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BENGT JANGFELDT

**MAJAKOVSKIJ  
AND  
FUTURISM  
1917–1921**

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# MAJAKOVSKIJ AND FUTURISM

1917–1921

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som för vinnande av doktorsexamen med fakultetens tillstånd framlägges  
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AV

BENGT JANGFELDT

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**BENGT JANGFELDT**  
**Majakovskij and Futurism**  
**1917-1921**



# MAJAKOVSKIJ AND FUTURISM

## 1917-1921

By  
Bengt Jangfeldt

Всегда требуют, чтобы искусство было понятно, но никогда не требуют от себя приспособить свою голову к пониманию.

К. Малевич, "О новых системах в искусстве", 1919.

People always demand of art that it be comprehensible, but they never demand of themselves that they adapt their mind to comprehension.

K. Malevič, "On New Systems in Art", 1919.

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*For my parents,  
Birgit and Bengt Jangfeldt*



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## Introduction

In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, a revolution within all fields of art took place about a decade before the political and economical revolution of 1917. During this decade the conception of art was expanded, and the view on the ends and means of art was thoroughly changed. Malevič wrote in 1920: “Кубизм и футуризм были движения революционные в искусстве, предупредившие и революцию в экономической политической жизни 1917 года.”<sup>1</sup> Due to political and economical circumstances, however, the revolution made by the artists had remained a revolution for the artists themselves and for a minority of understanding sympathizers.

The revolutions of 1917—especially the October Revolution—were to change this situation. Unique possibilities were opened to the artists and poets: now, for the first time in history, they could participate in the building of a completely new society; now they were given a chance to develop, on a broader basis, their artistic systems, and to make these artistic principles influence life itself. “Art onto the streets!”, became the slogan of the day—art should be a part of life, the principles that governed art should govern life as well.

Of the artists and writers, the Futurists were the first to cooperate with the new political power. This thesis deals with some aspects of the development of Vladimir Majakovskij and Futurism during the first post-revolutionary years. Majakovskij’s activities in these years can be divided into two periods, which could be called the “Kafe Poëtov” and the “Iskusstvo Kommuny” periods, respectively.

The first period lasted from the October Revolution until the late spring of 1918. During this time Majakovskij resumed his contacts with his old Cubo-Futurist companions Vasilij Kamenskij and David Burljuk. They organized in Moscow “Kafe Poëtov”, where they appeared together and read poetry and provoked the audience as they had done before the Revolution. In March, 1918, they published *Gazeta Futuristov*, which contained manifestos that were to form a theoretical base for Majakovskij’s polemics in the years to follow.

This was the last time that the three poets appeared as a group. In the spring of 1918 Burljuk left Moscow for Siberia, and the group thereby lost its organizer. Furthermore, it soon became clear, at least to Majakovskij, that the resumption of the café tradition of early Futurism was not satisfactory as a means of expressing support of the Revolution. In the fall of 1918, therefore, Majakovskij began to work in the art section (IZO) of the Commissariat of Enlightenment. This marks the beginning of the second period.

IZO soon became a bastion for the Futurists. Now, the word "Futurism" was given a completely new meaning after the Revolution. In the first post-revolutionary years the term was used vaguely by the critics to denote *all* avant-garde artists and poets—as a synonym for "leftist", a term that was no more exact. This meant that all "left-wing artists" were called "Futurists", whether they were "real" Futurists, or Cubists, Suprematists, Constructivists, etc., or simply avant-garde artists with no special label.

During 1918 representatives of the avant-garde gathered around IZO in increasing numbers. To IZO belonged, *inter alia*, David Šterenberg, Vladimir Tatlin, Natan Al'tman, Nikolaj Punin, Osip Brik, and Vladimir Majakovskij. Punin said of the work in IZO: "Впервые, вероятно, во всей европейской истории художники и притом еще наиболее молодые и 'радикально настроенные' получили возможность осуществлять свои, может быть, мало продуманные, но острые и несомненно творческие идеи."<sup>2</sup>

IZO's main task was to reorganize art education, and in October, 1918, the first "Svobodnye Masterskie" were opened in Petrograd. To the general public, however, the IZO Futurists became known—and even notorious—first of all because of their controversial views on questions of art, and especially on the cultural heritage. These views they expressed mainly in the IZO papers *Iskusstvo Kommuny* (Petrograd) and *Iskusstvo* (Moscow). The members of IZO represented the most advanced conceptions of contemporary art, and they struggled hard for the victory of "new art" over the "old". This struggle was often seen as an expression of contempt for the cultural heritage, and sometimes the avant-gardists' choice of expression was no doubt excessively provocative. As I shall try to show, however, it was never a question of contempt for the old culture as such, but a struggle against the *influence* of the old art on the creation of contemporary art. As one critic wrote: "Все это — следствие того пристрастия,

той страсти, без которой немислимо подлинное творчество. Это та творческая независимость, которой живо искусство, ибо на дне этой ненависти лежит любовь к человечеству и к обновленной жизни.”<sup>3</sup>

Majakovskij participated actively in this struggle. The great majority of Majakovskij's poems during 1918 and 1919 treated the question of the cultural heritage and were of a strongly polemical character. These poems were printed as *editorials* in the IZO papers, and can thus be seen as an expression of the views of IZO as a whole, i.e. of the leading avant-garde artists and poets of the period.

Majakovskij's poems and other polemical activities during this second period must be treated from two points of view: on the one hand, they were realizations of the manifestos printed in *Gazeta Futuristov*; on the other, they must be judged in connection with the contemporary debates on art and with the views expressed by Majakovskij's Futurist colleagues. Majakovskij's esthetic views were in full harmony with those of the other IZO Futurists. There have often been attempts to treat Majakovskij's development as a gradual "departure from Futurism", especially on the part of Soviet scholars. Majakovskij remained an avant-gardist all his life, and he was no less "Futurist" in the years following the Revolution than he had been during the pre-revolutionary period. Futurism was not a static school, but a revolutionary attitude to life and art.

The second period ended in October, 1919, when Majakovskij started to work for Rosta. Since the Rosta period is well documented, however, it is not treated in this thesis.

The two phases of Majakovskij's development in 1917-1919 are treated in the first three chapters. It has not been my intention, however, to provide an exhaustive or "final" picture of Majakovskij's activities in these years. My task has been to bring to light materials that are little known or, in some cases, completely unknown, and to point to connections and relations that have hitherto been more or less neglected. This thesis is a first attempt, based on broad studies of press and archive materials, to treat in detail Majakovskij's connections with the IZO avant-garde and his participation in *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. Strangely enough, *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and the role Majakovskij played there have never been the subject of a special study. Edward J. Brown even talks about it in his book on Majakovskij as a "dull paper".<sup>4</sup> This is a most questionable judgment. In my opinion,



*Iskusstvo Kommuny*—the forerunner of *Lef* and *Novyj Lef*—must be regarded not only as an extremely interesting paper but also as one of the central publications of the contemporary European avant-garde. Due to the negative opinion of most Majakovskij scholars, however, it has remained unexplored.

The remaining two chapters deal with problems that have also never been the subject of special studies.

One of these problems is the relationship between the Futurists and Proletkul't. Both the Futurists and Proletkul't claimed to represent the proletariat in the cultural field, and therefore fought each other with the strength and ferocity of arch enemies. Proletkul't was a workers' organization and could as such claim to be more representative of the proletariat than the Futurists. On the other hand, the Futurists stood on a higher level professionally and could claim that only their advanced artistic theories and practice were worthy of the proletariat. Although both the Futurists and Proletkul't were regarded by the Communist Party as un-Marxist and negative movements and were equally condemned, there are more differences between them than similarities. The Futurists and Proletkul't had different views on most questions: the conception of "proletarian culture", form *vis à vis* content, amateurism *vis à vis* professionalism. Even their views on the culture of the past, which at a superficial glance may seem identical, are shown to be of a different, even contradictory character.

The last chapter brings to light materials concerning the attempts of the Futurists to make Futurism a recognized movement, and even a "cultural ideology" of the Party. This wish was dictated not only by ideological considerations, i.e. not only by the fact that the Futurists were a revolutionary, Bolshevik-oriented group, but also by more practical reasons. The Futurists had to prove to the Party that they had the support of the workers, and therefore they tried, in January, 1919, to organize a Communist-Futurist collective within the Viborg Party District. This step, however, failed, since the Party refused to register the Communist-Futurists as a Party collective. Nevertheless, the idea did not die, and the need to organize did not diminish—the Futurists encountered great resistance all the while and were accused of being "incomprehensible" to the masses. The opposition to the publication and staging of Majakovskij's "Misterija-buff" led in January, 1921, to the creation of a second Communist-Futurist

collective and, ultimately, to contacts with Nikolaj Čužak and the Far Eastern group of Futurists. Obviously, in the winter and spring of 1921 Majakovskij felt a great need to create an organization that would be able to defend the interests of the Futurists and withstand the opposition from the Party and from conservative critics.

\*

Neglect of Majakovskij's "Iskusstvo Kommuny" period is also responsible for the circumstance that some of the poems published by Majakovskij in this paper were not printed in their original version in the poet's last *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*. As N. I. Xardžiev has pointed out, Majakovskij took almost no interest in the fate of his texts: "Известно, что, переиздавая свои стихи, Маяковский чрезвычайно редко вносил поправки в первопечатные тексты, а корректур почти не читал."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the texts of some of his poems have undergone gradual changes, due to misprints, changes by newspaper editors, etc. It is possible, of course, that Majakovskij did sometimes change his text, and therefore the question of which text should be judged as "canonical" has to be based on a concrete analysis of each separate case. In some poems printed in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* the text differs significantly from the text of *PSS*.<sup>6</sup> In those cases where the differences are of decisive importance for rhythm and meaning, I quote the text of *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. The source is then indicated as "I.K."

One example illustrates well the textual differences between *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and *PSS*. The last four lines from the poem "Radovat'sja rano" are in *PSS* as follows:

Это что!  
Пиджак сменить снаружи —  
мало, товарищи!  
Выворачивайтесь нутром!

(II, 17)<sup>7</sup>

The *Iskusstvo Kommuny* text gives the correct rhythmical and semantical reading:

Это что! —  
пиджак сменить снаружи.  
Мало товарищи!  
Выворачивайтесь нутром!

This version is also repeated in Majakovskij's first collected works, *Vse sočinnoe Vladimirom Majakovskim* (1919).

When the difference between the two texts is only a question of punctuation which does not change rhythm or meaning, I have retained the version in *PSS*. It is well known that Majakovskij never cared much for exactness in punctuation.

# I. Gazeta Futuristov

The two revolutions of 1917 made the Cubo-Futurists Vladimir Majakovskij, Vasilij Kamenskij, and David Burljuk flourish again as a group. Since the stormy appearances of early, militant Futurism in 1913–1914, Majakovskij had been more or less canonized as the leading poet of the trio. The fact that he no longer needed his comrades to promote his poetry and Futurist message, however, did not mean that he separated from them. Social activities were for natural reasons few during the war: Majakovskij was in the army, and Kamenskij and Burljuk depended very much on his talent and power of attraction. The Revolution, however, released the three poets' enthusiasm, and during the autumn of 1917 they resumed their pre-war appearances in Moscow at "Kafe Poëtov", an old laundry on the corner of Tverskaja and Nastas'inskij pereulok which they had personally furnished and decorated. Here, and occasionally in another artists' cafe, "Pitoresque", Majakovskij, Kamenskij and Burljuk once again appeared as a group.

Majakovskij's close friend Lev Grinkrug, who visited "Kafe Poëtov" almost every evening,<sup>1</sup> has furnished some interesting information on the activities there: "Ежедневно собиралась самая разнообразная публика. Здесь были и красногвардейцы, матросы, поэты, просто обыватели. Очень часто приходили анархисты, которые в то время занимали по соседству дом бывш. купеческого клуба на М. Дмитровке. Время от времени они устраивали скандалы со стрельбой, пока не были полностью ликвидированы.

Футуристы выступали со стихами, агитационными речами, ругали обывателей, которым, по-видимому, это очень нравилось, так как публика валила сюда в огромном количестве. К 12-ти часам ночи кафе было забито людьми, никого уже не выпускали. И так продолжалось изо дня в день.

Но скоро всем это надоело. Поэты постепенно перестали ходить в кафе и оно стало хиреть, а вскоре и совсем закрылось."<sup>2</sup>

Majakovskij was at first enthusiastic about “Kafe Poëtov”. He wrote in a letter to Lili Brik (middle of December, 1917): “Кафе пока очень милое и веселое учреждение. (‘Собака’ первых времен по веселью!) Народу битком. На полу опилки. На эстраде мы [...]. Публику шлем к чертовой матери. Деньги делим в двенадцать часов ночи. [...] Футуризм в большом фаворе” (XIII, 29). By early 1918, however, he seems to have become tired of “sending the audience to blazes”: “Кафе омерзело мне. Мелкий клоповничек.”<sup>3</sup>

The revolution in October, 1917, aroused the Futurists’ enthusiasm. The question, however, is whether resuming the café tradition of *la belle époque* was the right way to channel this enthusiasm. “Скоро всем это надоело”, Lev Grinkrug recalls, and this was quite natural: café appearances were an out-of-date form that little agreed with the stern reality of the Revolution and the demands it made upon those who claimed to support it. “Kafe Poëtov” was closed down on April 14, 1918.<sup>4</sup>

During the “Kafe Poëtov” period, however, the Futurists managed to publish a newspaper. According to Lev Grinkrug, Majakovskij often spoke at this time of the need of a mouthpiece for the Futurists’ ideas and poetry.<sup>5</sup> In March, 1918, *Gazeta Futuristov* appeared. This was a kind of leaflet the size of a daily newspaper, printed on both sides. Four fifths of it consisted of the three Futurists’ own materials: poems, manifestos, articles.

*Gazeta Futuristov* was printed and published by the poets themselves on funds provided by Lev Grinkrug.<sup>6</sup> The idea was that the income from the sale of the first issue would pay for the printing of those to follow. Lev Grinkrug recalls: “Сами мы были и корректорами и выпускающими, и чуть-ли не сами ее печатали, проводя большую часть своего времени, в дни печатанья, в типографии.”<sup>7</sup> Majakovskij wrote in a letter to Lili Brik: “С девяти в типографии. Сейчас издаем ‘Газету Футуристов’” (XII, 31).

The paper, then, appeared on March 15, 1918. Its publisher was announced as “ASIS (Associacija socialističeskogo iskusstva)”,<sup>8</sup> and its editorial board as “Gazetn. kolegija Federacii Futuristov”. The address of the editorial office was stated to be “Kafe Poëtov”, “eževečerne”. There would prove to be little need of a more permanent address; this first issue hardly sold at all, so no money was obtained for further publication. Lev Grinkrug remembers: “[...] ни одна

организация, ни одна артель газетчиков не соглашались распространять ее на общих основаниях, как это делалось со всеми центральными газетами, но и не соглашались взять ее на комиссию. Тогда избрали другой путь. Мы с Маяковским на извозчике объезжали все газетные киоски и отдельных газетчиков и уговаривали их взять газету на комиссию, обещая всяческие льготы, но даже и на этих условиях не все газетчики соглашались ее взять. Их пугало одно название ‘Газета Футуристов’. Раздав таким образом некоторое количество, мы каждый день ходили к тем же газетчикам и спрашивали о результатах. С грустью узнавали, что осталось еще много. Каково же было наше разочарование, когда недели через две после этого мы снова объездили всех газетчиков и получили обратно много газет и такую микроскопическую сумму денег, что ее не только не хватило на издание второго номера газеты, но, кажется, не хватило и на оплату извозчика, на котором мы ездили.”<sup>9</sup> According to Grin-krug, the leftover copies were given to friends and acquaintances or handed out at Majakovskij’s public appearances.

\*

The poems published by Majakovskij in *Gazeta Futuristov* were “Revoljucija. Poëtoxronika”, which had already been printed once, in May, 1917, and “Naš marš”, which, although written at the end of 1917, was here published for the first time.

Kamenskij published excerpts from his long poem “Sten’ka Razin — Serdce narodnoe”, and Burljuk the poems “Prizyv”, “Moi druž’ja”, “Utverždenie bodrości”, “Utverždenie vkusa”, “Delec”, and “Trupik rebenka puti”.<sup>10</sup>

Along with these main Futurists the young and Futurist-influenced poet Sergej Spasskij contributed two poems (“Iz poëmy Rupor nad mirom” and “Kafë poëtov”), the Ego-Futurist Vasilisk Gnedov one poem (“Vystupajut žavoronki ladno ...”), and a certain “Dokto”<sup>11</sup> a single short poem.

The most important part of *Gazeta Futuristov* was, however, made up of articles and manifestos. “Dekret № 1 o demokratizacii iskusstv” and “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov” were signed by all three poets: Majakovskij, Kamenskij and Burljuk, and “Otkrytoe pis’mo rabočim” by Majakovskij alone. A short, anonymous review, “Brat-skaja mogila”, and the article “Kafe Pittoresk” were, as has been

established, written by Majakovskij.<sup>12</sup> “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov”, although signed by Majakovskij, has never been included in any edition of his collected works.<sup>13</sup>

Burljuk and Kamenskij also published one article each in the paper. Burljuk’s “Обраščenie k molodym xudožnikam” is full of enthusiasm for “the joyous light of freedom” which now reigns. With a generosity unknown to the intolerant attitude of early Futurism he now proposes: “Разделим все студии, помещения художественных школ и академий поровну между всеми направлениями — различных живописных верований, дабы каждый мог свободно работать во славу родного искусства.” This liberality is a continuation of a tendency noticeable already in an article by Burljuk from 1915.<sup>14</sup> In *Gazeta Futuristov* Burljuk opens his arms even to the “изнеженное искусство ‘Мира искусства’” and to the “консерваторы от художественной колыбели”, the latter of which are accorded as many as two studios!

Vasilij Kamenskij’s article, “Kto mne nraivsja i čto — protivno”, is typical of its author, with his very personal rhetorical and metaphorical language. It is written in the characteristic Futurist manner, with praise and glorification of the Futurists themselves, of Majakovskij, Burljuk, the painter Boris Grigor’ev, and—Vasilij Kamenskij. These are the people Kamenskij likes. What he dislikes is, among other things, that only a few people feel the greatness of Majakovskij, who is “от Сердца Человечества”; that there are fools, like the bourgeois newspapers, who will still condemn and spit at “Истину о пророках, спасающих Красоту”; that there are egoists who do not understand Vasilij Kamenskij; that the two masters Burljuk and Grigor’ev are still unknown to the whole people; and, finally, that “иные среди гостей (at “Kafe Poëtov”, В. J.) появляются с наглыми улыбками лощенных дегенератов в манжетах и мешают читать стихи, созданные для исцеления от экземы суеты”.

Another—anonymous—little notice, “Proletarskoe iskusstvo”, was probably, judging by the style, also written by Kamenskij. It contains praise of Majakovskij’s “Vojna i mir” and Kamenskij’s “Sten’ka Razin” and is of minor interest.

\*

The three theoretical declarations were all published on the first page: “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov” as editorial, “Otkrytoe

pis'mo rabočim" in the adjacent column and "Dekret № 1 o demokratizacii iskusstv" directly below. In "Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov" the three poets make concrete demands:

I. Отделение искусства от государства.

Уничтожение покровительства привилегий и контроля в области искусства. Долой дипломы, звания, официальные посты и чины.

II. Передачу всех материальных средств искусства: театров, капелл, выставочных помещений и зданий академии и художественных школ — в руки самих мастеров искусства для равноправного пользования ими всего народа искусства.

III. Всеобщее художественное образование ибо мы верим, что основы грядущего свободного искусства могут выйти только из недр демократической России, до сего времени лишь алкавшей хлеба искусства.

IV. Немедленная, на ряду с продовольственными, реквизиция всех под спудом лежащих эстетических запасов для справедливого и равномерного пользования всей России.

The most important demand here is that art should be separated from the state. This point, however, must not be read as a refusal to tackle political themes and problems, as a demand that art be separated from politics, although Majakovskij had once expressed this idea: "[...] да здравствует политическая жизнь России и да здравствует свободное от политики искусство" (XIII, 244). This proclamation had been made almost exactly a year earlier and was in March, 1918 no longer valid. What the three poets turned against was patronizing and control in the field of art. Point I. in "Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov" ("Отделение искусства от государства") was a link in the struggle for the abolishment of the Art Academy, notorious for its conservative taste and obstructive influence on new tendencies in art. This struggle had been waged for one year by the representatives of "left" art, and the Academy was, in fact, liquidated shortly after the publication of *Gazeta Futuristov* (on April 12). The first free art studios ("Gosudarstvennye Svobodnye Xudožestvenno-Učebnye Masterskie"), which any student could enter without even producing a diploma and where the students elected their teachers, were opened in Petrograd on October 10, 1918.<sup>15</sup> This step corresponded



to point III. in “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov”, and was a natural consequence of the liquidation of the Academy.<sup>16</sup> Thus, one must not identify “the state” with “politics” in this respect: the publication of *Gazeta Futuristov*, with its call for revolutionary changes and its preoccupation with the problems of art in a revolutionary society, was in itself a recognition of the interdependence of art and politics. By the end of 1918 Majakovskij had changed his position even more toward a political view of art: “Внеклассового искусства нет. Новое создаст только пролетариат, и только у нас, у футуристов, общая с пролетариатом дорога” (XII, 452).

Beside these concrete demands “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov” contains a sharp criticism of the influence of the cultural heritage on contemporary art and culture:

Старый строй держался на трех китах.

Рабство политическое, рабство социальное, рабство духовное.

Февральская революция уничтожила рабство политическое. Черными перьями двуглавого орла устлана дорога в Тобольск. Бомбу социальной революции бросил под капитал октябрь. Далеко на горизонте маячат жирные зады убегающих заводчиков. И только стоит неколеблемый третий кит — рабство Духа.

