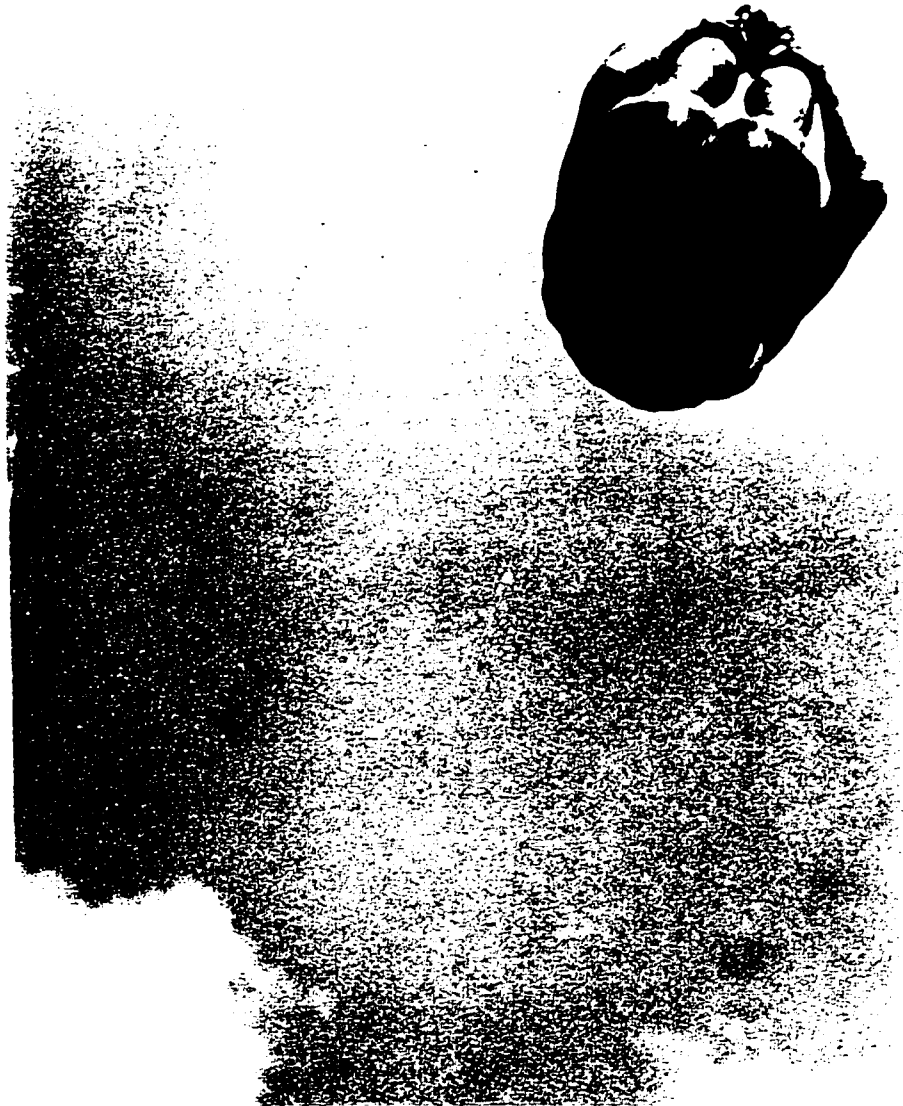


Fig. 144



Fig. 145



Fig. 146



Fig. 147



Fig. 148



К. Пастернак. Одеяло на тумбочке в комнате. На заднем плане в полутьме видны фигуры людей.



К. Пастернак. Талантливый человек. Актерская работа Пастернака.