Попрежнему извергает он фонтан затхлой воды — именуемый — старое искусство.

Театры попрежнему ставят: “Иудейских” и прочих “царей” (сочинения Романовых), попрежнему памятники генералов, князей — царских любовниц и царицыных любовников тяжелой, грязной ногой стоят на горлах молодых улиц. В мелочных лавочках, называемых высокопарно выставками торгуют чистой мазней барских дочек и дачек в стиле Рококо и прочих Людовигов.

И наконец, на светлых праздниках наших поем не наши гимны, а седоволосую одолженную у французов марсельезу.

The criticism of the dominance of the culture of the past was echoed in “Otkrytoe pis'mo rabočim”:

С удивлением смотрю я, как с подмостков взятых театров звучат “Аиды” и “Травиаты” со всякими испанцами и графами, как в стихах приемлемых вами, те же розы барских оранжерей и

как разбегаются глаза ваши перед картинками, изображающими великолепие прошлого (XII, 8).

The only solution is a total change of habits and life-style. There is only one thing that can break the influence of old art and old thinking: a Revolution of the Spirit.

Только взрыв Революции Духа очистит нас от ветоши старого искусства. (“Otkrytoe pris'mo rabočim”; XII, 8)

Мы пролетарии искусства — зовем пролетариев фабрик и земель к третьей безкровной, но жестокой революции, революции Духа. (“Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov”)

The call for a Revolution of the Spirit and the struggle against the influence of the past were to remain perhaps the most spectacular feature in Majakovskij's polemics during the years to come. This problem, however, will be treated in the following chapters.

“Dekret № 1 o demokratizacii iskusstv” is, as the title indicates, a manifesto dedicated to the democratization of the arts. According to this manifesto “первая расклейка стихов и вывеска картин” would take place “день выхода нашей газеты”. This program was realized. Although Vasilij Kamenskij, whose memoirs unfortunately are of little documentary value, does not connect the display of pictures with the day of publication of *Gazeta Futuristov*,<sup>17</sup> we can nonetheless establish that this display actually took place. A contemporary article notes: “Недавно один футурист вывесил свою картину на углу Кузнецкого моста. Газеты иронизировали по этому поводу, но в действительности в этом поступке лежала здравая идея.”<sup>18</sup> Osip Brik, who in March, 1918, was living in Petrograd but should still be a competent witness, states that this picture-exhibition did indeed take place on March 15: “[...] три небольшие футуристические картины были в день выхода ‘Газеты Футуристов’, 15 марта 1918, вывешены на углу Кузнецкого моста и Неглинного проезда на высоте второго этажа”.<sup>19</sup> It was undoubtedly David Burljuk who hung up these pictures.<sup>20</sup>

It is not certain, however, that this was the *first* “расклейка стихов и вывеска картин”. Kamenskij, as noted above, does not connect the picture-exhibition with *Gazeta Futuristov* but sets it earlier; but in view of the fact that Kamenskij's memory functions more literarily than documentarily, this is nothing to rely on. There is no doubt

whatsoever, though, that *Gazeta Futuristov* was in fact pasted up on walls and fences.<sup>21</sup> We can assume that such “publications” were in fact a typical sign of the times. In an announcement in *Gazeta Futuristov* “Letučaja Federacija Futuristov, oratorov, poëtov, živopiscev” volunteered: “Бесплатно выступаем речами, стихами, картинами во всех рабочих аудиториях, жаждующих революционного творчества.” This promise was kept; not, however, in well-organized form until towards the end of 1918, when the Futurists (Majakovskij, Brik, Punin, and others) began appearing before workers’ audiences and the Kom-Fut organization was founded (see chap. V, “Kom-Fut”).

Ideas were presented in “Dekret № 1 o demokratizacii iskusstv” which might seem too fantastic and hyperbolized to be realized:

1. Отныне вместе с уничтожением царского строя *отменяется проживание искусства* в кладовых, сараях человеческого гения — дворцах, галереях, салонах, библиотеках, театрах.

2. Во имя великой поступи равенства каждого пред культурой *Свободное слово* творческой личности пусть будет написано на перекрестках домовых стен, заборов, крыш, улиц наших городов, селений и на спинах автомобилей, экипажей, трамваев и на платьев всех граждан.

3. Пусть самоцветными радугами перекинутся *картины* (краски) на улицах и площадях от дома к дому, радуя, облагораживая глаз (вкус) прохожего.

Художники и писатели обязаны немедленно взять горшки с красками и кистями своего мастерства иллюминировать, разрисовать все бока, лбы и груди городов, вокзалов и вечно бегущих стай железнодорожных вагонов.

[...]

Пусть улицы будут праздником искусства для всех.

(XII, 443)

Such ideas were often repeated by Majakovskij and other leftist artists during the first years of the Revolution. Majakovskij expressed them in his poetry as follows:

На улицу тащите рояли,  
барабан из окна багром!  
[...]

Из сердца старое вытри.  
Улицы — наши кисти.  
Площади — наши палитры.  
[...]  
На улицы, футуристы,  
барабанщики и поэты!

(“Prikaz po armii iskusstva”; II, 14–15)

... новый грядет архитектор —  
это мы,  
иллюминаторы завтрашних городов.

(“My idem”; II, 31)

Vasilij Kamenskij's “DEKRET o zabornoj literature, o rospisi ulic, o balkonax s muzykoj, o karnavalax iskusstv”<sup>22</sup> was a direct poetical parallel to “Dekret № 1 o demokratizacii iskusstv”:

Давайте все пустые заборы,  
Крыши, фасады, тротуары,  
Распишем во славу вольности [...]

*Поэты!*

Берите кисти, ну,  
И афиши — листы со стихами,  
По улицам с лестницей  
Расклейте жизни истину [...]

*Художники!*

Великие Бурлюки,  
Прибывайте к домам карнавалюно  
Ярчайшие свои картины,  
Тащите с плакатами тюки,  
Расписывайте стены гениально,  
И площади, и вывески, и витрины.

*Музыканты!*

Ходите с постаментами,  
Раздавайте ноты-законы,  
Влезайте с инструментами  
Играть перед народом на балконы.

The Futurists' decree may, as we have already mentioned, seem somewhat over-enthusiastic, but every point of it was none the less realized in one way or another within the near future. In commemoration of the first anniversary of the Revolution, in October, 1918, both Moscow and Petrograd and several smaller cities besides were decorated in a manner which well agrees with the theses of the decree. I shall not take up these decorations here, since they have been well documented,<sup>23</sup> but shall restrict myself to quoting a report from Mark Šagal, who was working at this time in Vitebsk: "В этой провинциальной 'дыре' [...] раскачивалось многосаженное революционное творчество. [...] К моменту Октябрьской годовщины губерния Витебская была разукрашена около 450 большими плакатами, многочисленными знаменами для рабочих организаций, трибунами и арками."<sup>24</sup>

The Futurists themselves, of course, were responsible for the most daring and provocative experiments. "Кто, кроме футуристов, закрасит забор, что около Газетного переулка,<sup>25</sup> в 24 часа, чье искусство не испугается улицы", Majakovskij asked rhetorically.<sup>26</sup> One of the most spectacular attempts to bring art out "into the streets" was made by the artist Lentulov, who for the October celebration in Moscow painted the trees outside the Bolšoj Teatr and in Aleksandrovskij Park lilac and red, respectively.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, there was a good measure of prophecy in the seemingly fantastic ideas of the decree. When, in point 3, the Futurists call upon artists to decorate "the ever onrushing flocks of railroad cars", we must bear in mind that the first decorated agitation train was not to depart until August 13, 1918, five months after the appearance of *Gazeta Futuristov!*<sup>28</sup>

"Dekret № 1 о демократизации искусства" and "My idem" talk about "illjuminovat'" and "illjuminatory". In this context the words are synonymous with "decorate". "Illjuminacija gorodov", however, was given a more concrete expression on the first anniversary of the Revolution in Moscow, when Tatlin, Dymšic-Tolstaja, Kuznecov and Šapošnikov (as representatives for the Narkompros art section, IZO) in cooperation with "Artilleriskoe, Inženernoe, Aviacionnoe ведомства i Vysšaja škola Krasko-maskirovki" undertook to arrange "pyrotechnical illuminations".<sup>29</sup> These illuminations were to consist of projectors set up on the outskirts of the city and at several points in the center. The rays from the projectors "будут образовывать

на небе сложный движущийся рисунок, выработанный группой художников, ответственных за художественное качество иллюминации”.<sup>30</sup> The artists were also responsible for the rockets and signal fires which “одновременно и в известной последовательности” were to be launched and lit in various parts of the city. This was the plan; the organizers, however, received less money than they had asked for, and the whole affair as it was actually realized was somewhat more modest.<sup>31</sup>

The artist Ivan Puni, in a survey he made in 1919 of the left-wing groups in contemporary Russian art, saw Majakovskij’s lines “Улицы — наши кисти. Площади — наши палитры” to be symptomatic of the Futurists’ (here: the group around Majakovskij — Osip Brik, Nikolaj Punin, Boris Kušner, Natan Al’tman, and others) conception of the art of the future as “искусство — творчество жизни”. This view of art was manifested already in “Dekret № 1 о демократизации искусства”, and the Futurists adhered to and developed it further during the next few years. Puni formulated it as follows: “Здесь мы [...] встречаемся с ясно и определенно выраженной тенденцией выйти за пределы замкнутого в себе художественного произведения, т. е. с тенденцией ликвидации искусства, как отдельной дисциплины.”<sup>32</sup> The Futurists’ attempt to break out of the confines of the traditional artistic framework, however, did not find much favor with others, especially not in the Party and the working class. The reception given these Futurist experiments will be treated in the next chapter.

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As we have seen, *Gazeta Futuristov* was marked by an ample measure of enthusiasm and contained a number of promises and pledges concerning art and its role in a revolutionary society. The promises and demands that were presented in the paper were in step with the times: the Revolution gave birth to optimism and confidence in all the artistic groups (above all those on the left wing) which had begun the artistic revolution much earlier, around 1910. The reason why *Gazeta Futuristov* remained an isolated phenomenon must be sought in two quarters: for one thing, the tone of the paper was entirely too provocative and individualistic (which was pointed out by its critics; see below). For another, the political situation was so chaotic that such a leaflet easily disappeared in the multitude of various sorts of occasional publications.

It is of interest to examine how two important but different critics like Viktor Xovin and Boris Kušner reacted to *Gazeta Futuristov*. In their articles they point to two reasonable explanations for the failure of *Gazeta Futuristov*, and their respective views reflect two attitudes to the role of art in society that were typical of the period.

Viktor Xovin, who had earlier published *Očarovannyj strannik* and was at this time editor and publisher of the journal *Knižnyj ugol*, was known for his attitude that art should be apolitical. In the spring of 1918 he published at his own expense a pamphlet in which, referring to *Gazeta Futuristov*, he angrily attacked Majakovskij, Burljuk and Kamenskij for their readiness to accommodate the new powers that be. The merit of Futurism, according to Xovin, is that it is *not only* a “бунт против какой-либо эстетики, и если никто не требовал от него создания какой-либо системы политических и социальных верований, то мы знали, что футуризм глубже этого, мудрее, сказал бы я”.<sup>33</sup> The new ruling class has the same “overlord’s attitude” as the old, and is indifferent to Futurism: “Недаром в газете московских футуристов такой боязливо взволнованный, испуганно льстивый и исподволь убеждающий тон. Недаром заговорили они теперь штампованным и изжеванным языком газетного лексикона. Недаром футуризм, давший миру новые формы, обернулся у них большевистской ‘Правдой’. Недаром поддались они обаянию авторитета сильной или какой бы то ни было власти и ищут помощи и поддержки у этого авторитета.”<sup>34</sup>

Xovin’s reaction is representative of those among the intelligentsia who advocated the independence of art from the political authorities (Bolshevik or otherwise). As has been pointed out above, Majakovskij himself had been not entirely unsympathetic to a similar position only a year earlier. More interesting, however, is Boris Kušner’s criticism, and that for two reasons: first, it seems to me to be better-grounded, and secondly, it is of some importance to our study below, since a little over six months later Majakovskij and Kušner would be working together in *Iskusstvo Kommuny*.

The fault with *Gazeta Futuristov*, according to Kušner, is not that the three poets allied themselves with the Bolsheviks but rather that they failed to understand that you cannot continually serve the public the same dishes. He offers them a piece of “brotherly advice”: “Не заблуждайтесь, полагая, что продовольственная разруха дает вам право нести ‘к обеду грядущих лет’ лежалую мякину

былых обильных урожаев.”<sup>35</sup> A work of art can be created and presented only once: “[...] для художника, произведение, отданное уже, мертво навсегда. Возвращаться к нему, значит после смерти пожирать свой собственный труп.”<sup>36</sup> Kušner also levels the accusation at Burljuk that he “кротко стрижет купоны вышедших из употребления облигаций” and berates Kamenskij for acting like a “неуклюжий, впрочем старательный поденщик саморекламы, из средства возведенной в цель”. Like so many other critics—now as earlier—Kušner exempts Majakovskij from these accusations.

In my opinion, Kušner’s criticism of *Gazeta Futuristov* is accurate. Majakovskij, Kamenskij and Burljuk really had fallen between two chairs. On the one hand, there was no doubt as to their sincere desire to place their talents at the service of the Revolution, but on the other hand it was obvious that they were not quite capable of sizing up the situation that had arisen. In *Gazeta Futuristov* they continued to use devices from pre-war Futurism: *épatage*, self-praise, a generally provocative tone—ingredients that were necessary before but which now appeared in a quite different light. Burljuk’s lines “Мне нравится беременный мужчина / Лишь он хорош у памятника Пушкина ...” had been excellent as a manifesto and a challenge to bourgeois taste, but it was hardly suitable as a declaration of solidarity with the Revolution.

It was not only Kamenskij and Burljuk who at this time adhered to earlier Futurist traditions. Majakovskij also emphasized Futurism’s continuity. Beside their café appearances and *Gazeta Futuristov* two things especially deserve mention. In the spring of 1918 Majakovskij intended to publish a collection of poems entitled “Kofta fata”. The title, of course, was taken from the 1914 poem of the same name. The book contained two subsections: “Pestraja kofta” and “Domašnjaja kofta”. It was never published, but it does exist in a made up proof.<sup>37</sup> The picture of the Futurist as a snob and provocateur was obvious and unequivocal, and this was possibly why Majakovskij eventually decided not to print the book. Majakovskij’s identification with earlier Futurism during the spring of 1918 becomes even clearer if we consider that he at this time painted and displayed his so-called “Avtoportret v želtoj kofte”.<sup>38</sup> This self-portrait depicts, in cubistic faceting, the poet in a yellow and black striped blouse and top hat, with the city bearing down or pouncing on him. The picture of the



poet in a top hat goes back to early Futurism, when Majakovskij often appeared dressed just so. The poet in a top hat—together with the self-portrait—also recurs during the spring of 1918 in the film “Ne dlja deneg rodivšijsja”, in which the Futurist Ivan Nov, played by Majakovskij, appears in this piece of headgear.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, in a recitation he gave on May 1, 1918, Majakovskij read poems from the book “Kofta fata”.<sup>40</sup> Thus, there is no question that as late as the spring of 1918 Majakovskij identified himself with early Futurism and purposely evoked the image of the provocateur Vladimir Majakovskij in his yellow blouse. Seen in this context, the publication of *Gazeta Futuristov* appears in a more natural and comprehensible light.

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The manifestos in *Gazeta Futuristov*—in particular “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov” and “Otkrytoe pis'mo rabočim”—form a striking unity. The principal reason why I have devoted so much space to the newspaper and the circumstances of its publication, however, is that these manifestos were topical not only at the time of *Gazeta Futuristov*, but also constitute a theoretical basis and parallel to Majakovskij's poetical activity during the following few years. These manifestos, together with the foreword to *Ržanoje slovo* (1918), are the only program declarations Majakovskij wrote between the Revolution and the editorials in the first issue of *Lef* in 1923. The call to struggle against the influence of the old culture in the new state and the consequent demand for a spiritual revolution were the most important constituents in the (primarily poetical) polemics Majakovskij would be involved in to the fall of 1919, when he began to work at ROSTA, but later as well. The significance of these manifestos for an evaluation of Majakovskij's esthetic position in these years was recognized as early as the beginning of the 1930's by Poljak and Reformatskaja: “Любопытен, как иллюстрация позиции Маяковского-футуриста этих лет, не попавший в собрание сочинений материал из ‘Газеты Футуристов’ [...]”<sup>41</sup>

Majakovskij's poetical and social activities changed in the course of 1918. From his adherence during the spring to early Futurism's provocative policies, Majakovskij in the fall of 1918 enters Narkompros' art section, and his activity assumes a better organized and more fruitful form. This period in Majakovskij's development is the subject of the next chapter.

## II. The Futurists and IZO

Государственная мудрость — создать себе большинство, мудрость революционная иметь свое меньшинство.

— Н. Пунин, 1919.

In 1918–1919 Majakovskij wrote little poetry. In a letter to Lili Brik of early March, 1918, he complained: “Не пишется, настроение гнусное.”<sup>1</sup> From the Revolution to the fall of 1919, when he began working at ROSTA, Majakovskij wrote besides “Misterija-buff” only about a dozen poems. This period was quite obviously one of adjustment for him, a time to reconsider his own position. The Soviet scholar A. A. Smorodin notes: “Уже одно перечисление этих фактов говорит о его потрясенности происходящим, о совершенной необычности его состояния, о напряженности раздумий.”<sup>2</sup>

The few poems Majakovskij wrote during this period are of great interest. In a time of poetical inactivity the poetry that is written appears all the more significant. In addition, the majority of the dozen poems Majakovskij printed were of a rather unusual sort: they were published as *editorials* in the newspapers *Iskusstvo Kommuny* (seven) and *Iskusstvo* (one). Both of these papers were published by “Otdel Izobrazitel’nyx Iskusstv” (IZO) within Narkompros. IZO had ever since its formation in February, 1918, been dominated by “left-wing intellectuals”, and the two papers came to function as mouthpieces for these groups. Since Majakovskij published his poems as editorials, they can be regarded as representative not only of Majakovskij, but to an equally great extent of the avant-garde grouped around IZO; the poems also harmonized with the general content of the papers. Quotations from Majakovskij’s poems were even used as headline slogans; for example: “Только тот коммунист истый, кто мосты к отступлению сжег” and “Довольно шагать футуристы, в будущее прыжок!” from “Prikaz po armii iskusstva”; “Наш бог бег. Сердце наш барабан” from “Naš marš”.

The poems Majakovskij published in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* were “Prikaz po armii iskusstva”, “Radovat’sja rano”, “Poët rabočij”, “Toj storone”, “Levyj marš”, “Potrjasajuščie fakty” and “S tovariščeskim privetom, Majakovskij”; in *Iskusstvo*—“My idem”. All of these poems are markedly polemical, dealing with the decisive questions of the struggle against the old culture’s influence and the creation of a new culture, themes Majakovskij had touched upon in *Gazeta Futuristov*.

Majakovskij’s editorial poems can be approached in two ways: on the one hand, they are a poetical parallel to and a further development of his manifestos and other programmatic declarations mentioned above. On the other, they function as reactions to a concrete reality and as polemics in contemporary debates. With respect to the first relation—poetry as poetical theory—it of course applies not only to the poems in IZO’s two papers, even if it is these which are of interest to us in this context; Majakovskij fought his whole life against all that was old and stagnated, and he always maintained a highly professional approach to his work.

The other relation refers primarily to the debate on Futurism and the new culture that flared up in the fall of 1918, when the IZO-group was forced to defend its positions. To make this relationship between poetry and reality clear, we shall have to bear in mind something of the background to the “left-wing intellectuals” position within Narkompros during these years.

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Immediately after the October Revolution, in the middle of November, 1917, the People’s Commissar of Enlightenment, Anatolij Lunačarskij, appealed to “Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv”,<sup>3</sup> offering its members the possibility of joining Narkompros so that the construction of the new cultural life might begin: “Свергнут не только самодержавный бюрократический режим, тяготевший над искусством, но и всякая классовая и кастовая узость. Предстоит создать новые свободные, чисто народные формы художественной жизни. В этой важнейшей отрасли культурного строительства трудовой народ нуждается в вашей помощи и вы окажете ее ему ...”<sup>4</sup> “Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv” had since its foundation in March, 1917, stood at the center of artistic life, and the union contained representa-

tives of all schools and trends. Lunačarskij's appeal became the subject of a lively debate within the association. The "leftist" bloc took categorical exception to it, one of its members proposing a resolution in which it was stated, among other things, that "обращение народного комиссара Луначарского неясно в смысле отношения государственной власти к автономии искусства и принуждает левое современное течение на соглашательскую бездеятельность с дохлым академизмом и бюрократическими деятелями искусств".<sup>5</sup> This resolution was not approved by the association; the one that was approved was softer in tone, but its content was just as categorical: "Заслушав обращение т. Луначарского, Союз Д. И. доводит до его сведения, что им уже принят ряд мер к союзу учредительного собора всех деятелей искусства, который выразит перед лицом всего народа организационное мнение художественного мира на строение художественной жизни страны."<sup>6</sup> Their expressed intention of turning to the people directly, rather than as a part of Narkompros, reflects the artists' fear of state control; this was just as true of the "left-wing bloc" as of the "bourgeois" artists. On November 17 (30), "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv" held a plenary session. Brik remembers: "Все выступавшие, одни резче, другие мягче, — но все же категорически, протестовали против 'захвата большевиками власти над искусством' и призывали к борьбе за автономию художественной жизни."<sup>7</sup> The artists in "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv" aimed at forming an autonomous union of artists in which the State would have only a supervisory function, "с обязательством, разумеется, питания этой организации финансовыми средствами".<sup>8</sup> This union of artists was to be the already existing "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv", independent of the political authorities: "уже на первом, созванном наркомом Луначарским Совете, который был собран в Зимнем Дворце и состоял из представителей всех художественных и научно-художественных обществ и учреждений, выяснилось, что художники были согласны работать лишь при том условии, что организация дела искусств не будет зависеть от Совета Рабочих, Крестьянских и Солдатских Депутатов".<sup>9</sup>

The only one to extend a hand to Narkompros at this meeting was Majakovskij: "[...] нужно приветствовать новую власть и войти с ней в контакт" (XII, 215). (In a first draft of the protocol Majakovskij was quoted as having expressed himself more carefully:

“[...] приходится обратиться к власти, приветствовать новую власть”; XII, 596.)

It was also the “leftist bloc” in “Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv” that first met the political authorities halfway. Lunačarskij reacted to the negative response from the Union of Artists by organizing, on February 6, 1918, two departments within Narkompros: “Otdel Izobrazitel’nyx Iskusstv” and “Otdel Muzeev i Oxrany Stariny”. It was in IZO that the left-wing intellectuals gathered. The artist David Šterenberġ, with whom Lunačarskij had become acquainted as an emigrant in 1914 and who had recently returned home from Paris, became the head of IZO. Šterenberġ also became chairman of IZO’s “Xudožestvennaja kollegija”, which among others included Natan Al’tman, Nikolaj Punin and S. Čexonin. The collegiate was soon complemented by, among others, the architects Štal’berg and Ščuko and the artists Baranov-Rossině and Iosif Škol’nik. It has not been possible to establish with certainty when Majakovskij and Brik began working in the collegiate. According to Brik, they were invited to become members by Šterenberġ and Punin during their stay in Levašovovo in July–August, 1918.<sup>10</sup> “В эти месяцы (август, сентябрь) Маяковский начал работать в коллегии Наркомпроса.”<sup>11</sup> The minutes in which Majakovskij is first mentioned, however, date from November 28, 1918 (XII, 216).

In his poem “Davidu Šterenberġu — Vladimir Majakovskij” Majakovskij recalled:

Еще хлестали пули-ливни —  
нас  
с самых низов  
прибой-революция вбросила в Зимний  
с кличкой странной — ИЗО.  
Влетели, сея смех и крик,  
вы,  
Пунин,  
я  
и Ося Брик.

(IV, 79)

A counterpart to the Petrograd collegiate was later organized in Moscow under the chairmanship of Vladimir Tatlin (who was also

vice-head of IZO). Most of the leading artists of the time were members in the Moscow collegiate: Pavel Kuznecov, Il'ja Maškov, Aleksej Morgunov, Robert Fal'k, Ol'ga Rozanova, Aleksandr Ševčenko, Boris Korolev, Sergej Konenkov, Vasilij Kandinskij, etc. In time the composition of the Moscow collegiate changed.<sup>12</sup>

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IZO's papers *Iskusstvo Kommuny* (Petrograd; Dec., 1918–April, 1919; 19 issues) and *Iskusstvo* (Moscow; Jan.–Dec., 1919; 8 issues) became important mouthpieces for the left-wing artists. A journal, *Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo*, was also planned, but only one (much-delayed) issue was ever published, in early 1920 (although dated 1919). The most important paper was *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, with Brik, Al'tman and Punin as editors. Other collaborators included Majakovskij, Malevič, Šagal, Šklovskij, Ivan Puni and Boris Kušner.

Majakovskij personally contributed a great deal of practical work to *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. He managed more or less by himself publication, proofreading and other practical problems,<sup>13</sup> even to the extent that other members of IZO's collegiate knew nothing of the contents of the first issue until it appeared in print! Majakovskij defended this at a meeting of the IZO collegiate on December 5, 1918: “Выпуск первого номера без точного осведомления всех членов коллегии относительно материала, помещаемого в нем, объяснялся тем, что приходилось без работников двинуть эту машину. Ни т. Руднев, ни Альтман, ни Штеренберг, [...] никто этим делом на первый раз заниматься не хотел. [...] В первом редакционном совещании участвовали: Брик, Пунин, Штальберг и я в виде совещательной лошади, которая ходила по делам этой газеты” (XII, 219–220).

Majakovskij also attached great importance to *Iskusstvo Kommuny* as a mouthpiece for his ideas. This is evident from several statements made then and later, for example, from the application for permission to publish *Novyj Lef*, in which he writes that the task of the journal is to “продолжать работу, начатую газетой ‘Искусство Коммуны’ в 1918–1919 гг. и журналом ‘Левф’ 1923–24 гг.” (XIII, 211).<sup>14</sup>

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What was the position, then, of the “left-wing artists” in the cultural life of these years? First a definition of the notion “leftist”.

This notion—itself indefinite enough—was usually used as a synonym to “Futurist”. By “Futurists” were meant all radical, avant-garde (a word seldom used at the time) artists and writers. The “original” Futurists—Majakovskij, Kamenskij, Burljuk—had joined the so-called “levyj blok” already in “Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv”. They could with some justice be called both “Futurists” and “left-wing artists”. The critics, however, called all “non-realists” “Futurists”, regardless of whether they were Futurists, Suprematists, Cubists, Constructivists, etc. All “left-wing artists” were forced to resign themselves to this, and for the sake of simplicity they gradually began calling themselves “Futurists”: “‘Футуризм’ беру в обыденном смысле, т. е. все левые течения искусства”, Natan Al'tman wrote in an explanatory note to an article on Futurism and proletarian art.<sup>15</sup> The terminological confusion was so great that the word “Futurist” lost all precise meaning; Nikolaj Punin lamented: “[...] до сих пор для огромного большинства, даже среди деятелей ‘левого’ искусства, ‘футуризм’, даже как движение в искусстве, совершенно не ясен. Путаются безбожно, безнадежно, ежедневно, ежесловно, и [...] пожалуй, еще месяц и А. Бенуа станет ‘футуристом’.”<sup>16</sup>

Since “Futurism” was the word used at this time to designate practically all avant-garde art, I also employ the term in this broad sense. In view of the fact that all “Futurists”, with a few exceptions, had gathered around IZO, one can in any case say that with respect to their general objectives they constituted a more or less uniform group.

To the IZO group of Futurists “Futurism” was not merely an artistic movement, but a world-view. Nikolaj Punin wrote: “[...] футуризм не только художественное движение, это целое мировоззрение, лишь базирующееся на коммунизме, но в итоге оставляющее его, как культуру, позади; футуризм — движение, углубляющее и расширяющее культурную базу коммунизма [...]”.<sup>17</sup> The Kom-Fut collective’s manifesto drew the conclusion from this idea that Futurism was culturally superior to Communism: “Необходимо подчинить Советские культурно-просветительные органы руководству новой, теперь лишь вырабатываемой культурной коммунистической идеологии.”<sup>18</sup> (See further chap. V, “Kom-Fut”.)

The political dictatorship was to have a counterpart within the

cultural sphere as well, and it was of course the Futurists who would see to its implementation. They—rightly—saw themselves as the only radical and innovative cultural workers of their time, and they were in addition the only group ready and willing to cooperate with the political revolution. Majakovskij declared: “[...] только одни футуристы имеют право быть диктаторами, ибо они являются единственными и истинными революционерами в искусстве”.<sup>19</sup> A dictatorship is always based on a minority, and the right of the minority was often emphasized in *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. Proceeding from Velimir Xlebnikov’s distinction between “izobretатели” and “priobretатели”, Punin wrote: “Ясно, что только ограниченное число подлинных художников-изобретателей может претендовать на участие в новом строительстве, и что вся масса эксплуататоров-подражателей, куда бы она сама себя не причисляла, к правым или к левым в искусстве, не есть правые и левые художники, а никакие, и что им в нашей новой жизни нет, попросту, места. Мы хотим видеть осуществленным наш Октябрь, мы хотим утвердить диктатуру меньшинства, ибо только меньшинство и есть то творческое, которое имеет достаточно мощные мускулы, чтобы шагнуть в ногу с рабочим классом.”<sup>20</sup>

The Futurist played the same role in cultural life as the Bolshevik in politics: the role of the vanguard. In the foreword to *Ržanoje slovo* (November, 1918) Majakovskij expressed the idea as follows:

“Да здравствует социализм” — под этим лозунгом строит новую жизнь политик.

“Да здравствует социализм” — этим возвышенный, идет под дула красноармеец.

“Днесь небывалой сбывается бablyю социалистов великая ересь”, — говорит поэт.

Если бы дело было в идее, в чувстве — всех троих пришлось бы назвать поэтами. Идея одна. Чувство одно.

Разница только в способе выражения.

(XII, 12)

The Futurist, according to Majakovskij, was more than an “ordinary” poet:

На улицы, *футуристы*,  
барабанщики и поэты!

(“Prikaz po armii iskusstva”; II, 15. My italics, B. J.)



To Majakovskij, “Futurist Poet” is equivalent to “Communist”:

Только тот коммунист истый,  
кто мосты к отступлению сжег.  
Довольно шагать, футуристы,  
в будущее прыжок!

(“Prikaz po armii iskusstva”; II, 14)

The lines “За футуристами гонятся/памятников бронзовая конница” from the proof-sheet version of “150 000 000” have the variant “за красноармейцами” instead of “за футуристами” in the manuscript (II, 496). The identification of Futurist and Communist is also clear in the poem “My idem”, and it found practical expression in the formation of Kom-Fut (Kommunisty-Futuristy) in January, 1919.

It might seem that the status the left-wing artists enjoyed within IZO corresponded to their legitimate demand to be recognized as the leaders of the Revolution in the cultural sphere. But their position was insecure and depended to a great extent on two things: firstly, there did not yet exist an elaborated cultural policy, and the Futurists were the first to declare themselves willing to help create a new, revolutionary culture. Lunačarskij and Narkompros, searching high and low for intellectuals who would place their talents at the service of the Revolution, found it difficult to ignore the enthusiastic representatives of left-wing art. Lunačarskij explained to the foreign Komintern delegates in 1922: “В русском буржуазном обществе <футуристы> были в некоторой степени загнаны, а они были молоды и считали себя революционерами в художественной технике: естественно, что они скорей почувствовали симпатию к революции и увлеклись ею, когда она протянула им руку [...]. Должен сознаться, что прежде всего это была моя рука. Я же протянул ее не потому, что был в восхищении от этих исканий. [...] я протянул футуристам руку, главным образом потому, что в общей политике Наркомпроса нам необходимо было опереться на серьезный коллектив творческих художественных сил. Их я нашел почти исключительно здесь, среди так называемых ‘левых’ художников.”<sup>21</sup>

The second reason for the IZO Futurists’ relatively good position had to do with Lunačarskij himself.<sup>22</sup> Lunačarskij was far from a “Futurist”, as he openly declared on several occasions, but he regarded the Futurists’ experiments and enthusiasm with tolerance; he

emphasized above all Majakovskij's talent and possibilities for development. The Futurists were greatly indebted to Lunačarskij for the opportunities they were afforded of implementing their ideas. Majakovskij's constant appeals to the People's Commissar of Enlightenment (the difficulties he encountered in staging "Misterija-buff" and in publishing "150 000 000", among other things) show how important the Commissar of Enlightenment was; but they also indicate how dependent the left-wing artists were on him. In a proclamation signed "Gruppa levyx poëtov" entitled "Organizujte otdely slovesnogo iskusstva!" (*Iskusstvo Kommuny*, 1918: 1) Lunačarskij's personal significance appears clearly. It is probable that Majakovskij was one of the authors of this appeal. It was published in the first issue of *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, which must be seen as a kind of manifesto, and even if we assume that Majakovskij did not personally participate in the writing of the proclamation, we can take it for granted that it had his full support. Its content agrees well with his opinions at this time. I quote the proclamation here in its entirety:

Организируйте Отделы Словесного Искусства!  
Товарищи.

В вашей работе второй год здравствующий пробел — отсутствие организации в области словесного искусства. Мы обращаемся к Вам, ибо тщетны поиски мифического литературного отдела. Правда, в последнее время стали чаще попадаться случайные сообщения, указывающие на какое то движение в этой области, то где-то не состоялось собрание, то наоборот где-то такое собрание состоялось и даже кто-то уже изъявил желание управлять нами. Даже указания на вполне реальную деятельность комиссариата, как напр. издание классиков или призвание варягов европейской литературы, не убеждает нас, ибо это, в лучшем случае, продолжение обычной школьной работы просвещения, музейная работа а не организация живой творческой силы — единственного источника так призываемого нами, в статьях и речах, возрождения. Только в кажущемся с этими словами противоречии стоят цифры приводимые тов. Луначарским, цифры побития Советским Правительством издательских рекордов России. За все это время в рабочие массы не проведено ничего из крох ценного — созданного всё-таки — современной литературой. Как мастера слова утверждаем — пропагандируе-

мое сейчас в области поэзии или графомания полуинтеллигентов, как напр. Ясинский, или повторение буржуазных азов — пролеткульские поэты (за редким исключением, напр. Кириллов, разумеется еще в намеках). Результат налицо — нет нашего гимна, нет наших пьес, — бесголосое время. Нелепее всего то, что есть и замечательные произведения (“Война и мир” Маяковского, поэмы Хлебникова, стихи Каменского) и мастера слова и пропагандисты нового (группа молодых учёных, объединенная “Сборниками по теории поэтического языка”) и нет одного — организации знающей как собрать отдельные колеса в стройный механизм. Поэтому силы, долженствующие быть использованными в государственной работе, бегут в провинцию от голода — результат отсутствия организации — или обивают пороги всяких литературных, платящих керенку за выход, кафэ; вспомним о доброй сотне молодых московских поэтов, занятых этим делом. Нам могут сказать: кто же вам мешают? работайте; ведь, вот издали ваше “Ржаное слово”. Дело не в случайных клочках, могущих быть перехваченными, а во всей политике нашей в области искусства. Почему в искусстве не проводится железная последовательность большевистской программы? Вспомним подлинно-революционные слова тов. Луначарского: “Рабочее Правительство скорее мальчика неопытного поставит во главе сложнейшей работы чем пустит под видом специалистов и компетентных людей всех этих еще вчера увешенных звездами, с ужасом отстраняющихся от нас старцев. Наше первое требование — убежденная, а не сегодняшняя революционность.” Мы бы хотели видеть осуществление этих слов и в организациях искусства — в частности в отделе словесного искусства. Пока что положение в этой области нисколько не устраивает нас. Так: тов. Луначарский рекомендует пьесу (“Misterija-buff”, В. J.), а комиссар одного театра Москвы говорит: “только через мой труп вы проведете в наш театр ваши пьесы”, тов. Луначарский дает возможность издать новые вещи, а соответствующие комиссары говорят о невозможности траты бумаги на такую ерунду и уже напечатанную пьесу запрещают распространить в театре в день ее постановки. Пока что сделанное нами в области словесного искусства, это то, что сумел отстоять тов. Луначарский; выбей его инфлуэнца из работы на четыре недели и ровно на четыре недели остановится развитие поэзии в России.

Надо поставить работу левых деятелей словесного искусства в достойные их условия. Необходимы реальные гарантии возможности ведения работы.

Таковой гарантией было бы создание литературного отдела исключительно из людей левого искусства. Это предложение встретит у вас при настоящих условиях негодующее отношение. Революция в области искусств находится сейчас в февральском периоде. Соглашательство и единый демократический фронт от Иеронима Ясинского до Пикассо. Предвидя 25 Октября и в области искусства, мы хотим ускорить его приход в нашу область созданием “отдела словесного искусства”. Если даже Ком. Нар. Просв. объединит наконец в литературном отделе всех патриархов, самостоятельное наше существование необходимо, т. к. мы одни, освобождая слово от роли служающего при здоровом смысле, можем считать себя носителями литературных идей пролетариата.

*Группа левых поэтов.*

The Futurists' position was formally strong. They had a great deal of influence in IZO, and for a time they published two newspapers. At the same time, however, they were subjected to criticism that was both irrelevant and spiteful. This criticism came from several quarters: from the Party, from the “right-wing intelligentsia”, from the essentially conservative academicians who had attached themselves to the Soviet state (Friče, Kogan), from the Proletkul't and others. Accusations of dictatorship—“zasil'e” was the current expression—were levelled at them in earnest as early as the fall of 1918, after the first anniversary of the Revolution, when a few “Futurist”—“incomprehensible”—decorations provoked a storm of anti-Futurist criticism. Of the nearly ninety artists who participated in the decoration of Petrograd, however, only a few can be regarded as “Futurist”. Natan Al'tman was especially severely criticized for his design of Ploščad' Urickogo in front of the Winter Palace, where, among other things, the Alexander Column was adorned in cubic and rhomb-like figures. All in all, at most ten “left-wing” artists contributed to the decoration of Petrograd; besides Al'tman there were Šterenberg, Ivan Puni, Ksenija Boguslavskaja-Puni, V. Lebedev and others.<sup>23</sup> These decorations long remained a cornerstone in criticism of Futurism's alleged “incomprehensibility”. “В торжественные, радостные

дни годовщины Октябрьской революции [...] здания столицы начали украшаться уродливыми плакатами [...]”, wrote one critic,<sup>24</sup> and another emphasized that he had personally had the opportunity of observing the aversion of the masses toward “футуристические украшения”.<sup>25</sup> Osip Brik, however, rightly (if with less than mathematical precision) pointed out in a debate on March 2, 1919, that “на Октябрьском заказе и в комитете по устройству Октябрьских торжеств было 99 % противников футуристов и были привлечены к работе художники всех направлений. Футуристов участвовало 1½ человека [...] и вы кричите ‘засилье футуристов’.” Majakovskij followed Brik and drew—what he, at least, felt to be—the logical conclusion: “[...] если из всей массы художников, работавших по устройству Октябрьских торжеств, были заметны только работы футуристов, а их было только 1½ человека, то каждому ясно, что футуризм и есть то ‘единственное живое’, которое может противостоять эстетической ‘пачкотне’, всей массе художников.”<sup>26</sup> In this question, however, it was the Futurists who drew the shortest straw: for the 1919 May 1st celebrations the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet decided that “ни в коем случае не передавать организацию Первомайского празднества в руки футуристов из Отдела изобразительных искусств”.<sup>27</sup>

The Futurists from IZO they had in mind were the teachers and students in “1-е Gosudarstvennye Svobodnye Hudožestvennye Masterskie”, which were administered by IZO and with which all prominent left-wing artists—but not only leftists!—were associated. Above all the students had made great plans for May 1, 1919, including, among other things, an outdoor staging of “Misterija-buff” on Lubjanskaja ploščad’.<sup>28</sup> This proposal, however, was refused with the motivation that the play had little artistic value, that its idea was vague and its language unintelligible to the broad masses.<sup>29</sup> The party cell in “Masterskie” protested against the decision to exclude the members of the school from participation in the celebration of May 1: “К кому, как не к нам, учащимся Государственных мастерских, обращались государственные учреждения и профессиональные союзы в момент протеста против зверского убийства Карла Либкнехта, Розы Люксембург или в моменты величайших радостей — революции в Германии, объявления Венгрии Советской Республикой и т. п. 1-го же мая, в день величайшего рабочего праздника, 1-е Гос. Св. Худ. Мастерские были обойдены секцией

по организации празднеств при Моск. Сов. Р., С. и Кр. Д. Коммунистическая ячейка с болью констатирует факт отказа в работе нашим мастерским в лице наших представителей в Бюро Труда. Отказ мотивирован якобы тем футуристическим духом, который царит в мастерских. Но если борьба, затеянная 'натуралистами', состоящими при Моск. Сов. Р. и Кр. Д., против молодых художников, группирующихся вокруг Отдела Изобразительных Искусств Наркомпроса, имеет некоторую идеологическую подоплеку, то все же художники при Моск. Сов. Р. и Кр. Д. и в частности секция празднеств не имеет никакого основания и материального права бойкотировать Свободные Народные мастерские, где дана свобода всем художественным течениям и направлениям. На мастерские затрачены народные деньги и тем самым они должны принимать участие в народных празднествах. И, кроме того, факт бойкота вопиюще противоречит основным началам Советской России. Из-за борьбы двух учреждений, учащаяся революционная молодежь отстраняется от своих прямых обязанностей — работы для Советской Республики."<sup>30</sup>

Resistance to the Futurists within the Party was evidently quite solid, but there was at any rate one driving force behind the decision to bar them entirely from the May 1st festivities. This was Vladimir Frič, head of two sections in MONO ("Moskovskij Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovanija"), namely "izobrazitel'nye iskusstva" and "narodnye prazdnestva". It was Frič who pushed the anti-Futurist campaign to its climax in February–March, 1919, and he was also one of the leading figures in the struggle to stop the staging and printing of "Misterija-buff".

Vladimir Frič was one of the academicians Majakovskij had in mind (though he did not mention his name) in the first *Lef*-editorial "Za čto boretsja Lef?", where he briefly summarizes the cultural situation during the first years of Soviet power: "Постепенно разочаровываясь в двухнедельности существования Советской власти, академики стали в одиночку и кучками стучатся в двери наркоматов.

Не рискуя пользоваться их в ответственной работе, Советская власть предоставила им — вернее, их европейским именам — культурные и просветительные задворки.

С этих задворок началась травля левого искусства [...].

Власть, занятая фронтами и разрухой, мало вникала в эстетические распри, стараясь только, чтобы тыл не шумел, и урезонивала нас из уважения к ‘именитейшим’” (XII, 42–43).