Fig. 149



Fig. 150



Fig. 151



С **НИ**
ОВЕТСКОЕ
ФОТО

Камюфляж

Март 1936

Fig. 152

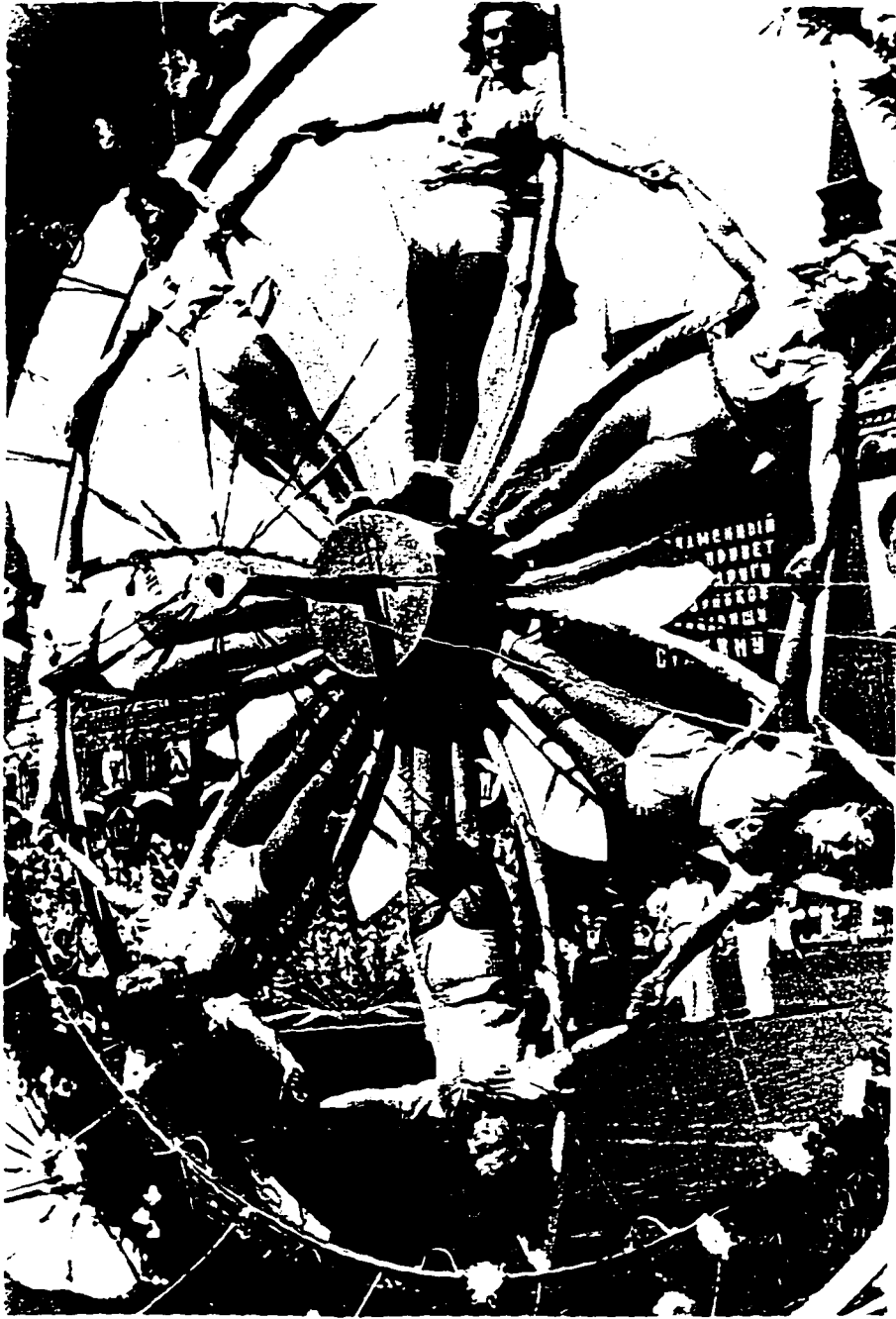


Fig. 153



Fig. 154



Fig. 155

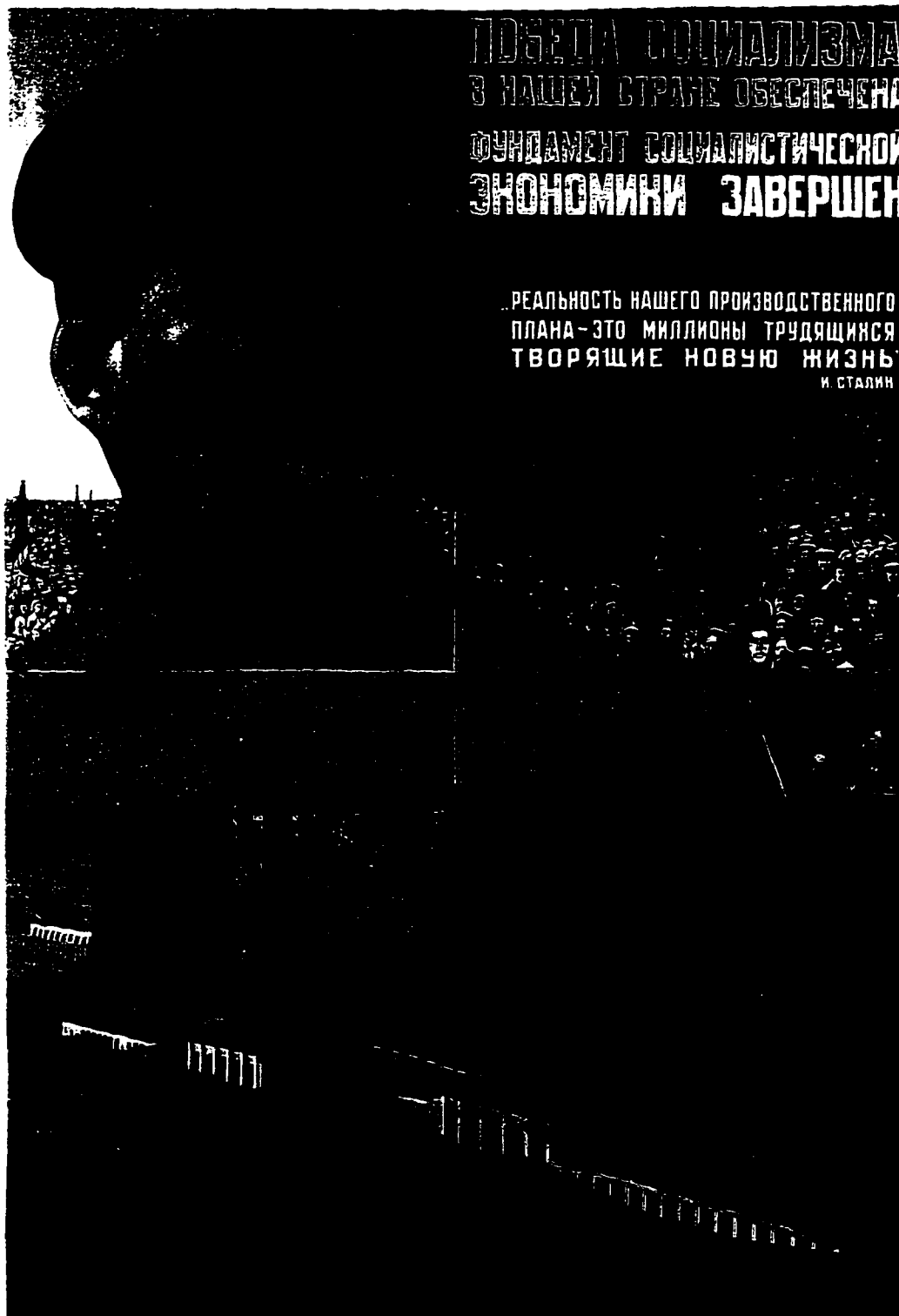


Fig. 156



Fig. 157



Fig. 158

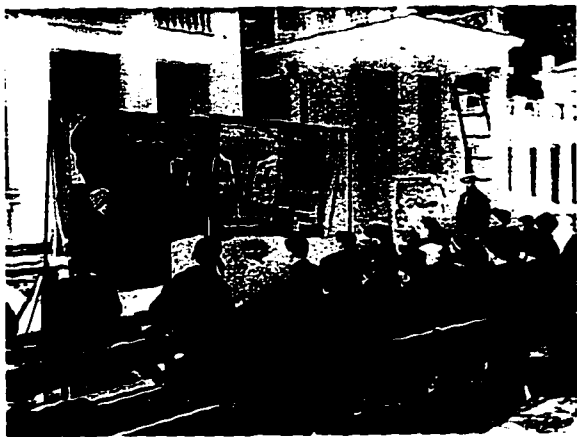


Fig. 159

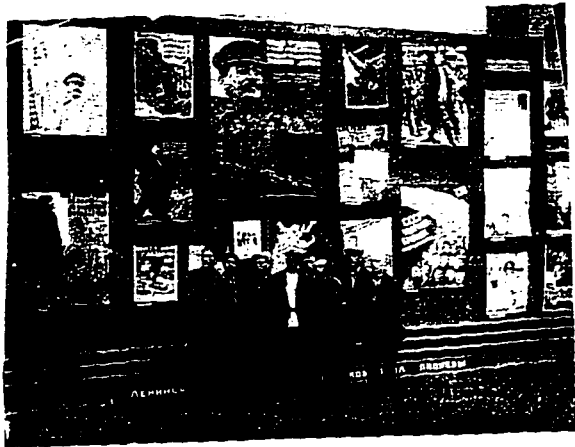


Fig. 160



Fig. 161