In February, 1919, Friče published three long articles in *Večernie Izvestija Moskovskogo Soveta Rabočix i Krasnoarmejskix Deputatov*. The first article (February 15) was an attack on the Futurist poets, especially Xlebnikov, but also contained criticism of the Imaginists. Friče accused the leftist poets of having brought with them from bourgeois-tzarist Russia “вместе с опустошенной душой, вместе с отсутствием всяких идеалов, литературщину дурного вкуса, свойственную оторванным от жизни интеллигентским группам, и дух самой бесшабашной саморекламы, характерный для капиталистически-буржуазного строя” and of presenting “эту гниль под маркой ‘пролетарской’ поэзии и последнего слова ‘культуры’ на столбцах идущей ей навстречу советской печати, подчас украшенной девизом ‘Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!’”<sup>31</sup>

The second article was dedicated to the Imaginists and is of no interest in this connection.<sup>32</sup> The third one (28 February) was directed at IZO, which was accused of supporting unintelligible movements in art and literature.<sup>33</sup>

It was no coincidence that the articles appeared at just this time; they were written in connection with IZO’s first anniversary (February 6) and were accompanied by a number of other anti-Futurist diatribes in this and other press organs. The day after Friče’s third article (March 1) the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet decided to “предложить т. Фриче сделать доклад о футуризме сначала в Исполкоме, а потом и в Пленуме Совета”.<sup>34</sup> Olga Kameneva, head of TEO (“Teatral’nyj Otdel Narkomprosa”) wrote a letter to *Večernie Izvestija* at the same time denying her responsibility for the posters the Futurists had donated to “Den’ Krasnogo Podarka”,<sup>35</sup> and Futurism was made the subject of a special discussion within the Petrograd Proletkul’t.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the accusation of “unintelligibility”, the Futurists were above all criticized for their position within IZO. It was said that they had occupied IZO (“zasil’e”) and were trying to achieve a position as “gosudarstvennoe iskusstvo”. As has already been pointed out, the IZO Futurists believed in the dictatorship of a minority in the cultural sphere and saw themselves in the role of this vanguard; thus, there was something to the criticism for “zasil’e”. But this

criticism also contained a strong distrust of the Futurists' motives: it was suspected that they were not true revolutionaries but had merely taken advantage of the moment to gain a position of power. Gričev wrote: "Воспользовавшись моментом, когда общепризнанные раньше 'корифеи' и 'лидеры' художественного слова ушли в отставку или окутались безмолвием, футуристы ловко продвинулись вперед и разыграли — калифы на час — роль правительственной литературной партии, роль поэтов-лауреатов рабоче-крестьянской России."<sup>37</sup> He was far from alone in such criticism. In particular among Proletkul't's representatives every attempt the Futurists made to approach the working class was regarded "как попытку одного класса (i.e. the intelligentsia, В. J.) обработать в своих интересах психологию другого класса".<sup>38</sup> (Proletkul't's relationship to the Futurists will be considered separately in chap. IV, "The Futurists and Proletkul't".)

Nikolaj Punin, who together with Osip Brik and to a certain extent Boris Kušner most often wrote in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* on theoretical questions, saw the charge of "gosudarstvennost'" as a sign of strength: "[...] это не что иное, как скрытое обвинение за силу".<sup>39</sup> He declared further "от имени значительной группы деятелей молодого искусства" that they did not need the State, first, because they were struggling for a socialist future, which will have no state, and secondly, because they were eternal rebels: "[...] 'бунта вечного дух непреклонный' в нас".<sup>40</sup> Punin even went so far as to declare that it would be wrong for Futurism to try to become state art; that would involve being forced to compromise and to take other artistic groups to the right of them into consideration. And this would then not mean strengthening the position of leftist art, but merely strengthening the "gosudarstvennaja vlast'" of the left-wing artists: "Но я должен сказать: нам эта власть не нужна, если она не сопряжена с диктатурой левого искусства. Да, и поверьте, для того, чтобы проводить государственную линию не надо вызывать нас, левых. А. Бенуа, Коровин, Сомов гораздо лучше осуществляют эту нейтральную, государственную политику; у них больше 'опыта', больше 'ума', больше сил и они прикладистее нас. Революция призвала нас не как лучших государственных людей, <a> как единственных, и это вы запомните твердо, как единственных обладателей революционной мудрости и творческой художественной идеи."<sup>41</sup> With such general and rhetorical phrases



Punin could hardly veil the fact that IZO, by virtue of its central position in the construction of the culture of the new state, was regarded by many as (and in a number of respects really was) Futurist-dominated. With respect to IZO, however, we must hold two things distinct: the propaganda conducted in the section's papers *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and *Iskusstvo*, and the practical work that took place in the art schools, the purchases of contemporary art for museums, etc.

Both of IZO's newspapers drove a line that was unambiguously "Futurist": they were purposeful and consistent propaganda organs for the cultural outlook represented by the editors and by no means a forum for general discussions. To speak of dictatorship is in this case justified. Punin wrote: "[...] те художественные группы, которые обвиняют нас в футуризме, диктатуре, и прочих грехах, очевидно имеют в виду только нашу агитацию, наши слова. В той реальной работе, которую отдел проводит, никакого преобладания футуризма, никакой диктатуры нет."<sup>42</sup> It was not difficult to prove that the everyday work of the section was not dominated by the Futurists. Many teachers from the old academy (Benois, Šuxaev, Šervud, Zaleman, Ginzburg and others) taught in the new schools, and among the artists whose works were purchased for the museums were names like Benois, Rerix, Dobužinskij, Petrov-Vodkin and others. Punin rebutted the criticism from the right, agreeing instead with those who accused IZO "в недостаточно революционной политике, в отсутствии диктатуры".<sup>43</sup>

The tolerant attitude toward "non-Futurist" artists in the art schools was not the result of a pluralistic conviction, but merely the consequence of the fact that the resources of the leftist artists were inadequate: "Мы чуть ли не ежедневно сталкиваемся с отсутствием людей, приходится поручать подчас очень ответственные работы не очень подходящим лицам, а это портит чистоту нашей политики."<sup>44</sup>

Lack of people was one of the very reasons the IZO-group usually cited in answer to the criticism that so little had been accomplished during the time the section had existed. In the issue of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* which appeared in connection with the first anniversary of IZO's founding on February 6, Punin admitted that more could have been done: "Нам часто приходилось слышать: — ничего не сделано. Если хотите, недурно сказано, во всяком случае определенно. Беда вся только в том, что мы раньше всех других

это сказали. Мы говорим это и сейчас — да, нами ничего не сделано, нами ничего не сделано сравнительно с тем, что мы должны и что мы можем сделать.”<sup>45</sup> Natan Al'tman agreed with Punin (“За год не сделано много. Но мы наметили путь”) and attributed this to the fact that the Futurists were entirely too few in number: “Год тому назад художественный мир раскололся на две неравные половины: мы, маленькая кучка, — и все остальные. Теперь наши ряды увеличились, но их все еще мало.”<sup>46</sup> As editorial in the anniversary issue was printed Majakovskij's poem “S tovariščeskim privetom, Majakovskij”, in which he gives a similar description in verse of the Futurists' exposed position:

Дралось  
некогда  
греков триста  
сразу с войском персидским всем.  
Так и мы.  
Но нас,  
футуристов,  
нас всего — быть может — семь.

(II, 28)

Majakovskij was always very exact; six of the seven Futurists can be identified at once: Majakovskij himself, Osip Brik, Nikolaj Punin, Boris Kušner, Natan Al'tman and David Šterenberġ.

Majakovskij emphasizes that the past year has been a struggle—a struggle waged from a defensive position:

Если петь  
про залезших в щели,  
меч подъявших  
и павших от —  
как не петь  
нас  
у мыслей в ущельи  
не сдаваясь дерущихся год?

(I.K.)

The fact that the Futurists were attacked violently from all directions he countered with his characteristic hyperbolicized confidence:

Поздравители  
не хлопают дверью?  
Им  
от страха  
небо в овчину?  
И не надо.  
Сотую —  
верю! —  
встретим годовщину.

(II, 29)

Now, it was not really true that nothing had been done during the past year. IZO's primary task had been to reorganize the artistic educational system, and this it had in fact done. The Academy of Arts had been closed by a decree of April 12, 1918,<sup>47</sup> and "Gosudarstvennye Svobodnye Xudožestvenno-Učebnye Masterskie" had been opened in its place in Petrograd on October 10, 1918 (see the preceding chapter). Analogous studios were opened somewhat later in Moscow, and "Svobodnye Masterskie" were set up in other cities as well: in Vitebsk, Rjazan', Pskov, Voronež, Penza, Saratov, Kazan', Tver'.<sup>48</sup> That IZO was criticized for insufficient results depended on two factors: in the first place, expectations were great—*too* great—in a Russia that had just shaken off the political yoke; it was often not understood that creating a new culture is a long and complicated process. Secondly, the reorganization of the art schools did not concern the culture-hungry population in general. Further, its critics *wanted* to disparage IZO and those who worked there: in light of the big and sometimes unfounded words the IZO Futurists uttered about their activities, here was a polemical point to be plucked.

But if the Futurists were unable to display very great results, other groups could show even less. If we allow that a cultural "dictatorship" could be justified in the first post-revolutionary years, then it is reasonable to grant the Futurists the right to exercise it. The Futurists were the only group which could seriously claim to represent the most developed artistic consciousness. If Futurism really had had the position of "state art", Punin argued, that would only have meant that it was "the strongest of all existing artistic movements"; Futurism, according to Punin, was a tendency that sought battle in order to "вызвать все сколько-нибудь живые и противоборствующие

нам силы для борьбы с нами”.<sup>49</sup> It was difficult, however, to find worthy opponents. The representatives of Symbolism, Naturalism or Realism could only with difficulty maintain that their art alone was proletarian, and Proletkul't's attempts to create proletarian art were on such a low artistic level that emphasis ought to be placed more on “proletarian” than on “art”. Punin: “Дело не в ‘футуризме’, но в том, что ‘футуризм’ оказался обладателем художественного творчества. [...] мы — не захватчики власти, мы — угадчики будущего.”<sup>50</sup> If one means by “Futurism” all of the artistic currents and theories that were implied at this time by the term, then in view of the significance which Cubism, Suprematism and Constructivism had in the later development of art, one is forced to agree with Punin in his seemingly cocksure rejection of the criticism that Futurism was state art: “[...] футуризм — не государственное искусство, но единственный правильный путь по линии развития общечеловеческого искусства.”<sup>51</sup>

\*

The attacks on the Futurists during the winter and spring of 1919 were so intense and frequent that the editors of *Iskusstvo* felt called upon to devote more than half of no. 5 (April 1) to a rebuttal of the criticism. A similar defense was undertaken in *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, although the main battle at this time was being waged in Moscow. This paper, however, was closed after no. 19 (April 13), evidently as a concession on the part of Narkompros to the critics. In April “Sojuz rabotnikov nauki, iskusstva i literatury” adopted a resolution in which Narkompros was prevailed upon to “обратить внимание на неограниченное преобладание футуризма, кубизма, имажинизма и т. п. в Советской Социалистической республике” and to take measures to support those attempting to create “истинное пролетарское искусство в совершенном соответствии с коммунизмом”.<sup>52</sup> Somewhat later, on May 6, 1919, Lenin spoke to the “Pervyj Vserossijskij S’ezd po vneškol’nomu obrazovaniju”, where he indirectly criticized the Futurists: “[...] сплошь и рядом самое нелепейшее кривляние выдавалось за нечто новое, и под видом чисто пролетарского искусства и пролетарской культуры преподносилось нечто сверхъестественное и несуразное”.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that pressure of this kind played a certain role in the closing of *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. Majakovskij spoke later of the academicians’

# ИЗВЕЩЕНИЕ КОММУНЫ

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№ 10.

10-е ФЕВРАЛЯ — ГОДОВЩИНА

ОТДЕЛА ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНЫХ ИСКУССТВ.

товарищеским приветом Маяковской.

Дралось некогда греков триста сразу с войском перидским всем. Так и мы. Но нас футуристов нас всего — быть может — семь.

Тех наших у истории в пылах. Подсчитали всех кто сражен. И поют про смерть в Фермопилах. Восхваляют что лез на ромон. Если петь про залезших в щели меч подъявших и лавших от — как не петь нас

у мыслей в ущелья не сдаваясь дерущихся год. Слава вам! Для посмертной лежки да не словет вас смерти лог

Неуязвимые лезьте по скользким скалам слов! Пусть хотя-б по капле по две ваши души в мир волются и рстат рабочий подвиг именуемый „РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ“.

Поздравители не хлопают дверью? Им от отраха небо в овчину? И не надо. Сотую — верю! — встретит годовщину.

Товарищи!

Год прошел. Год тяжелой борьбы. Много работы вперед еще. В ногу, товарищи! Совместно рядом! Да здравствует Коммуна! Да здравствует творческий труд!

Д. П. Штеренберг.

## Бюллет.

Год тому назад сплоченная группа художников, близких Октябрьской революции, взяла на себя тяжелую задачу — стать организующим центром художественной жизни Республики. Впервые, вероятно, во всей европейской истории художники и притом еще наиболее молодые и „радикально настроенные“ получили возможность осуществлять свои, может быть, мало предумышленные, но острейшие и несомненно творческие идеи. Можно много спорить о целесообразности такого „присоединения“, но ни один человек, обладающий сколько-нибудь живым восприятием, не станет отрицать того, что самая попытка дать художественным силам непосредственно участвовать в организации искусства имеет глубокий интерес.

Ни мы сами, да и думаю, никто, кроме разве какого-нибудь шалого и безнадоедного догматика, не будет утверждать, что факт огосударствления художников может быть оправдан, как таковой. Нет, мы далеки от того, чтобы считать себя святыми, которые ждали своего рая и нашли его, в Октябрьской революции. Мы должны еще быть оправданы.

Если наш путь к „власти“ был обусловлен нашей коммунистической культурой, нашей революционной верой, нашим напряженным стремлением к новому будущему, то каждый день жизни дальнейшего „властвования“ должен быть оправдан нашими делами.

„Хорошо, вы — единственные революционеры, вы, догматики, единственные коммунисты художники, вы те коммунисты, которые были вне себя, также — но ведь это все фразеология и идеология, пришедшая для первых трех, пяти шести месяцев Советов, а теперь... покажите нам наше будущее, чтобы нам перестать уже верить и начать знать“ — так нам говорят и имеют право так говорить.

Год тяжелого, подчас отчаянного труда за спиной. Кто перебрал этот год в советской организации, знает чего стоил этот год. Две, три недели работы и месяц ерinya, ерinya морального, организационного или просто какого-нибудь вынужденного непродуманного вмешательства. Преступный мир, левые эсеры, покушения, заговоры, убийства — все что сошлось и влетало в сапожки, казалось бы аполитичную и холодную работу.

Мы не хотим и не будем сейчас говорить о том, что нами фактически сделано за этот год. Нам часто приходится слышать: — ничего не сде-

В грядущее, товарищи!

Год тому назад художественный мир распался на две неравные половины: мы, маленькая группа, — и все остальные. Теперь наши ряды увеличались, но их все еще мало! Старые художественные силы при всем своем подчас искреннем желании работать с нами не в состоянии выполнять стоящие на очереди революционные задачи.

За год сделано не много. Но мы выжили тут. Мы раскрывали молодые художественные силы. Мы дали им возможность окрепнуть и выявить себя. Недалеко время, когда из маленькой кучки мы превратимся в мощную армию, армию нового подлинно коллективистического искусства. Этой верой мы сплываем. В этом залог нашей победы.

Да здравствует грядущее Искусство Коммуны!

Нат. Алмазов.

лаво. Если хотите, неудурно сказано, во всяком случае определено. Вера — вся только в том, что мы раньше всех других это сказали. Мы говорим это и сейчас — да, нами ничего не сделано, нами ничего не сделано сравнительно с тем, что мы должны и что мы можем сделать.

От тех первых недель нашей государственной жизни не осталось ничего; там, действительно, было больше фразеологии и идеологии; мы не получили лучше говорить за этот год, но кое-чему мы научились.

Прежде всего мы захотели быть практичными. Предоставляя спорить идеурные замки той части художественной интеллигенции, которая не потеряла еще вкуса к этому, по нашему мнению, отрицательному занятию, мы решили не вступать больше ни в какие идеурные рассуждения с кем бы то ни было. Каждому утверждающему свое коммунистическое мировоззрение, мы готовы всегда предоставить возможность его реализовать; мы только берем себе право по ходу самой работы принять или отклонить, — иногда уже раз навсегда, — такой опыт. Тем самым, мы, может быть, стали уже и ограниченнее; ну чтож, мы зато будем в состоянии получить те реальные факты, которые только один нам и кучки, которые один и могут оправдать наш завтрашний день.

Государственные художественные феерии — ладно прошло. Мы не любим оглядываться назад. Давайте, и если то, что вы сделаете не случит, подобно картонному дому, будущее — пролетариат принесет нам свою благодарность на тех самых плакатах, которые сейчас укажут столько многих „эстетически воспитанных“ своем грубости и тогда они паперные будут более соответствовать художественной коммунистической культуре.

Не слова — дела нужны нам. Простой, жалкой реальности — и как можно больше.

И. Прунц.









“травля левого искусства, блестяще завершенная закрытием ‘Искусства Коммуны’ и проч.” (XII, 42). *Iskusstvo* also began to experience publishing difficulties, officially due to paper shortage, and no. 6 did not appear until July 8.

No. 5 of *Iskusstvo* had as its editorial Majakovskij’s poem “My idem”, which was written in defense of “the new art” and was a part of the polemics being conducted at the time; Majakovskij had moved to Moscow in early March<sup>54</sup> and was therefore now working on *Iskusstvo*. His editorial was supported by articles by Brik, Šterenberg, Šeršenevič (one of Friče’s articles was, as we have seen, directed at the Imaginists) and Udal’cova together with a number of shorter items that refuted specific points in the attacks made in *Večernie Izvestija*.

*Večernie Izvestija* in general and Vladimir Friče in particular were the target of *Iskusstvo*’s counter-attacks. It must have been frustrating to the Futurists who had enthusiastically rallied to the Revolution to watch an administrator like Friče use his powerful position to ruin much of their work, especially in view of the fact that his political attitude before the Revolution, when the Futurists were being persecuted by the bourgeois press, anything but flattered the present head of MONO. *Iskusstvo* quoted, not without pleasure, a comment Friče had made in 1914 about Крученых: “А этот самый Крученых едва ли не один из врагов нашей родины. Я ничуть не удивлюсь если узнаю, что господин, написавший такое, может быть социалистом.”

In several poems of this period Majakovskij attacked both the dominance of the old culture and its spokesmen; “My idem” is one such work. Considering the debate on (or, more correctly, the campaign against) Futurism as presented above, but also in view of no. 5 of *Iskusstvo*, we can establish that “My idem” was aimed at Vladimir Friče in particular. It can, of course, be read as a general programmatic poem, and Majakovskij mentions no one by name in order to make it more universal, but there can be no doubt as to the model for these lines:

И пускай  
с газеты  
какой-нибудь выродок  
сражается с нами  
(не на смерть, а на живот).

(II, 31)

After his campaign against Futurism, Friče was the very incarnation of the “рев стариков злочий” Majakovskij mentions in the poem, and the poet had had occasion to attack him earlier as well. As noted above, it was on Friče’s orders that “Misterija-buff” was prevented from being staged on May 1, 1919, and his willing assistance also made it possible to postpone the production until May 1, 1921. On March 4, 1919, Majakovskij wrote the following dedication to Varvara Stepanova in a copy of *Vojna i mir*: “Тов. Степановой на память об атаке на Фриче В. Маяковский.” A. Fevral’skij, who cites the declaration,<sup>55</sup> states he has been unable to establish which attack Majakovskij might have meant. However, it is reasonable to assume that he is referring to a discussion at “Krasnyj petux” (formerly “Pittoresque”) in Moscow on March 2, where the campaign against Futurism was on the agenda and where, according to contemporary accounts, Majakovskij specifically attacked Friče.<sup>56</sup>

\*

This account of the relations between the Futurists and IZO does not claim to be exhaustive. There exists no monograph on this important phase of the history of the Russian avant-garde. The background I have attempted to outline above, however, is necessary to an understanding of Vladimir Majakovskij’s poetry of 1918–1919. These works were written in a very particular situation and with very concrete objectives, and they must be seen in connection with the artistic milieu—the IZO group—in which they were created.



The fact is, however, that the Futurists' attitude to the cultural heritage cannot be reduced to a simple repudiation of it. We must bear in mind that the Futurists, like other avant-garde groups, had a penchant for extreme formulations, so that they themselves were at times to blame for the fact that they were misunderstood. Another reason for their hyperbolicized statements about the worthlessness of the old culture was, of course, the political and psychological situation of the time; the old political system had been eliminated and the old rulers overthrown, while the Futurists were innovators in the field of art and literature. It was therefore only natural that they, sometimes in rather provocative terms, should also reject the culture of the old society.

An analysis of Majakovskij's poetry and statements on the cultural heritage, however, reveals unambiguously that in his case it was never a question of repudiating the old culture as such, but of a struggle against *the influence of this heritage on the new art and literature*. What Majakovskij opposed was an uncritical reverence for "the classics", which many had set up as models for contemporary art. An examination of Majakovskij's view of this question shows with what vigor and conviction he and his colleagues at IZO waged the battle against the influence of the "old" culture.

This was no new struggle or idea as far as Majakovskij was concerned. The Cubo-Futurists, after all, had entered the literary debate by demanding that Puškin, Dostoevskij, Tolstoj, etc. be thrown overboard from the Steamer of Modernity.<sup>2</sup> Here, however, it was primarily a question of the need to proclaim their literary "school", and the avant-garde tradition, of course, abounds in such provocative diatribes. In 1918, the problem appeared in a quite different and more serious light—the foundation of a new social system had been laid, a new culture was to be developed, and the question of the role the cultural heritage was to play in this task was brought to a head and demanded a practical (not only a "literary") solution.

In *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, it was primarily Brik, Punin and Majakovskij who participated in this discussion on the relationship between the old and new culture. Summarizing the October festivities of 1918, Punin wrote with his usual polemical pungency: "До сих пор в отношении <к буржуазии> мы знали только один метод действия — разрушение. Этот метод и следовало бы провести в день Октябрьской годовщины. [...] Взорвать, разрушить, сте-

петь с лица земли старые художественные формы — как не мечтать об этом новому художнику, пролетарскому художнику, новому человеку.”<sup>3</sup> Punin’s cocksureness and uncompromising attitude bear the stamp of the proselyte. If we examine an article he wrote in November, 1917, we find a diametrically opposed train of thought, one which is more in line with the esthetic views of a periodical such as *Apollon* (to which Punin had earlier been a contributor): “Красота, которой радовались наши деды, радует нас, и чувство искусства, то чувство, которое в нас, во мне, которое соединяет весь народ, оно живет в тех дворцах и в этих картинах. [...] мы, освободившие себя, мы освободили и свое искусство, и мы хотим сохранить его [...].”<sup>4</sup>

Punin, then, had radically altered his point of view in the course of a single year. But he did not always formulate his new position in the categorical and polemical terms of the example quoted above. The idea on which such “nihilistic” utterances were based was that the old culture should not be allowed to influence the creation of the new: “Для здорового и продуманного ‘футуристического’ мировоззрения разрушение старины только метод борьбы за свое существование. Только потому, что искусство прошлого претендует еще на влияние и на образование новых художественных форм — оно может стать предметом разрушения.”<sup>5</sup> This thought Punin repeated on several occasions: “Не потому молодые художники борются со старым искусством, что оно плохо или не может быть использовано как материал, но потому, что оно еще претендует на влияние.”<sup>6</sup>

*Iskusstvo Kommuny* no. 2, 1918, published as its editorial Majakovskij’s poem “Radovat’sja rano” (December 15). This poem was severely critical of the veneration in which the representatives of the old culture were still held, and immediately aroused a great deal of excitement and indignation: “Руководители отдела охраны старины заявили Наркому свой энергический протест, и товарищу Луначарскому пришлось созвать специальное совещание для улаживания конфликта.”<sup>7</sup> Majakovskij’s poem, like Punin’s statement quoted above, is uncompromising in its attitude toward the old culture and its symbols. It is structured on a series of symmetrical oppositions: each pair contains an example of the relentless battle being waged against the White Guard and the Capitalist lackeys in the political sphere, followed by a question asking why nothing

is being done about the representatives of the past in the cultural area:

I: Белогвардейца  
найдете — и к стенке.  
А Рафаэля забыли?  
Забыли Растрелли вы?  
Время  
пулям  
по стенке музеев тенькать!  
Стодюмовками глоток старье расстреливай!

II: Сете смерть во вражьем стане.  
Не попадись, капитала наймиты.  
А царь Александр  
на площади Восстаний  
стоит?  
Туда динамиты!

(II, 16)

III: Выстроили пушки по опушке.  
Глухи к белогвардейской ласке.  
А почему  
не атакован Пушкин?  
А прочие  
генералы классики?

(I.K.)

The attacks were aimed at four specific persons: Raphael, the architect Rastrelli, Tsar Aleksandr III and Puškin. While these men were actual historical figures, they were also and above all representative symbols of politics or various areas of artistic endeavor. Raphael was used often in the debate, as were Rubens, Michelangelo, Venus Milo and other artists and works of art. Raphael, of course, was not a random choice. As Men'šutin and Sinjavskij have noted, there was much in the discussions of this period that harked back to the debate of the 1860's, and allusions to Pisarev and others are frequent.<sup>8</sup> Turgenev's Bazarov, for example, expressed the opinion that "Рафаэль гроша медного не стоит". Raphael's name occurred on several occasions in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* as a symbol of the "old" art.

The Proletkul't poet Vladimir Kirillov also used Raphael as a symbol in his poem "Му" (1917):

Мы во власти мятежного, страстного хмеля;  
Пусть кричат нам: "вы палачи красоты",  
Во имя нашего Завтра — сегодня сожжем Рафаэля,  
Разрушим музеи, растопчем искусства цветы.

Kirillov says in his autobiography that Majakovskij gave him one of his books with an inscription that read: "Однополчанину по битве с Рафаэлями."<sup>9</sup>

The use of the plural form underlines the fact that Raphael was nothing more than a symbol; that it was Raphael the "пам'ятник" and not Raphael the painter Majakovskij was attacking is confirmed by a statement made in 1914 in which he mentions the artist in positive terms: "[...] плеяда молодых русских художников — Гончарова, Бурлюк, Ларионов, Машков, Лентулов и друг. — уже начала воскрешать [...] древнюю русскую иконопись безвестных художников, равную и Леонардо и Рафаэлю" (I, 320).

The architect Rastrelli, especially to the inhabitants of Petrograd, was as obvious a symbol as Raphael, since much of the old "classical" architecture of Petersburg was associated with his name.

Majakovskij's targets in "Radovat'sja rano" were all connected with the discussions being carried on at the time. This was also the case with the statue of Aleksandr III.

With respect to statues of former tyrants, we have seen that Majakovskij, Kamenskij and Burljuk had already touched upon the theme in "Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov": "[...] попрежнему памятники генералов, князей — царских любовниц и царицыных любовников тяжелой, грязной ногой стоят на горлах молодых улиц". A bitter debate on the monuments of the tsarist period had been going on since the February Revolution. The leftist bloc in "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv" was in favor of removing the monuments dedicated to tyrants and autocrats, whereas the conservative elements in the union did what they could, for esthetic reasons, to preserve as much as possible of the cultural heritage. Arguing with those who maintained that the statues of the tsars, for example, should be removed or at best, if they had any artistic value, be placed in museums, Aleksandr Benois wrote in July, 1917: "Но вот беда в том, что не во имя красоты вызывают наши цензоры от революции, а во имя

революционных идей, и при последовательном осуществлении таких воззваний человечеству грозит лишиться самых прекрасных вещей и как раз сохранить всякую дрянь — за то только, что эта дрянь изображает очень почтенных деятелей.”<sup>10</sup> Benois declared that what he was defending was above all “художественно-историческую ценность вещей”.

Those who shared Benois' attitude eventually grouped together in Narkompros's section for the preservation of works of art (“Otdel Muzeev i Ochrany Stariny”). The opposition between IZO and this section was practically absolute. There is no doubt that Lunačarskij respected these politically indifferent or even conservative “Kultur-träger”, whose views on the significance of the old culture were very close to those of the Commissar of Enlightenment himself. Brik recalls of one of the first meetings in Narkompros: “Были тут и А. Бенуа, и граф П. Зубов, увидевшие в советской власти ту ‘твердую власть’, которая может сохранить культурные ценности и памятники искусства прошлого. Встреча Маяковского со своими исконными ‘врагами’ в кабинете революционного наркома повергла Маяковского в полное недоумение. Его пылкие футуристические предложения встретили резкий отпор со стороны ‘охранителей старья’. И, как ни странно, революционный нарком Луначарский внимательней прислушивался к советам Бенуа об организации музеев, чем к ‘архиреволюционным’ выпадам Маяковского.”<sup>11</sup>

There were artists in “Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv” who demanded the establishment of a “Komissija uničtoženija pamjatnikov”.<sup>12</sup> It was sentiments such as these that led Benois to defend the statue of Aleksandr III on Znamenskaja ploščad' (later Ploščad' Vosstanija [Majakovskij has “Vosstanij”]): “[...] всему миру, как недемократическому, так и демократическому *очень большое дело* до того, чтобы [...] Александр III встречал прибывающих из глубин России тем упрямым вызовом, который страна в свое время не сумела побороть и за который ей пришлось так жестоко расплачиваться”.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, it was no coincidence that Majakovskij chose to attack the statue of Aleksandr III. Beside the fact that it was naturally very prominent there on Ploščad' Vosstanija at the one end of Nevskij Prospekt, it was (together with the other monuments to the tsars) one of the statues being debated in the press.



Majakovskij's attack on Puškin aroused the greatest indignation. This is natural, considering Puškin's position as national poet. What Majakovskij objected to, however, was a "хрестоматийное пони- мание Пушкина и других классиков", as Vladimir Trenin put it.<sup>14</sup> Majakovskij was attacking Puškin the "classic", who had been given a final, canonical form, not Puškin the *writer*. It was not the old literature as such Majakovskij was after, but the fact that it was held up as a model for how contemporary literature ought to be written. This criticism recurred in "150 000 000", where "the collected works" symbolized the petrification of the classics:

В "Полное собрание сочинений",  
как в норки,  
 классики забились.  
Но жалости нет!  
 Напрасно  
их  
наседкой  
Горький  
 прикрыл,  
распустив изношенный авторитет.  
(II, 159)

Gor'kij, who on several occasions had adopted an attitude similar to Benois's (in *Novaja Žizn'*, for example), received his due share of criticism here.

In a discussion that took place shortly after the publication of "Radovat'sja rano", Majakovskij came out in defense of his view of the cultural heritage and declared that he was personally prepared to lay chrysanthemums on Puškin's grave. But he added immediately: "Но если из гробов выйдут покойники и захотят влиять на творчество наших дней, то нужно им заявить, что им не может быть места среди живых" (XII, 453).

The same day that Majakovskij explained his position, Anatolij Lunačarskij spoke at another meeting, where he declared: "Мы не хотим [...] разрушать памятников старого искусства и не дадим это никому сделать [...]." <sup>15</sup> And that same day, *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, the organ of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, published Lunačarskij's article "Ložka protivjadija", in which he attacked "раз-

рушительные наклонности по отношению к прошлому”.<sup>16</sup> This article was written in response to Majakovskij’s “Radovat’sja rano”.

Lunačarskij’s article prompted the editors of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* to print an answer to the commissar’s accusations in the same issue. It can reasonably be assumed that Majakovskij was one of the authors. The response is of interest as regards theoretical principles, and the part of it that deals with Lunačarskij’s censure of “разрушительные наклонности” is quoted here in its entirety:

Разрушительные наклонности, проявленные сотрудниками газеты, могли быть усмотрены только в стихах Маяковского в № 2 “Искусства Коммуны”. Редакция, печатая эти стихи, полагала, что одним из наиболее прочных культурных завоеваний европейской литературы за последнее время является освобождение поэтического произведения от буквального толкования. Ни один современный критик не решился бы утверждать, что Пушкин в своем стихе “Глаголом жги сердца людей” призывает поэта какими-либо горячими материалами жечь сердца своих ближних. Давно установлено право поэта употреблять для выполнения своего творческого задания те образы, которые он находит соответствующими. Поэтому мы считали своей обязанностью поместить означенные стихи, хотя бы они и могли вызвать в некоторых неискушенных поэзией кругах ложное толкование.<sup>17</sup>

It is precisely to the avant-garde tradition we must look if we are to find the explanation to the seemingly uncompromising attacks the Futurists made on the old culture: these attacks must not be interpreted literally as exhortations to destroy the cultural heritage. The metaphorical and hyperbolicized manner of expression was part of “Futurist” (in a broad sense) poetics and tactics.

The editorial comment above was not the only defense of Majakovskij’s poem; Osip Brik supported him in the same issue with an article entitled “Ucelevšij bog”, in which he criticized the reverence which even the workers showed the “святые отцы искусства”: “Всем отлично известно, что никто не собирается ни уничтожать сочинения Пушкина, ни сжигать картины Рафаэля, ни разбивать статуи Микель-Анджело. Все прекрасно понимают, что речь идет об ореоле святости, которым окружают этих непогрешимых пап эстетической церкви.”<sup>18</sup>

Majakovskij himself provided the most important—and most illustrative—answer to the accusation in his poem “Toj storone” (which was also published in no. 4). Here he clarifies his views, explaining that the real question concerns the *influence* of the old culture:

Гарцуют скелеты всемирного Рима  
на спинах наших.  
В могилах малó им.  
Так что ж удивляться,  
что непримиримо  
мы  
мир обложили сплошным “долоем”.

(II, 20)

These lines are a direct parallel to what Majakovskij said above in the debate “Proletariat i iskusstvo” on the *same day* that “Toj storone” appeared: “Но если из гробов выйдут покойники и захотят влиять [...]” (XII, 453).

Majakovskij repudiates the use of physical violence against the old culture:

... мы  
не призыв к ножевой расправе.

(I.K.)

but at the same time he makes a clear distinction between himself and those (“ta storona”) who value the preservation of the cultural heritage higher than the Revolution:

За целость Венеры вы  
готовы щадить веков камарилью.  
Вселенский пожар размочалил нервы.  
Орете  
“Пожарных!  
Горит Мурильо!”

(II, 20)

There really were people to whom vandalism to works of art and artistically valuable buildings appeared as an argument against the Revolution. According to Majakovskij, Fedor Sologub said at a meeting of cultural workers shortly after the October Revolution: “Революции разрушают памятники искусств. Надо запретить революции в городах, богатых памятниками, как, например,

Петербург. Пускай воюют где-нибудь за чертой и только победители входят в город” (XII, 151). Sologub’s statement may have become somewhat oversimplified and more extreme in this second-hand quotation, but it should be borne in mind that this argument did in fact figure in the debate. Even Anatolij Lunačarskij had advanced similar views to motivate his resignation from the government on November 2, 1917: “St. Basil’s and the Uspensky Cathedral are being destroyed. The Kremlin, where the most important artistic treasures of Petrograd and Moscow are collected, is being bombarded.

There are thousands of victims.

What will happen next? What more can happen?

I cannot bear it. My cup is full. I am powerless to stop this awfulness.

It is impossible to work under the pressure of thoughts which are driving me mad.

That is why I am resigning from Sovnarkom [...].”<sup>19</sup>

The reports he had received on the destruction, however, proved to be false, and Lunačarskij withdrew his resignation the same day it was published in the papers, November 3.<sup>20</sup>

We have seen that Lunačarskij firmly opposed all talk of rejecting the cultural heritage, whether in earnest or more as a provocation; considering the fact that “Toj storone” was an answer to Lunačarskij’s criticism of “Radovat’sja rano”, it is not unreasonable to assume that the lines quoted above were (or could be interpreted as) at least to some extent directed against the Commissar of Enlightenment.

In “Toj storone”, Majakovskij makes it clear that the relationship to the old culture is a matter of principle—nothing should be venerated for the simple sake of veneration:

Бабушка с дедушкой.

Папа да мама.

Чинопочитания проклятого тина.

This principle applies to the Futurists’ works as well:

Идите!

Под ноги —

топчите ими —

мы

бросим

себя и свои творения.

(II, 21–22)

During the discussion "Proletariat i iskusstvo", Majakovskij emphasized with respect to the question of rejecting the old culture that "футуристы сами отвергают *сегодня* то, что ими было сделано *вчера*. С таким же пафосом футуристы выступают против своего искусства, если оно становится мертвым и старым" (XII, 453). He advanced the same idea in the foreword to the collection *Vse sočinennoe Vladimirom Majakovskim* (April 24, 1919): "Скоро сделанное нами станет не творимой, а разучиваемой азбукой. Оставляя написанное школам, ухажу от сделанного и, только перешагнув через себя, выпущу новую книгу" (XII, 16). As soon as a work of literature ceases to be alive and creative ("tvorimaja") and has instead been transformed into petrified forms and patterns ("razučivae-maja") it is time for the artistic search to move on. This was a truly "Futurist" principle, one which Majakovskij also adhered to in practice throughout his life.

At the same time, Majakovskij emphasized that the uncompromising struggle against the influence of the old culture was temporary, and would be waged only until "the new" had triumphed. During a transitional period, however, in which "the old" still threatened the creation of a new culture, this struggle and a dictatorial attitude were necessary. Echoing Kirillov ("Во имя нашего Завтра"), Majakovskij said in "Toj storone":

Мы смерть зовем рожденья во имя.  
Во имя бега,  
паренья,  
реянья.

(II, 22)

When opposition has been broken and the new view of art has triumphed, the struggle can end:

Когда-ж  
прорвемся сквозь все заставы  
и праздник будет за болью боя —  
мы  
все украшенья  
расставить заставим —  
любите любое!

(I.K.)

There can be no doubt whatsoever, in our opinion, as to Majakovskij's attitude toward the cultural heritage. Only a superficial observer with no knowledge of avant-garde tactics or Majakovskij's dialectical view of the mechanisms of art can maintain that he ever attacked, for example, the "classic" writers; it was these writers as "pamjatniki", in the figurative as well as literal sense, that Majakovskij was attacking, together with the fact that they were held up as models for the literature being created in the present. A literal reading, which certain Soviet scholars have been guilty of,<sup>21</sup> leads to absurd consequences. Kazimir Malevič went even further than Majakovskij in his provocations, suggesting that old artists and works of arts should be cremated—in such a way, thousands of cemeteries would fit on a single drug-store shelf.<sup>22</sup> We can safely assume, however, that Malevič was not personally willing to translate his imagery into action.

One of the slogans in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* was "Изучайте старое, но творите новое". This may seem to be a banal statement, but considering what we know about the IZO Futurists' attitude, we can see that the emphasis should be placed on "tvorit'" and "novoe" rather than on "izučat'" in the sense of "podražat'". In some unpublished theses on Proletkul't<sup>23</sup> Osip Brik criticizes the formula "Мы должны усвоить опыт прошлой культуры" and formulates the following thesis instead: "Надо усвоить не опыт, а тайны производства. Опыт — это готовый продукт, которому можно только подражать, который нам не нужен. Нам нужно знать производство и проблемы производства." This thesis is related to the theory regarding the significance of professionalism and craftsmanship in artistic creation (see next chapter)—without them the artist ends up trapped in eclecticism. This was what happened to the Proletkul't poets. Brik therefore draws the conclusion: "Нам не нужны сейчас пролетарские поэты, художники, музыканты, артисты и пр., ибо они будут неизбежно повторять образцы прошлого; нам нужны идеологи для того, чтобы вскрыть законы культурного развития, подвергнуть анализу современное ее состояние и наметить путь ее дальнейшего развития."

Here we have a great difference between the Futurists and the proletarian poets (especially the Proletkul't poets). The former stood at the summit of contemporary poetical culture, whereas the latter were often on a very low technical level, deriving instead their poetical *raison d'être* from their revolutionary zeal and enthusiasm. In spite

of this fact, one occasionally encounters the contention that the two groups stood on a common platform with respect to their attitude toward the cultural heritage: "В этом стремлении объединились и футуристы, и часть пролеткультовцев, и прочие рыцари левой фразы."<sup>24</sup> This may seem to be the case if we make a superficial comparison of, say, the poems by Majakovskij and Kirillov quoted above; upon closer examination, however, we can see that the Futurists' and Proletkul't's<sup>25</sup> respective views of the culture of the past were totally distinct.

The Proletkul't poets who rejected the cultural heritage did so for purely ideological reasons. Theirs was a rejection of the values that had been created by bourgeois society and were consequently invalid for the ideology of a proletarian society. Putting it somewhat crudely, they repudiated the "content" of bourgeois society as it was expressed in the culture of that society. Since the Proletkul't poets were esthetically uneducated, however, they unintentionally borrowed the form of "bourgeois" poetry—its metrics, imagery, etc. There was a contradiction here which they, to the extent that they were aware of it, were unable to resolve, due to their lack of insight into the laws of artistic creation and their deficient poetical education.

The Futurists, on the other hand, based their rejection on just this insight into the laws of artistic production, its "tajny"; for this reason, they were able either to take or reject both form and content from "old" writers without thereby becoming eclectic. They did not borrow "experience" from tradition, but were themselves a living part of that tradition, fluent in it and among its vanguard. This was the important distinction between the Futurists and Proletkul't—that Majakovskij and Kirillov joined hands on a level of polemical slogans is in this connection of little significance.

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The battle against the influence of the old culture was not waged for only theoretical reasons. The representatives of this culture really did what they could to prevent it from dying or being crushed. As we have seen, those who worked in the "Otdel Muzeev i Oxrany Stariny" fought to legitimate the continued existence of the cultural heritage. In the theater as well the old repertoire continued to dominate during the first years of the Revolution, a fact the Futurists had pointed out already in *Gazeta Futuristov*. For example, on May 1, 1921, the

Moscow theaters presented, beside “Misterija-buff”, only pre-revolutionary works (“Zolotoj petušok”, “Revizor”, “Kovarstvo i ljubov”, Strindberg’s “Erik XIV”, etc.) and two artistically uninteresting Proletkul’t plays.<sup>26</sup> This “bourgeois” repertoire, of course, was not only due to an unwillingness to produce revolutionary plays; other than Majakovskij’s “Misterija-buff” and Kamenskij’s “Sten’ka Razin” there simply were no works of any quality. Majakovskij wrote later: “[...] мы дали первые *вещи искусства октябрьской эпохи*. (Татлин — памятник 3-му интернационалу, ‘Мистерия-буфф’ в постановке Мейерхольда, ‘Стенька Разин’ Каменского.)” (XII, 42.) As we have seen, however, Majakovskij’s play was staged reluctantly and rarely, as was also the case with “Sten’ka Razin”.<sup>27</sup>

What, then, could break this inertia, this influence—and even dominance—of the old culture? In “Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov” the Futurists had called for a Revolution of the Spirit (see chapter I, “Gazeta Futuristov”): “Да здравствует третья Революция, Революция Духа!” This call for a spiritual revolution had been formulated already in the spring of 1918. As we have seen, it was to remain imperative to the Futurists during the years to come. In the poem “IV Internacional”, which Majakovskij had begun to think about early in 1920,<sup>28</sup> the poet echoed the manifestos in *Gazeta Futuristov*:

Октябрь не выгорел! —  
 Коммунисты  
 толпами  
 лезут млеть  
 в Онегине,  
 в Сильве,  
 в Игоре.  
 К гориллам идете!  
 К духовной дырке!