Fig. 162



Fig. 163



Fig. 164



Fig. 165



Fig. 166

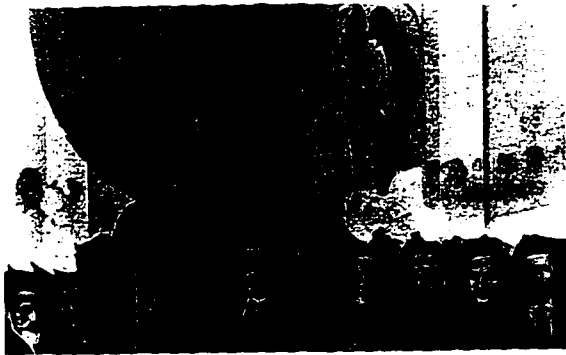


Fig. 167

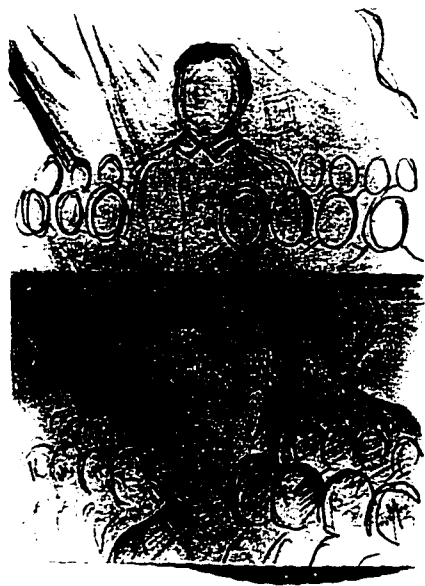


Fig. 168



Fig. 169



Fig. 170

Bibliography

Archives Consulted

Ignatovich Family Archive

Klutsis Family Archive

Lenin Library

Rodchenko Family Archive

Sen'kin Family Archive

Sovetskoe foto

TsGALI

Periodicals Consulted

Daesh

Kino-Fot

LEF

Novyi LEF

Proletarskoe foto

Sovetskoe foto

SSSR na stroike

30 Dnei

Books

Adorno, Theodor W., Negative Dialectics, New York: Continuum, 1987

AKhRR: Sbornik vospominanii, statei, dokumentov, Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1973.

Antologija sovetskoj fotografii, vol. 1 and vol.2, Moskva: Planeta, 1986-1987.

Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932 (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).

The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 1980.

Aumont, Jacques, Montage Eisenstein, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley, and Andrew Ross, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Bakhtin, Mikhail and Medvedev, P.N., The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics, trans. Albert J. Wehrle, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Barthes, Roland, Writing Degree Zero, New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.

Barthes, Roland, Image, Music, Text, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Benjamin, Walter, Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz, New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1978.

Benjamin, Walter, Moscow Diary, ed. Gary Smith, trans. Richard Sieburth, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Bois, Yve-Alain, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," Art in America, April 1988.

Buchloh, Benjamin H. D., "From Faktura to Factography," October, no. 30, Fall 1984.

Burger, Peter, Theory of the Avant-Garde, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Chudakov, Grigory, Pioneers of Soviet Photography: London: Thames and Hudson, 1983.

Cinema in Revolution, Schnitzer, Luda, Schnitzer, Jean and Martin, Marcel, eds., New York: Da Capo Press, 1973.

Deleuze, Gilles, Cinema 1: The Movement Image, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Erlich, Victor, Russian Formalism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

Gassner, Hubertus, Rodchenko Fotografien, Munchen: Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, 1982.

German Expressionism: Documents From the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism, Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1993.

Die Gleichschaltung der Bilder: Pressefotografie 1930-1935, ed. Diethart Kerbs, Berlin: Frolich & Kaufmann, 1983.

Gouldner, Alvin W., Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

The Great Utopia, New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992.

John Heartfield, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992.

Hiroaki, Kuromiya, Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Huyssen, Andreas, After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na fronte prostranstvennykh iskusstv. Sbornik statei ob'edineniia Oktiabr', Leningrad i Moskva: Izofront, 1931.

Jameson, Fredric, The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, vol.2: The Syntax of History, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Khan-Magomedov, Selim O., Rodchenko: The Complete Work, Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1987.

Gustav Klutssis: Retrospektive, Gassner, Hubertus and Nachtigaller, Roland, eds., Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1991.

El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts, Lissitzky-Kuppers, Sophie, ed., London: Thames and Hudson, 1968.

El Lissitzky, 1890-1941, Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1990.

El Lissitzky: Maler Architekt Typograf Fotograf, exh. cat. Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle, 1982.

El Lissitzky, Cambridge, Mass: Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1987.

Literatura Fakta, Chuzhak, Nikolai, ed., Moskva, 1929.

Lodder, Christina, Russian Constructivism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Lukacs, Georg, History and Class Consciousness, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971.

Lukacs, Georg, Realism in Our Time, New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Lukacs, Georg, Essays on Realism, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Benington, Geoff and Massumi, Brian, eds., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1979

Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, eds. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison, New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

Montage and Modern Life, 1919-1942, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992.

Oginskaia, Larisa, Gustav Klutssis, Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1981.

Photography at the Bauhaus, ed. Jeannine Fiedler, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940, Phillips, Christopher, ed., New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., A History of Russia, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Rodchenko, A.M. Stat'i, vospominaniia, avtobiograficheskie zapiski, pis'ma, Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1982.

Aleksandr Rodchenko, Elliot, David, ed., Oxford: Oxford Museum of Modern Art, 1979.

Rowell, Margit and Rudenstine, Zander Angelica, Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia: Selections From the George Costakis Collection, New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1981.

Ruskaia Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia kritika: 1917-1941, Denisova, L.F. and Bespalova, N.I. eds., Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1982.

Sovetskaia fotografiia za desiat' let, exh. cat., Moskva, 1928.

Sovetskoe iskusstvo za 15 let: materialy i dokumentatsiia, Matsa, I, ed., OGIZ-IZOGIZ, Moskva, 1933.

Sergej Tretjakov: Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers. Aufsätze, Reportagen, Portrats, ed. Heiner Boehncke, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1972.

Voloshinov, Vladimir, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Za bol'shevitskii plakat, Moskva/Leningrad: OGIZ-IZOGIZ, 1932.