Thus, the October Revolution had not yet had any effect on cultural life; another rebellion was needed:

Каждый омолаживайся!  
 Спеши  
 юн  
 душу седую из себя вытрясти.



Коммунары!  
Готовьте новый бунт  
в грядущей  
коммунистической сытости.

This rebellion should be of a spiritual character—and here the call from “Manifest Letušej Federacii Futuristov” is repeated word by word:

Взрывали мысли головы содрогая,  
артиллерией сердец ухая,  
встает из времен  
революция другая —  
третья революция  
духа.

It was, of course, the Futurists who were to take care of the Revolution of the Spirit:

Мы возьмемся,  
если без  
нас  
об этом думать некому.<sup>29</sup>

(IV, 101–103)

The call for a spiritual revolution was not a rejection of the October Revolution, but a complement to it. The enslavement of the soul was the third corner-stone in the old society (after the political and economical enslavement) that had to be crushed. Man, emancipated materially, must be emancipated spiritually as well. In the poem “Prikaz po armii iskusstva”, published in the first issue of *Iskusstvo Komunny* (December 7, 1918), Majakovskij voiced this programmatic idea (my italics, V. J.):

Паровоз построить *мало* —  
накрутил колес и утек.  
Если песнь не гремит вокзала  
то к чему переменный ток?  
[...]  
Это *мало* — построить парами,  
распушить по штанине канты.  
Все совдепы не сдвинут армий,  
если марш не дадут музыканты.

(II, 14)

The idea is repeated in "Radovat'sja rano":

Это что! —  
пиджак сменить снаружи.  
Мало товарищи!  
Выворачивайтесь нутром!  
(I.K.)

It is striking how Majakovskij (and most of the other Futurists) stress the spiritual impact of the Revolution, which had given the poets and artists the opportunity of realizing what they had been striving for for so long: to create art in freedom, without persecution from the bourgeois critics and the Academy, and to make their art more widely known. The Revolution as a political and economical emancipation *as such*, although it is of course touched upon, is never stressed in these first years. The Futurists were concerned with *their* task: revolutionizing the arts. In his foreword to *Ržanoje slovo* (November, 1918) Majakovskij talks about the young poets of Russia, "нашедших *духовный выход* в революции и ставших на *баррикады искусства*" (XII, 11; my italics, B. J.). This quotation is characteristic of the "esthetic revolutionism" cherished by Majakovskij at the time. The expression is varied in "150 000 000":

Вам,  
растрелянные на баррикадах духа,  
чтоб дни сегодняшние были пропеты,  
будущее ловившие в ненасытное ухо,  
маляры,  
певцы,  
поэты.  
(II, 163)

and in "Prikaz po armii iskusstva":

Товарищи!  
На баррикады! —  
баррикады сердец и душ.  
(II, 14)

The Revolution of the Spirit was hailed not only by Majakovskij. Vasilij Kamenskij wrote in his poem "DEKRET o zabornoj literature, o rospisi ulic, o balkonax s muzykoj, o karnavalax iskusstv":

... Предлагаю всем круто и смело  
Устраивать карнавалы и шествия  
По праздникам отдыха,  
Воспевая Революцию духа  
Вселенскую.<sup>30</sup>

In the poem "Маяковскій" (1917) Kamenskij characterizes his colleague as follows:

И он — Поэт, и Принц, и Нищий,  
Колумб, Острило, и Апаш,  
Кто в Бунте Духа смысла ищет —  
Владимир Маяковский наш.<sup>31</sup>

and in the almanac *Jav'* (1919) he published a poem called simply "Роѐма револјусіи духа" (pp. 25–26):

Разве дело скрывается в том,  
Чтобы поэмы писать на бумаги?  
Или чтоб Бог был один и был горд.  
Я кричу и стучу в человеческий дом  
ради вольной отваги —  
Эй, бунтуй, солнцeveющий Город!

The spiritual revolution went farther and deeper than the political one, and it was also more difficult to realize. There were many obstacles in the way: the "bourgeois mentality" that had developed through the centuries was deeply rooted in people, the classical heritage influenced negatively the creation of contemporary art, the low level of education and culture of the majority of the population and the conservative taste of many of the political leaders made the realization of a spiritual revolution difficult. Nevertheless, to the Futurists, the Revolution would not end until "rabstvo duxa" had been abolished. The Revolution of the Spirit was the real and ultimate revolution. Kamenskij eloquently expressed this view in prose (1918): "Политическую свободу — основанную на власти и подчинении — высокую заработную плату — самоопределение национальностей — условное разоружение — волонтерство — всю эту революцию Тела — стройный порядок организма — купеческий покой вкусно нажравшихся, Он (the Futurist poet, V. J.) непризнает, непринимает.

Он требует творческого разгула вольного Духа [...]. Да здравствует борьба за бога внутри каждого — за рассвет дарований — за выявление всех возможностей. [...] Бей каждый в колокол своей Души, чтобы в хороводном перезвоне услышать алошелковую ленту Гимна торжествующего духовно человечества. [...] Поэт — миллионер поющего Духа — роздал все свое духовное богатство и ждет [...] ответа.”<sup>32</sup>

One supporter of Futurism who talked much about the lack of “spirit” in the revolution was Nikolaj Čužak. Quoting Majakovskij’s lines “Коммунисты / толпами / лезут млеть” he talked about “мление коммунистов — именно коммунистов, а не одних только нэпманов — перед обломками старой культуры [...]”.<sup>33</sup> Čužak even expressed the view that Futurism was being persecuted just because of its stress on the spiritual revolution: “Футуризм — это первое еще творческое осознание революции пролетариата, как чуда, и потому-то он и приветствовался творческой Россией целых 2 года; потому-то [...] он так и ненавистен всем чиновникам, не чувствующим озарения в душе своей, еще успевшим кое как в раскрепощении ума, но так и не удосужившимся *революционировать душу*.”<sup>34</sup>

Čužak’s colleague in Siberia, Sergej Tret’jakov, feared that the Revolution had not been effective enough: “[...] а вдруг сквозь опадающий пламень окажется, что колонны и фундаменты вчерашнего дня не выжжены до тла?” (Cf. Majakovskij: “Октябрь не выгорел.”) There are always people who will use the Revolution for their own purposes: “Беспокойно следит поэт, как на усталости от революционного напряжения, на доверчивости новых хозяев жизни, не прочь спекулировать лавочки эстетической и моральной барахолки, пытающиеся пристегнуть старьё на потребу нового дня.”<sup>35</sup>

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There was, of course, nothing unique in the fact that the Futurist poets cherished a spiritual revolution—the “spirit” was the poets’ domain, where they could bring their tribute to the Revolution—the ultimate tribute, without which the Revolution would not “выгорет”.

It was not only the Futurists who talked about the “third revolution”. This idea and slogan was frequently expressed in these years.<sup>36</sup>

The thought that the third, cultural revolution should be independent of the political and economical ones was the corner-stone in Proletkul't's ideology. According to this ideology, the work of the proletariat in the cultural field should be free from party and state influence and control but, of course, under the direct supervision of Proletkul't.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of the spiritual revolution was held by the Scythian poets and thinkers as well. They used this slogan before the Futurists did, and it is possible that the Futurists borrowed it from them. In the struggle against the influence of the past, against bourgeois taste and habits, the Futurists were to some extent close to mystic thinkers like Ivanov-Razumnik. In the Socialist-Revolutionary paper *Znamja Truda*, Ivanov-Razumnik expounded on the ideas of a spiritual revolution ("Duxovnaja Revoljucija") and a spiritual transformation ("Duxovnoe preobraženie"), and in the almanac *Skify* he wrote about the revolutionaries of the spirit: "[...] все поэты считают себя подлинными революционерами духа; для них всякая внешняя революция слишком 'мелка', слишком материальна; они смотрят 'глубже', они видят дальше, они неудовлетворяются малым".<sup>38</sup> The ironic tone of this statement is due to the fact that Ivanov-Razumnik thought that not all poets had the right to call themselves "revolutionaries of the spirit". His own favorites were the peasant poets, Kljuev above all, but also Esenin and Orešin. Among the Futurists he recognized Majakovskij as "единственный небездарный футурист, [...] ломовой извозчик поэзии".<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless Ivanov-Razumnik was close to the Futurists in his vigilance *vis à vis* the past and his fear that this past would retain its influence: "[...] 'революционность' будет возможно скорее заключена в твердые рамки, причем рамки эти всецело будут принадлежать старому миру".<sup>40</sup> It is the bourgeois spirit that threatens the Revolution; "Vsesvetnyj Meščanin", who once crushed world Christianity, is now crushing world Socialism by subjecting it to "Dux Kompromissa".<sup>41</sup> "Will", Ivanov-Razumnik asks, "Socialism remain revolutionary?"<sup>42</sup> Within all Socialist parties there are both revolutionary Socialists and bourgeois Socialists: "[...] правда нынешнего дня — отмежевание революционеров социалистов от социалистов мещан, какое бы название они не носили".<sup>43</sup>

Andrej Belyj was another poet who was much occupied with the problems of "dux". In a pamphlet written in 1917 Belyj also ex-

pressed the idea that the political revolution was not enough: “Революция производственных отношений есть отражение революции, а не сама революция; экономический материализм полагает лишь в ней чистоту; и полагает он: революции духа — не чисты; они буржуазны.”<sup>44</sup>

In a letter to Ivanov-Razumnik of March 2, 1927, Andrej Belyj wrote of 1919: “[...] самый трудный год [...] явное разочарование в близости ‘революции Духа’”.<sup>45</sup>

This is an interesting remark. As we have seen, 1918 and 1919 were for the Futurists years of hard cultural ideological struggle. It was a time when they were forced to take a stand on the most urgent questions of art and culture and to fight for their views and positions. And it was then that “*travljа levogo iskusstva*”—as Majakovskij put it—began and was brought to a “successful” conclusion. In the struggle between those who favored a Revolution of the Spirit and those who were enemies of such a revolution, the latter triumphed. Majakovskij had many opportunities to convince himself that the cultural revolution propagandized by the Futurists was not popular with the Party and many other groups in the young Soviet society: the never ceasing campaigns against him and the other Futurists, the unwillingness (to put it mildly) on the part of the authorities to publish and stage his works, the closing of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and *Iskusstvo*, and so on. 1919 was no doubt a difficult year for Majakovskij; as for Belyj, it was a year of disappointment—he understood not only that the Revolution of the Spirit was not close, but also that it was not wanted in the form in which the Futurists presented it.

What, then, was he to do? It is my opinion that one of the reasons why Majakovskij started to work at Rosta in the fall of 1919 was that he had realized the fruitlessness of posing the questions of art in such a general and provocative way as had been done in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and elsewhere. He understood that the new art had no possibilities of achieving victory at this moment; for this reason Majakovskij chose more practical work and temporarily abandoned the theoretical debate.

This, however, did not mean that Majakovskij gave up his views. Futurism was not a poetic “school” but an attitude—a revolutionary attitude—to life and art. The Futurists had always fought against conservatism and stagnation. This struggle may, in fact, be seen as the very essence of “real” Futurism and the “real” Futurists. The struggle

for the new against the old, therefore, was an integral part of Majakovskij's life and work, both before and after the Revolution. This was a fight against *byt* and for the Revolution. Nikolaj Punin wrote in one of the last issues of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* that it was the *Revolution* (i.e. the revolutionary process) that the Futurists were close to, “именно с революцией, я это подчеркиваю, а не с существующим советским бытом”.<sup>46</sup>

Majakovskij undoubtedly agreed.

## IV. The Futurists and Proletkul't

Самое революционное содержание не может быть революционным без революционного подхода к слову.

— В. Маяковский, 1920.

In the discussion on the culture of the future the Futurists and Proletkul't occupied a unique position. These two groups both claimed to be the sole representatives of the proletariat in the cultural sphere. "Футуризм и пролетарская культура, вот два сфинкса, смотрящие друг на друга и вопрошающие: кто ты?", wrote Pavel Bessal'ko, proletarian poet and one of the most active Proletkul't polemicists.<sup>1</sup>

Both Proletkul't and the Futurists could with some justification say that they were close to the proletariat, but for quite different reasons. Proletkul't could claim the right to the position of the proletariat's cultural representatives by virtue of its orientation toward the working class, its "klassovost". Proletkul't had held its first conference less than a week before the October Revolution, and it soon became an extensive organization; in its heyday, at the beginning of 1920, it had 80 000 "studijcy" organized in 300 local organizations,<sup>2</sup> and for a time it published some twenty periodicals.<sup>3</sup> With respect to artistic creation, however, Proletkul't was unable—except in a few instances—to boast of anything of real value. The Futurists, on the other hand, lacked Proletkul't's strong organization and orientation toward the working class, but they could maintain that their art—the most advanced of the time—was the only art worthy of and in concord with the proletariat, historically the most advanced class.

During the years after the Revolution, the Futurists and Proletkul't were more than chief rivals—they were arch enemies. Unfortunately, the two groups did not engage in any theoretical debate on the important cultural questions facing the new state. The critics of Futurism within Proletkul't lacked the knowledge and theoretical



education for that. Nor was the political situation such that it allowed time for an ordered discussion of theoretical questions: the Civil War was going on, the food-supply situation was chaotic, and future political development unclear.

Criticism of the Futurists (not only from Proletkul't) was conducted on a low level of irrelevant slogans, which made it difficult to rebut. "[...] обвинения [...] в большинстве вздорны, необоснованы, обнаруживают полнейшую неосведомленность 'критиков' — вообще таковы, что серьезно отвечать на них нельзя [...]]", as Nikolaj Punin complained.<sup>4</sup> Not only was there an animosity toward left-wing art, there was an equally strong reluctance to comprehend it. An article in *Grjaduščee*, organ of the Petrograd Proletkul't, entitled "Čerez soderžanie k texnike, čerez texniku k massam" contains a typical expression of this attitude: pride at not being able to understand is combined with presumptuousness springing from the writer's conviction that he is speaking in the name of the "masses": "Я — масса. Позвольте мне говорить от массы. Я не понимаю Маяковского и Шершеневича, и у меня нет охоты их понять" (my italics, B. J.).<sup>5</sup>

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In the debate between the Futurists and Proletkul't, it was for the most part the Futurists who were on the defensive. Proletkul't used its class position to accuse the Futurists of not being real revolutionaries, in any case not real proletarians. V. Aleksandrovskij, the only Proletkul't poet to be profoundly influenced by Majakovskij, declared nonetheless that "сколько-бы нам Маяковский [...] ни говорил, что он самый настоящий пролетарский поэт, мы [...] не поверим ему. И это может быть будет единственным критерием."<sup>6</sup> This was the point of departure from which the "discussion" was conducted: Majakovskij and the other Futurists had to "prove" the whole time that they were sincere and did not simply want to "primazat'sja k sovetskoj vlasti".

Now, the criticism of Futurism within Proletkul't was not entirely monolithic. There were members who were more placably disposed toward the left-wing artists' experiments, and one can even find positive remarks on Futurism in the Proletkul't press. Opinions varied from person to person, as well as from periodical to periodical. In general, however, it can be said that Proletkul't's leading theoretic-

cians were totally negative towards the Futurists. This was true of such important names as Bogdanov, Keržencev, Fedor Kalinin (Mixail's brother) and Pavel Bessal'ko.

Discussion of literary and cultural questions was conducted primarily in the main publication of the organization, *Proletarskaja Kul'tura*, and in the Petrograd paper *Grjaduščee*. These contained two very weighty (if not especially penetrating) contributions to the debate on Futurism, by Fedor Kalinin and Pavel Bessal'ko.<sup>7</sup> Both articles coincided in time with the general anti-Futurist campaign, and they were answered in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and *Iskusstvo*.

Both *Proletarskaja Kul'tura* and *Grjaduščee* were orthodox mouthpieces of Proletkul't, and little space was allotted to Futurism. Schools of art which were from Proletkul't's point of view as heretical as Futurism were evidently easier to discuss in the organization's provincial publications. While no deviating opinions on Futurism were published in the two main papers, out in the provinces we find more openness and pluralism. *Zarevo Zavodov*, for example, mouthpiece of the Samara Proletkul't, devoted one article in its first issue and a large part of the second (only two issues were published) to Futurism. This was explained in an editorial comment by the fact that "различные общественные организации и отдельные лица" lately had directed questions to Proletkul't about the organization's relationship to Futurism, and it was promised that the discussion would be continued in the third issue, which, however, never appeared.<sup>8</sup> *Zarevo Zavodov* was officially a Proletkul't organ, but in tone and contents it differed from the central Proletkul't papers. Two favorable articles were written by Sergej Spasskij, who was close to the Futurists. He had become acquainted with Majakovskij as early as 1914,<sup>9</sup> and had, as we have seen, participated in *Gazeta Futuristov* in the spring of 1918. It would be wrong to believe that Spasskij expressed the views of the Proletkul't leaders. In spite of the fact that both issues of *Zarevo Zavodov* by no means praised Futurism to the skies, but rather assumed a sympathetic if also reserved attitude, they were severely censured by orthodox critics such as Semen Rodov: "Непонятным кажется [...], зачем почти половина второго номера посвящена футуризму. [...] не слишком-ли много чести для направления, ничего общего с пролетарской культурой не имеющего и вызвавшего к себе отрицательное отношение со стороны всех пролетарских организаций?" Rodov attributes this situation

to the influence of foreign elements: “Не объясняется-ли это незаслуженное внимание к футуризму приветствием в журнале некоторых залетных гостей, совершенно чуждых духу пролетарской культуры?”<sup>10</sup> *Zarevo Zavodov* was also attacked in *Grjaduščee*, where, with an allusion to the name of the periodical, it was said to be only an “отблеск догорающего заката буржуазного искусства [...]”.<sup>11</sup> Other reviewers as well criticized *Zarevo Zavodov* for allowing Spasskij and other “наезжие гастролеры” to publish in the journal.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, any devotion of interest or space to Futurism aroused the displeasure of the central Proletkul't theoreticians. Anything which might resemble “Futurism” in form or content was severely criticized. *Vzmaxi* (I), a calender published by the Saratov Proletkul't, for example, was attacked for the “футуристические кляксы” on the cover, which were said to harmonize well with the contents.<sup>13</sup> *Vzmaxi* contained a polemical article by Lidija Toom<sup>14</sup> which attacked a viciously anti-Futurist article in the Moscow periodical *Gudki* (“Izdanie Literaturnoj Studii Moskovskogo Proletkul'ta”),<sup>15</sup> pointing out instead that Futurism had been of great importance to the development of the poetical language, not least in the case of a number of proletarian poets. As far as I know, this is the only article in any Proletkul't organ defending Futurism in direct polemics with another Proletkul't article. *Vzmaxi*, however, can hardly be accused of taking an apologetic attitude toward Futurism, and in the same issue “Reporter” communicates from Moscow under the heading “Proletsmex”:

В картинах, опять вот, мутят футуристы,  
Прохвосты, сволочи, анархисты!  
Чтоб им было пусто, чертям,  
И на этом свете и на том!

Another periodical of some importance that discussed Futurism was *Grjaduščaja Kul'tura* (the Tambov Proletkul't), in which Semen Kluben' printed a long article entitled “Proletkul't i Kom-Fut” (1919: 4/5) which was strongly anti-Futurist and should have been to the Proletkul't theoreticians' taste. In spite of the fact that *Grjaduščaja Kul'tura* had on several occasions in reviews opposed the excessively vulgar attacks being made on Futurism and had expressed its interest in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* (“не знаем, что заговорят ‘левые деятели

искусства' в следующих номерах газеты, но в № 1 они рассуждают с большой здравостью и ясностью"<sup>16</sup>) the periodical was praised by the influential Proletkul't poet A. Maširov: "[...] Грядущая Культура и с художественной и с идейной стороны является одним из лучших пролетарских журналов."<sup>17</sup>

In the other Proletkul't publications to which I have had access, I have not found anything of interest to our discussion of Proletkul't and Futurism during this period. These include *Gorn* (Moscow), *Tvori!* (Moscow), *Mir i čelovek* (Kolpino), *Žizn' Iskusstva* (Kologriv), *Zori* (Klin), *Grjaduščaja Kul'tura* (Tambov; "Odnodnevnyj bjulleten' Tambovskogo Gubernskogo Proletkul'ta"—supplement to *Izvestija Tambovskogo Gubernskogo Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta*).

Rather than give individual accounts of all the fairly similar Proletkul't articles, it has been my intention here to provide, in a short summary, a quantitative picture of Proletkul't's criticism of Futurism. On the basis of this resumé we can conclude that the front against Futurism within Proletkul't was almost totally united, that the important leaders deprecated it, while only a few less significant members—or "foreign elements"—in the provinces expressed a deviating opinion.

What, then, did Proletkul't's criticism of Futurism amount to?

Before we can answer that question, we must briefly outline Proletkul't's ideological position.

Proletkul't was a workers' organization, but not in the broad sense. It was meant to consist of only the most progressive part of the working class, the industrial proletariat, whose members were the sole bearers of the historical consciousness of the class. Contamination was something to be feared, not only from other social classes and groups, but also from the "lower", undeveloped proletariat: "Допустить в студиях Пр<олеткуль>та только фабрично-заводской производственный пролетариат."<sup>18</sup> This narrow attitude, of course, meant that large sections of the proletariat were excluded from the educational work conducted within Proletkul't's various study groups. In practice it nonetheless happened that groups other than the industrial proletariat participated in Proletkul't work, and Proletkul't sections were established even far out in the countryside, where there were no workers at all and where activities assumed a mere educational character.

This orientation toward the skilled industrial proletariat resulted

in very poor contact with the working class as a whole. Platon Keržencev, a leading Proletkul't theoretician, admitted in a later review (1921) of the work of the first period that the Proletkul't organizations' greatest weakness was precisely "сравнительно слабая связь их работы с широкими массами".<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Proletkul't's activities were conducted only among workers, and the notion "klassovost'" was a catchword in the organization. Its attitude toward other social classes was completely negative. This is not surprising with respect to the old bourgeois class. But "klassovost'" was insisted upon in relation to the peasants as well. Fedor Kalinin wrote of the search for new forms in cultural work: "Эту работу пролетариат должен совершить сам, исключительно своими собственными силами, вне сотрудничества с другими трудовыми элементами Советской России, например крестьянством, [...] чтобы его творчество не тормозилось из-за влияния на работу других групп населения и в своем развитии имело чисто пролетарский характер."<sup>20</sup>

This attitude can appear strange in view of the fact that the peasants were also an oppressed class under capitalism; to Proletkul't's way of thinking, however, it was the proletariat that was the historically progressive class, the class under whose leadership and dictatorship the new culture would be created. The peasants were culturally backward and most often conservative, and therefore—like the unskilled *Lumpenproletariat*—they ran a greater risk of being contaminated by bourgeois propaganda than the industrial workers, who with the help of their "критический нож классового чутья"<sup>21</sup> were able to evaluate correctly foreign influences. In his report from "1-j S'ezd po rabočekrest'janskomu teatru" Keržencev wrote that "идейное освобождение крестьянства мыслимо лишь, как переход крестьянства на точку зрения коммунизма, т. е. его полного слияния с пролетариатом".<sup>22</sup> Another leading Proletkul't theoretician, Lebedev-Poljanskij, also emphasized that there existed a "глубокая разница между мироощущением пролетария и крестьянина".<sup>23</sup>

Proletkul't's relationship to the intelligentsia was even more strained. Proletkul't was a "kul'turno-prosvetitel'naja organizacija", and as such regarded the intelligentsia as a hateful and dangerous rival, especially since the intelligentsia as a whole stood for bourgeois cultural values. The intelligentsia, after all, was the superstructure in the society that the working class had overthrown. There were, of

course, intellectuals who supported the Revolution, and it is true that Proletkul't used intellectuals as lecturers and instructors (Brjusov, Bal'mont, Belyj, Vjačeslav Ivanov, *et al.*), but they were not allowed to exert any influence on Proletkul't's activity or ideology. In spite of this, they were occasionally able to influence Proletkul't's work so that "студии Пролеткульта стали скорее носителями буржуазной культуры, чем революционной культуры пролетариата".<sup>24</sup> On several occasions the Proletkul't leadership was forced to intervene and purge the ranks: "Так как Пролеткульт, по идее — классовая организация, то на обязанности совета старост лежит наблюдение за чистотою состава студий. В студии может быть принят лишь тот, кто, по роду своей деятельности, является подлинным пролетарием, вышедшим из пролетарской среды. На первых порах в драматические студии Пролеткульта проник совершенно чуждый рабочему классу элемент, и совету старост пришлось произвести основательную чистку."<sup>25</sup> Intellectuals, due to their social position (the majority came from the bourgeois classes) could not feel the proper solidarity with the proletariat; this solidarity was something which, according to Proletkul't's ideology, only the proletariat itself could possess. The following idea occurred often in Proletkul't's argumentation: "Мы должны знать, что в самых ничтожных дозах буржуазное искусство крайне ядовито и разлагающе действует на нашу волю и чувство. Но мы должны знать и другое, что добровольным агентом и весьма искусным проводником буржуазного искусства является интеллигенция. [...] Студии заполняются только рабочими, это положено в основу нашей деятельности."<sup>26</sup> It was all a matter of class origins; to experience reality like a worker one must be born a worker: "Примыкающая к нам интеллигенция мыслить с нами, а если нужно и за нас, может, чувствовать же — нет."<sup>27</sup>

It is against this background that we must regard Proletkul't's hostile attitude toward Futurism. The Futurists belonged to the intelligentsia but supported the Revolution and therefore competed with Proletkul't. It is no coincidence, then, that Proletkul't's attacks on Futurism were even harder and more unrelenting than on the purely bourgeois part of the intelligentsia, with which it had nothing in common. The antagonism on the part of Proletkul't was absolute. Fedor Kalinin, whose views on esthetic questions were usually representative of the rest of Proletkul't's leadership, asked: "Может ли

пролетариат итти за футуризмом, или по его стопам”, and answered himself: “Ясно, что нет. Пролетариат и футуризм — это антиподы.”<sup>28</sup>

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Proletkul't regarded the Futurists as representatives of the intelligentsia, and consequently Futurism as bourgeois art. Or, more precisely, as the art of the moribund bourgeoisie. The Futurists were “представители глубоко реакционной, издыхающей идеологии”.<sup>29</sup> Not only was this ideology reactionary, it also nourished “извращенные вкусы”.<sup>30</sup> “Футуризм с его разновидностями как в живописи, так и в литературе, явился отражением распада буржуазного общества”, wrote Keržencev,<sup>31</sup> and he was echoed, in more vulgar terminology, by Pavel Bessal'ko: “Перед смертью <буржуазное искусство> покрывается уродливыми шишками и наростами ... Один из этих наростов и есть футуризм.”<sup>32</sup>

There were several sub-titles under the general heading “bourgeois art” in Proletkul't's criticism of Futurism.

Futurism was said to be individualistic: “Футуризм зародился среди представителей крайнего индивидуализма, которым вообще богата буржуазная среда.”<sup>33</sup> Bessal'ko accused Kamenskij and Majakovskij of individualism—Majakovskij, among other things, because he used the chapter headings “Roždestvo Majakovskogo”, “Žizn' Majakovskogo”, etc. in the poem “Čelovek”.<sup>34</sup>

It was a simple maneuver to charge one's opponents with individualism in an age that regarded collectivism and collective creativity as its ideals. “Collectivism”, moreover, was a vague notion that was often used as a kind of invocation. In Proletkul't it meant either that the proletarian writer was supposed to depict the working class's “collective soul” in his works, or also that a collective jointly created or presented a literary work, as when Walt Whitman's poetry, for example, was read aloud by everyone in the auditorium. The idealistically colored collectivism advocated by Proletkul't, however, was utopian, and it could not point to anything capable of eclipsing the Futurists' “individual creation”. Furthermore, the Proletkul't critics schematicized here as in so many other connections in a way that deprived their argumentation of its force and made it rather easy to rebut; they lumped together writers who superficially, perhaps, seemed similar in their individualism but who upon a deeper analysis exhibited more differences than likenesses. For example, there was

little in common between the individualism of Igor' Severjanin (and other Ego-Futurists) on the one hand, and that of Majakovskij, on the other. Majakovskij's "individualism", moreover, might, in Jung's terminology, be said to be an archetypal expression of the collective sub-consciousness. The most eloquent answer to Proletkul't's criticism came from Majakovskij himself, in his unfinished poem "V International'":

Пролеткультцы не говорят  
ни про "я",  
ни про личность.  
"Я"  
для пролеткультца  
все равно что неприличность.  
И чтоб психология  
была  
"коллективней", чем у футуриста,  
вместо "я-с-то"  
говорят  
"мы-с-то".  
А по-моему,  
если говорить мелкие вещи,  
сколько ни заменяй "Я — Мы",  
не вылезешь из лирической ямы.  
А я говорю  
"Я"  
и это "Я"  
вот,  
балагурия,  
прыгая по словам легко,  
с прошлых высот,  
озирает высоты грядущих веков.  
Если мир  
подо мной  
муравейника менее,  
то куда ж тут, товарищи, различать местоимения?!

(IV, 122-123)

"Collectivism" was also a catchword among the IZO Futurists, and they did their best in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* to prove that it was pre-



cisely Futurism that was based on collectivist principles. The word was often used as a mere slogan, without being defined, as a synonym or complement to "Socialism", "Communism", etc.—the idea of the collective was strong within the political and economical branches of the Labor Movement, so proletarian culture would also be "collectivistic". Boris Kušner avowed: "Знаем мы <о социалистическом искусстве> столько же, сколько умненькие, старенькие социал-демократы докоммунистического периода. Знаем, что в эпоху социализма искусство станет коллективистским."<sup>35</sup> The IZO Futurists, however, were not able to provide any tenable or—above all—developable definition of the notion, either.

Natan Al'tman maintained on several occasions that only "Futurist" art is constructed "на коллективистических основах".<sup>36</sup> His argument was based on an analysis of the structure of the work of art itself: "Мы понимаем это не в том смысле, что одно произведение будет сделано многими художниками, а в том, что сработанное одним творцом, само произведение построено на коллективистических основах."<sup>37</sup> How, then, did Al'tman define this? His idea was based on the theory and technique of Cubist ("Futurist") painting. Al'tman was of the opinion that the components of a Futurist painting cannot be seen separately, outside their context. Every part receives its significance "лишь от содружества всех прочих частей".<sup>38</sup> Proceeding from this technical definition of "collectivism" Al'tman drew the conclusion that a Futurist painting "живет коллективистической жизнью".<sup>39</sup>

Al'tman's (perhaps somewhat sophistic) definition of collectivism naturally had little in common with Proletkul't's interpretation. Bessal'ko, it is true, could agree that "действительно, в настоящее время, кроме футуристской живописи, у пролетариата другой не имеется", but this did not imply that Futurist painting was anything for the working class: "[...] едва ли пролетариат доволен этим даром футуристов, и едва ли футуристски-кубистскую пачкотню он захочет усыновить и признать ее своим искусством".<sup>40</sup>

Boris Kušner provided a more socially oriented definition of what he meant by "collective creation".<sup>41</sup>

To begin with, Kušner defines the collective as "количественно неограниченное общественное целое" or, in other words, "вся совокупность каждой общественности". In art one must dis-

tinguish between two factors: 1) “момент художественной воли. Эстетического давления, делающего неизбежным появление данного произведения искусства”, and 2) “момент осуществления созревшего художественного задания”.

The possible combinations of these operations may vary. The artist himself is the source of the artistic will, and he either realizes this will himself (e.g. easel painting) or he leads a specially trained group of performers (e.g. a conductor). This combination, however, Kušner rejects as being anarchistic, the capitalist bourgeoisie's cherished dream in art: “Идеальный случай индивидуального искусства.”

There are other conceivable combinations. The artistic will and the striving to realize it can be shared by several or many persons. Kušner cites as an example the cathedral in Bern. It is a work by architects of the Ulm school, but it is impossible to tell who planned and erected the building. Paintings connected with Leonardo da Vinci's name are another example: “Воля их породившая принадлежала группе лиц, индивидуальности которых слиты в общем понятии Ломбардской школы.”

Kušner also rejects this principle as a form typical of all class democracies.

Now, then, will the two operations be combined under Socialism? “В социализме идея произведения зарождается в едином сознании массы и воплощается подавлением коллективной воли ее.” This theory, of course, produces problems: even if the “idea” arises in the collective consciousness of the masses, the masses can hardly change it collectively into artistic practice. Kušner solves this problem by distinguishing an “исполнительный орган” from the “носитель эстетического замысла”. Thus, the artistic will is “delegated” to a “рабочий производственный аппарат”. Kušner's view of the art of the collective contains ideas that would recur ten years later under the name of “social'nyj zakaz”: “Искусство коллектива будет, следовательно, такой формой, при которой идея произведения возникнет в неограниченно широких массах, воля же к воплощению его будет этой массой делегирована исполнителю — безразлично единичному ли художнику, рабочей ли коллегии.”

The difference between Socialism's collective art and that which has been created under other economic systems thus lies in the first factor: it is the masses rather than the individual that give birth to

the artistic will. The second operation, the realization of the idea, however, remains unchanged in Kušner's theory, even if by way of conclusion he speculates on whether the production of art objects in the future will be effected by individual artists or through the joint efforts of production staffs—"или, наконец, непостижимым образом разрешив положение о единстве композиции и исполнении, социалистическое человечество найдет возможность оборудовать и запустить в ход фабрики искусства".

The "collective" element in Kušner's theory depends, in fact, on whether these speculations of his can become reality; otherwise "collective art" will be merely another expression for "popular", "typical", etc. This definition of "collectivism", where the artist expresses ideas that have arisen in the masses, agrees well with Lenin's "reflection theory", for example, and Tolstoj would be interpreted accordingly as a "collective" author.

In other words, the Futurists' use of the notion "collectivism" was not especially clear. But they were not alone in this; Proletkul't, which accused the Futurists of individualism, was also unable to provide a definition of "collectivism". Here as in so many other cases, a notion borrowed from politics and other social areas proved to be inapplicable in the cultural sphere.

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Closely related to the charges that the Futurists were "bourgeois" and "individualistic" were accusations of "incomprehensibility". The moribund culture of the bourgeoisie, according to the Proletkul't critics, gave rise to desperate and/or decadent esthetic experiments which were incomprehensible to the masses; conversely, anything that was "incomprehensible" could be called "bourgeois".

As has been indicated above, in this question there was not only a lack of understanding of the new literature, but also a conscious unwillingness to understand. But there existed "objective" conditions as well which made Futurist literature, for example, seem unintelligible to many people; the poetical culture of the workers, due to illiteracy and the general cultural level, was exceedingly low, and modernistic poetry is a demanding, "difficult" poetry. Further, in Futurist poetry, as in all poetical schools, there were extreme examples which could always be cited by the critics. The prime example for the critics of Futurism, of course, became Kručenyx's verses

Дыр бул шыр  
убешщур  
скуп  
вы со бу  
р л э з

which the author, to crown it all, said contained more of the Russian national character than the whole of Puškin.<sup>42</sup> These five lines were almost always cited when the point was to exemplify Futurism's supposed incomprehensibility. None of the critics had insight enough to understand (or else they intentionally ignored) the fact that this was but an example from Futurism's *ars poetica*, intended more to illustrate a principle and defy conservative tastes than to be "intelligible" poetry.

Instead, the Proletkul't theoreticians struck at precisely the Futurists' interest in formal experiments: "[...] мы не можем не признать, что даже формы — внешняя оболочка футуристского искусства — враждебна пролетариату".<sup>43</sup> Proletkul't's "ideologist-in-chief", A. Bogdanov, lamented: "Печально видеть поэта-пролетария, который ищет лучших художественных форм, и думает найти их у какого-нибудь кривляющего интеллигента — рекламиста Маяковского, или, еще хуже, — у Игоря Северянина, идеолога альфонсов и кокоток, талантливого воплощения лакированной пошлости."<sup>44</sup>

The view in Proletkul't was that content was primary. A good (revolutionary) content automatically ensured a good (revolutionary) form: "[...] только новое содержание дает нам новые формы".<sup>45</sup> All formal experiments were frowned upon. It was assumed that the proletarian writer's class background and class instinct, "klassovost", would guide him in relation to problems of form as well. To the Futurists, who had carried out what was perhaps the most important revolution in form in the history of Russian poetry, this view appeared not only unacceptable but even downright absurd.

The Proletkul't poets, unversed as most of them were in literature, clothed their new, revolutionary content in old formal attire (in particular Symbolism's), with respect to both metrics and metaphors.<sup>46</sup> "[...] футуро-имажинисты словоблудники, пишут с потолка, справляют праздник галлюцинациями. [...] когда я встречаю образ Горького 'море смеется', Короленко 'река

играет', в моем воображении вырастает яркая, сочная картина, преисполненная радости."<sup>47</sup> It was such a view of poetry Majakovskij had in mind when in "Prikaz № 2 armii iskusstv" he spoke of

пролеткультцы,  
кладущие заплатаки  
на вылинявший пушкинский фрак.

(II, 86)

Most of the Proletkul't poets' verses were dominated by hackneyed metaphors and traditional meters. The Futurists objected to this. Majakovskij in particular unceasingly emphasized the importance of form in the work of art: "О новом надо говорить и новыми словами. Нужна новая форма искусства" (XII, 452). It was the Futurists who had dealt the first blow to the old poetical language, and it was not their fault if even now "благородные чувства гражданских поэтов забронированы в такие эпитеты, как 'царица свободы', 'золотой труд'", because in their poetry "tsarevnas" and "gold" had long ago been replaced by "iron" and "rebellion" (XII, 13).

The question of form and content obstructed cooperation between the Futurists and Proletkul't. According to his own assertion, Brik was heckled at the first Proletkul't conference in October, 1917, when he took the liberty of pointing out that the proletarian artist "будет писать не кистью, а шваброй".<sup>48</sup>

Majakovskij recalled on a later occasion that even before the October Revolution the Futurists had tried to come to terms with the proletarian writers in what was to become Proletkul't: "[...] но эти писатели думали (по вещам глядя), что революционность исчерпывается одним агитационным содержанием, и остались в области оформления полными реакционерами, никак не могучими спаяться" (XII, 41). Even in his theoretical article, "Kak delat' stixi", Majakovskij touched upon the Proletkul't poets' inadequate interest in form, taking Vladimir Kirillov as an example: "Безнадежно складывать в 4-стопный амфибрахий, придуманный для шопотка, распирающий грохот революции.

Герои, скитальцы морей, альбатросы,  
Застольные гости громовых пиров,  
Орлиное племя, матросы, матросы,  
Вам песнь огневая рубиновых слов."

(XII, 84-85)

These lines were taken from Kirillov's poem "Matrosam". Kirillov tells in his memoirs (presumably written in 1932) that he had visited Majakovskij in the spring of 1918 and had read him this poem. Majakovskij said bluntly: "Бросьте старую форму, иначе через год не будут читать ваших стихов, вот 'Железная Мессия' (another of Kirillov's poems, В. J.) — это хорошо! И он читал на свой манер строки этого стихотворения."<sup>49</sup>

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The question of form and its significance, of course, was not only an "ideological" problem ("contentness" *vis à vis* "formalism"), but had just as much to do with poetical skill and talent. This brings us to an important question of principle, the real watershed between the Futurists' and Proletkul't's views of proletarian culture.

What was proletarian culture? And who was to create this culture?

Trockij pointed out that "proletarian culture", "proletarian art", etc. were notions that were often used uncritically, at times to designate the art and culture of the future Communist society, while at times they stood for "такая путаница понятий и слов, в которой уж вовсе ничего не разберешь".<sup>50</sup> "Proletarian", of course, was a positively charged notion, and it was often used as a synonym of "socialist". Here there was a latent confusion of ideas. On the one hand, the term "proletarian" was used in a general sense, in which case "proletarian culture" was equivalent to "the culture of the new state", "the culture of the future", etc. On the other hand, it was used by Proletkul't to denote the culture of the working class. But there were other classes in the Socialist society, which was why the Party, for example, laid the emphasis on the creation of a culture that was Socialist and not only proletarian—even if the significance of the creation by the working class of its own, class-bound culture was not denied. To Proletkul't, however, genuine Socialist culture was the culture of the working class, proletarian culture; Fedor Kalinin emphasized that the proletariat, through what was from the beginning a conscious struggle for the ideals of Socialism, "закладывал фундамент социалистической культуры (или культуры пролетарской, что для нас одно и то же)".<sup>51</sup>

The Futurists used the notion "proletarian culture" in the general sense, i.e. the new culture that would be created under new social relations, in the Socialist society.

The principal question in the discussion was: what is “proletarian culture”? Is it a culture *by* the proletarians? Or a culture *for* the proletarians?

We have already touched upon Proletkul't's view of this question. It was the workers themselves who would create proletarian culture, and even if it was possible to borrow this or that from the intelligentsia's technical arsenal, one always had to be on guard against bourgeois infection. This reasoning resulted in the theory that only a worker can write about a worker's situation; although an intellectual can understand and intellectually even be on the side of the worker, he can never *feel* like a worker. “Мы не располагаем еще пьесами, написанными самими рабочими. Писатели же, не вышедшие из рабочей среды, могут мыслить за рабочих, но они не могут чувствовать, как рабочие”, as V. Boguševskij wrote apropos of the proletarian theater repertoire.<sup>52</sup> Lebedev-Poljanskij formulated the conception of the significance of class background as follows: “Сам рабочий, если он владеет кистью или словом, передает свои переживания непосредственно, интеллигент же, хотя он и коммунист, передает не непосредственные переживания, а наблюдения над тем, что переживает рабочий у <сво>его котла. Этот интеллигент запечатлевает свои переживания из вторых рук, так как рабочий передает эти переживания так, как они запечатлелись в его пролетарской душе.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, it was the task of the workers themselves to create proletarian culture: “Мы исходим из того положения, что пролетарскую культуру создают сами рабочие, а не интеллигенты, случайно или не случайно дошедшие до идей пролетариата.”<sup>54</sup> This opinion that the worker, by virtue of his origin and his place in the production process, possessed unique prerequisites for the creation of proletarian culture was at times manifested rather touchingly. On October 9, 1920, a worker by the name of E. A. Fedorov wrote to the chairman of the Soviet of the People's Commissars, V. I. Lenin, “как к равному товарищу среди равных” and offered to write a modern counterpart to *Vojna i mir*: “Я берусь написать художественный исторический, нарисованный с классового пролетарского понимания роман ‘Война и революция’ в три года. За свои труды не беру ни наград, ни похвал. Прошу только дать комнату, освещение и пищу. А самое главное — доступ в архивы и редакции.”<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Proletkul't's answer to the question "What is proletarian culture?" was: culture created *by* the workers *for* the workers. A considerably more interesting and complex solution was proposed by the IZO Futurists.

Before I go into the IZO Futurists' interpretation of what proletarian culture was, I shall try to explain what they thought it was *not*.

It was primarily Osip Brik who theorized about proletarian culture. He was of the opinion that "art *for* the proletariat" is no solution, since it is based on a conception of the proletariat as an enormous consumer. Moreover, this attitude is what gives rise to the constant arguments about "ponjatnost'" and "obščedostupnost'", as if this was what the whole question was about: "Давно известно, что чем искусство понятней и доступней, тем оно скучней."<sup>56</sup> In some entries ("Proletarskoe iskusstvo") in his notebook<sup>57</sup> Brik rejects the idea of art *for* the proletariat on somewhat different grounds, which, however, complement rather than contradict the above reasoning: "Определение 'пролетарского искусства', как 'искусства для пролетария, искусства приемлемого для пролетария' не состоятельно; так как предполагает существование искусства непролетарского, из которого пролетарий отбирает себе то, что ему нужно. Следовательно, не пролетарий определяет ход искусства, а кто-то другой. Такое понимание пролетарского искусства возможно лишь при господстве буржуазии и совпадает с понятием 'искусства для народа', 'искусства популярного'."

With respect to the notion of "art *by* the proletariat", Brik's repudiation of it was automatically an attack on Proletkul't, for it was only the Proletkul't theoreticians who consistently maintained this "sectarian" position. It is wrong to believe, says Brik, that you can take any proletarian whatever, "обучить его искусствам и все, что он производит, будет пролетарским искусством".<sup>58</sup> The result will not be proletarian art at all, but merely a "бездарная пародия на давно изжитые формы искусства прошлого".<sup>59</sup> The conclusion Brik draws points toward the IZO Futurists' understanding of proletarian culture: "[...] искусство, как и всякое производство, не терпит любительства. Об этом забыли 'Пролеткульты'."<sup>60</sup>

The IZO Futurists emphasized neither "art *for* the proletariat" nor "art *by* the proletariat" but "искусство художников-пролетариев"



(my italics, B. J.). Thus, emphasis lay on artistic skill, professionalism. Proletarian consciousness is insufficient: “Художник-пролетарий — это человек, в котором сочетались во-едино: творческий дар и пролетарское сознание.”<sup>61</sup> In an article in which he equated realism and lack of talent (“Реалисты и бездарность — синонимы”) Nikolaj Punin wrote that the discussion on who had the right to call himself a “proletarian artist” was both dull and sterile: “[...] единственное качество, каким может быть определяем художник — это даровитость и бездарность”.<sup>62</sup>

There was no worship of Talent with a capital “T” at the bottom of this attitude. On the contrary, it was just such a worship that Brik regarded as typical of those who espoused the idea that proletarian art is art *for* the proletariat: “По их мнению, талант — универсален. Ему ничего не стоит приспособиться к любой потребительской среде. Сегодня буржуазия, завтра пролетариат, — какая разница?”<sup>63</sup>

Now, then, does a “*xudožnik-proletarij*” differ from a “*xudožnik-buržua*”? The distinction is not in the social environment from which he originates nor in the fact that he creates for another consumer, but in his relationship to himself and to art. Brik: “Художник-буржуа считал искусство своим личным делом; художник-пролетарий знает, что он и его талант принадлежат коллективу.

Художник-буржуа творит, чтобы выявить свое ‘я’; художник-пролетарий творит, чтобы выполнить общественно важное дело.

Художник-буржуа противопоставлял себя толпе, как чуждой ему стихии; художник-пролетарий видит перед собой своих.

В погоне за славой и наживой художник-буржуа старался потрафить вкусам толпы; художник-пролетарий, не знающий личной выгоды, борется с ее косностью и ведет ее за собой путями непрерывно движущегося вперед искусства.

Художник-буржуа в тысячный раз повторяет шаблоны прошлого; художник-пролетарий всегда творит новое, ибо в этом его общественное назначение.

Таковы основные принципы пролетарского творчества. Кто сознает их, тот пролетарий, художник-пролетарий, строитель искусства будущего.”<sup>64</sup>

True, there was a great deal of eloquence and demagogy in these principles for proletarian art; they were formulated with the self-confidence of a born polemicist. It would be wrong, however, to think

that the IZO Futurists' view of proletarian culture was expressed solely in this polemical and simplified manner. The leading idea in their artistic philosophy was professionalism and quality.<sup>65</sup> Their interpretation of professionalism originated from the artistic work that had been done among innovative artists during the immediately preceding decades. This work had been oriented primarily toward “вопросы профессионального качества художественных произведений и тем самым их мирового значения”. One of the most positive results of this creative work was the notion of “xudožestvennaja kul'tura”.

These ideas were advanced in the theses from “Otdel Izobrazitel'nyx Iskusstv i Xudožestvennoj Promyšlennosti” on “xudožestvennaja kul'tura” (1919).<sup>66</sup> Here were established, among other things, purely technical theses (on the significance of painterly elements), but also more general thoughts on the notion of artistic culture: “2) Понятие художественной культуры связано [...] с исканиями молодых художественных школ и может быть раскрыто только ими. 3) Понятие художественной культуры является вместе с тем объективным признаком художественной ценности, поскольку таковая определяется, как ценность профессиональная.”

This was how the IZO Futurists established their definition of artistic culture and at the same time justified their position as the sole creators of this culture.

Vladimir Majakovskij was a highly professional writer, and he never ceased emphasizing the importance of poetical skill: talent and the “correct” political attitude were not enough; good literature cannot be created without hard work on artistic form. In the universal enthusiasm after the Revolution, there was a tendency to regard positively all attempts to write “proletarian” poetry, and the demand for quality was often ignored if the writer's heart was in the right place. Majakovskij objected to this attitude in a discussion on the proletariat and art on December 22, 1918: “Разве можно привлекать <к созданию пролетарского искусства> огульно всех людей искусства, как это делается сейчас? Вы говорите: ‘добро пожаловать’. Мы говорим: предъявите ваши мандаты” (XII, 452). This argument is paralleled in verse in “Toj storone”, which was written at the same time (December 29):

Мы  
не подносим  
“Готово!  
На блюде!  
Хлебайте сладкое с чайной ложки!”  
Клич футуриста:  
были б люди —  
искусство приложится.

(II, 21)

Art was to Majakovskij not an occupation for esthetes, but hard and deliberate work: “понятие искусства — понятие труда” (XII, 454). The poet, like other workers, handles a material, and the poet's raw material is the word: “Отношение поэта к своему материалу должно быть таким же добросовестным, как отношение слесаря к стали” (XII, 454).

This emphasis on professional skill and the element of labor in the creative process can be said to be the IZO Futurists' trademark. In an editorial note in *Iskusstvo Kommuny* we find a complement to Majakovskij's statement: “Мы считаем главной задачей пролетарского искусства полное уничтожение понятий ‘свободное творчество’ и ‘механическая работа’ и замена их одним единым понятием — творческий труд.”<sup>67</sup>

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The relationship between Proletkul't and the Futurists, as we have seen, was extremely strained, not only in their daily polemics, but also in theory. What they had in common was the claim to represent the culture of the new class. On all essential points—form *vis à vis* content, their interpretations of “proletarian” culture, professionalism *vis à vis* “klassovost”—however, the views of the Proletkul't theoreticians and the Futurists were greatly divergent.

## V. Kom-Fut

### 1.

Late in 1918 Majakovskij began making more frequent appearances before the workers of Petrograd. He read his works and gave lectures on the role of art in the new society. He propagandized for Futurism as the only true proletarian art. In most cases he appeared together with Osip Brik and Nikolaj Punin. Later he wrote: “[...] семнадцатилетняя коммунистка Выборгского района Муся Натансон стала водить нас через пустыри, мосты и груды железного лома по клубам, заводам Выборгского и Васильеостровского районов” (XII, 152). This was a way of spreading Futurism’s ideas: “В целях агитации наших идей мы организовали [...] обход заводов и фабрик с диспутами и чтением вещей” (XII, 42).

It is quite clear that by the end of 1918 the Futurists strongly felt the need of a social base on which to stand; naturally, only the working class could provide such a base.

This contact with the new ruling class was determined by several factors. Firstly, there was a natural desire of an ideological nature to establish a closer relationship with the proletariat, whose culture the Futurists claimed to support and represent. Futurism in its pre-revolutionary form—with its *épatage* and defiant individualism—was no longer possible. This form, as we have seen, had survived well into 1918. The new social conditions demanded more intimate cooperation between artists and “the masses”. The Futurists’ search for closer contact with the representatives of the political revolution must therefore be regarded as natural.

Beside this striving, however, there were also more compelling reasons why the Futurists approached the working class in this direct manner and at this particular time.

As we saw in the preceding chapters, criticism of Futurism had begun to grow strong in the late autumn of 1918, after the first anniversary of the Revolution. The Futurists found themselves in a credibility crisis. They were forced to prove that they really were

revolutionary artists, in deed as well as in word. Their contacts with the Petrograd workers must therefore be seen as an attempt to approach the conscious, primarily Communist part of the working class in order to repel once and for all charges of “incomprehensibility”, “estheticism”, etc., and show the Party and the critics that the Futurists were serious when they spoke of Futurism as the art of the proletariat and the Revolution.

At the same time that Majakovskij and the other Futurists began appearing before proletarian audiences, the first issues of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* were published. In no. 3 (Dec. 22, 1918), Majakovskij published as an editorial his poem “Poët rabočij”, which to be understood correctly must be regarded in connection with these appearances.

“Poët rabočij” defends the work of the poet and attempts to place it on a par with that of the proletarian. It can reasonably be assumed that the poem is a direct poetical answer to questions and criticism which Majakovskij encountered during his appearances before the workers.

Орут поэту:  
“Посмотреть бы тебя у токарного станка.  
А что стихи?  
Пустое это!  
Небось работать — кишка тонка.”

(II, 18)

Majakovskij’s answer to this criticism becomes a vindication of the poet’s (the “intelligentsia’s”) role in a proletarian society. The intelligentsia, as pointed out above, was a word of abuse in many unenlightened proletarian circles, particularly within Proletkul’t. And Proletkul’t (or rather the view within Proletkul’t that only workers can create workers’ culture) is just what Majakovskij is attacking.

Может быть,  
нам  
труд  
всяких занятий роднее.  
Я тоже фабрика.  
И если без труб,  
то, может,  
мне  
без труб труднее.

(II, 18)

It is more difficult for the poet to adapt to the new conditions. He lacks “klassovost”, the correct origin (“bez trub”), but he still has the same *raison d'être* in the production process as the worker:

Кто выше — поэт  
или техник,  
который  
ведет людей к вещественной выгоде?  
Оба.  
Сердца — такие же моторы.  
Душа — такой же хитрый двигатель.  
Мы равные.  
Товарищи в рабочей массе.  
Пролетарии тела и духа.  
Лишь вместе  
вселенную мы разукрасим  
и маршами пустим ухать.

(II, 19)

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On December 2, Majakovskij and Brik appeared at the Viborg District Party School.<sup>1</sup> Brik made an opening speech in which he maintained, among other things, that Proletkul't was not capable of satisfying the workers' need of cultural creation: “[...] пролетарские организации культурно-просветительного характера, не будучи искушенными в творческой работе искусства, преподносят под видом нового и пролетарского старую трафаретщину”. The only group that stood for “proletarian” and “revolutionary” values were the Futurists, but Futurism could not become a “real force” until “сама рабочая масса организует силы на почве строительства новой культуры”. Brik urged his audience to establish such an organization. As far as I know, this exhortation was the first step towards the founding of the Kom-Fut collective in January, 1919. After Brik's speech, Majakovskij read “Naš marš”, excerpts from “Misterija-buff”, and other poems. During the discussions that followed, Futurism found both “ярые защитники” and “слушатели недоверчивые”.

Five days later, on December 7, another meeting was held in the same school. In the interval the Futurists' books had been spread<sup>2</sup> and the audience were “более ознакомленные с новым искусством”

and received Majakovskij sympathetically. After reading his poetry, Majakovskij gave a lecture in which he emphasized the necessity of waging the same class struggle in art as in politics. We recognize here a train of thought expressed by both Punin and Brik, who often stressed the importance of having a minority dictatorship in cultural life (see chap. II, "The Futurists and IZO"). A worker by the name of Muštakov spoke after Majakovskij's lecture. He referred to Futurism as the only proletarian school of art in existence at the time. He also emphasized how important it was that the Futurists turn not to the old circles of intellectuals but "к рабочим, единственной среде, в которой лозунги новаторов искусства встретят творческий отклик". On the motion of Muštakov a resolution was adopted demanding that cheap editions of the Futurists' books be published and that the Futurists be afforded opportunities to "проявлять себя".

Muštakov was an ardent supporter of Futurism. Among other things, he was one of the sellers of *Iskusstvo Kommuny*.<sup>3</sup> In no. 2 of the paper the editorial staff published an article by Muštakov in which he once again spoke of Futurism as the art of the proletariat. He quoted Majakovskij's lines "На улицы, футуристы, / барабанишки и поэты" and continued: "Я же добавлю к его словам, на фабрики, на заводы, к резервам рабочего класса." Unlike Proletkul't, the Futurists could not boast of any proletarian contributors to their publications, so they cultivated Muštakov as best they could. In the following issue of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* Brik warmly supported Muštakov's article, but at the same time he complained about the official representatives of the proletariat, who were poorly versed in the question at hand and hindered the Futurists in their work: "[...] такое отношение к нам со стороны влиятельных вождей пролетариата сильно тормозит нашу работу в рабочей среде". This remark once again underlines the unpopularity of Futurism in Party circles.

The meeting of December 7 was concluded with the adoption of a supplementary resolution "с требованием предоставить в театрах, занятых показыванием вчерашнего искусства, места футуристическим постановкам". This resolution referred directly to the difficulties that had been encountered in staging "Misterija-buff"—a problem that had occupied Majakovskij the entire autumn of 1918 and would continue to do so until the fall of 1921, when he took the matter to court.<sup>4</sup>

“Misterija-buff” was also the main question at the next appearance, on December 14 in the Oxta District. After Majakovskij had spoken and read poems and “отрывки футуристических пьес”, the meeting turned to a discussion on the possibility of organizing practical work in the new art. The Oxta District had a large theater with 700 seats, and the proletarian actors were very interested in staging “Misterija-buff” together with comrades from other districts. This must have been a great and welcome triumph for Majakovskij, considering the great resistance the play had encountered on the part of the official theaters and influential critics and Party members. M. F. Andreeva, vice-head of TEO and commissar of the “Otdel teatrov i zrelišč sojuza kommun Severnoj oblasti”, did all she could to obstruct a staging of the play. When Majakovskij was finally given Teatr Muzykal’noj Dramy, the administration of the theater managed to sabotage the whole affair. Majakovskij was forbidden to sell “Misterija-buff” at the theater, he was forced to color the posters himself, and to his maid fell the task of pasting them up around Petrograd (see XII, 155). The play had its première as planned on the first anniversary of the Revolution, November 7, but it ran only two days more: “[...] через день ‘Мистерию’ разобрали, и опять на радость акам (академикам, В. J.) занудили Макбеты. Еще бы! Сама Андреева играла саму Лэди” (XII, 156).<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, Majakovskij’s struggle for and his opponents’ battle against the staging of the play continued; as was mentioned above (see chap. II, “The Futurists and IZO”), his antagonists succeeded in forbidding it on May 1, 1919, and it was not staged until May 1, 1921 (in its second version).

It was no coincidence, therefore, that Majakovskij read and fought for his play when he appeared in the workers’ districts. He wrote in his autobiography: “Езжу с мистерией и другими вещами моими и товарищей по заводам. Радостный прием” (I, 25). With the aim of staging “Misterija-buff” and in general to further work “над теоретическими основами нового искусства и над деланием его”, the meeting in the Oxta district proposed the foundation of an “организация рабочих футуристов”. Brik’s appeal in the December 2 meeting was thereby given a more concrete formulation, and yet another step had been taken towards the creation of Kom-Fut.

On December 17, Majakovskij read poems and gave a lecture at the Matrosskij teatr (formerly Gvardejskij ekipaž). Here for the first



time he read "Levyj marš": "Мне позвонили из бывшего Гвардейского экипажа и потребовали, чтобы я приехал читать стихи, и вот я на извозчике написал 'Левый марш'" (XII, 436). The performance was a success: "Горячая встреча и целая очередь покупающих книги была радостным окончанием выступления футуризма."

On December 19, Majakovskij apparently<sup>6</sup> appeared before the Pervyj beregovoj otrjad, and on the 21st he read his poems at the Central'nyj rajonnyj klub after a talk by Punin entitled "Čto takoe iskusstvo?".<sup>7</sup>

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The Futurists' contacts with the Communist workers of Petrograd and their repeated urgings for organized work resulted in the foundation of Kom-Fut in January, 1919. "Коллектив коммунистов-футуристов — Комфут" was established at two organizational meetings of the Viborg District of RKP (b) on January 13 and 19. At these meetings a "программная декларация, устав и организационная схема" were adopted.<sup>8</sup>

One of the driving forces behind the foundation of Kom-Fut was Boris Kušner, poet, critic and one of the active contributors to *Iskusstvo Kommuny*. He wrote: "Товарищи Выборжцы правильно учли соотношение вещей. Задачу разрушения старой культуры и создание новой связали они с движением Футуризма. [...] Велика революционная работа, которую должен совершить этот коллектив. И более всего должны помнить товарищи из коллектива Ком-Фут, что пятнадцать месяцев революции упущены. Что нужно их наверстать. [...] Социализм уже наступает, а культура еще буржуазна."<sup>9</sup>

It was Kušner as well who was elected chairman and responsible organizer of the collective. Marija Natanson, mentioned by Majakovskij in the quotation above, was elected secretary. According to its statutes, the collective was to have a school, and the organization and leadership of this school in "Communist cultural ideology" was entrusted to Osip Brik. Muštakov was commissioned to set up the office of the collective. Kušner, in addition to his chairmanship, was also responsible for publications, and Natanson was in charge of oral agitation and propaganda. Comrade Krasavin managed the distribution of literature.

Majakovskij was not included among the officers of the Kom-Fut

collective. This is due to the fact that only members of the RKP (b) were allowed by the statutes to become members of Kom-Fut. Osip Brik and Boris Kušner were Party members, as, of course, were the others in the organization. Majakovskij, however, was not—nor ever would be—a member of the Party. In his autobiography (under the heading “18-j god”), he answers his own question “Отчего не в партии?” as follows: “Коммунисты работали на фронтах. В искусстве и просвещении пока соглашатели. Меня б послали ловить рыбу в Астрахань” (I, 25).

Thus, as a non-Party member Majakovskij could not participate directly in the founding of Kom-Fut. But there is no doubt that the collective had his full support. After all, he had participated in the meetings in December, 1918, when the foundations of the future Kom-Fut had been laid, and its ideology agreed well with his own convictions. Furthermore, Majakovskij mentions Kom-Fut in positive terms in later reminiscences. The fact that he did not participate in the active work of the collective, therefore, is due to factors of a formal nature.

Kom-Fut's manifesto ran as follows:

Коммунистический строй требует коммунистического сознания. Все формы быта, морали, философии и искусства должны быть пересозданы на коммунистических началах. Без этого невозможно дальнейшее развитие коммунистической революции.

Культурно-просветительные органы советской власти обнаруживают в своей деятельности полное непонимание возложенной на них революционной задачи. Наспех сколоченная социал-демократическая идеология не в силах противостоять многовековому опыту буржуазных идеологов, эксплуатирующих в своих интересах пролетарские культурно-просветительные организации.

Под видом непреложных истин массам преподносится лжеучение господ.

Под видом общечеловеческой правды — мораль эксплуататоров.

Под видом вечных законов красоты — развращенный вкус насильников.

Необходимо немедленно приступить к созданию своей коммунистической идеологии.

Необходимо повести беспощадную борьбу со всеми лживыми идеологиями буржуазного прошлого.

Необходимо подчинить советские культурно-просветительные органы руководству новой, теперь лишь вырабатываемой культурной коммунистической идеологии.

Необходимо во всех культурных областях, и в искусстве также, решительно отбросить все демократические иллюзии, обильно покрывающие буржуазные пережитки и предрассудки.

Необходимо призвать массы к творческой самодеятельности.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from the manifesto why and to what purpose Kom-Fut was founded. Social-Democratic ideology is unable, in the cultural sphere, to defend the workers and their cultural organizations from the influence of bourgeois ideologists. This requires a Communist cultural ideology, which will control the organs of culture and education. Such an ideology has not yet been developed, but there is no doubt that the authors of the manifesto mean to say that only the Communist Futurists are capable of producing it. The Futurists, as we have already seen, were not altogether out of sympathy with a dictatorship—their dictatorship—in cultural life. What they are suggesting here is nothing less than that they should assume the leading position in the development of the cultural policies of the country (and the Party). They were of the opinion that the Party had not devoted sufficient attention to the cultural sector: “Культурно-идеологическая революция, отставшая от революции политической и экономической уже более, чем на год, идет своими особыми путями. [...] Это обстоятельство побуждает коммунистов-футуристов особое внимание уделять вопросам революционной тактике.”<sup>11</sup> One of the first steps in this tactic was that the collective commissioned its presidium to address an official letter to the Central Committee of the Party “о полной нереволуционности всего направления деятельности советских органов в культурно-идеологической области и о назревшей необходимости включить и эту сторону общественности в сферу партийного внимания”.<sup>12</sup>

Organizational work within Kom-Fut advanced during the last days of January: “[...] запись в кандидаты и слушатели партийной школы идет вполне успешно”.<sup>13</sup> Eight lectures on the following themes were planned as the basis of the lessons in the Party school: “Žizn’ i idej”, “Marksizm”, “Ideologija aristokratov”, “Ideologija

buržuazii”, “Ideologija demokratov”, “Ideologija social-demokratii”, “Futurizm” and “Kommunisty-futuristy”. If we interpret this plan as ordered in an evolutionary progression, then Futurism is a higher stage than Social-Democratic ideology and functions as an intermediate link between it and the highest stage of cultural ideology, the synthesis between Futurism and Communism. This is a form of evolutionary thinking that could hardly have pleased Party ideologists; to my knowledge, however, the course plan was never realized.

Publishing activities were to be concentrated on two areas: “Общие вопросы культурной идеологии” and “Вопросы пролетарской эстетики и социалистического искусства”. Four brochures were planned for the first area: Kom-Fut’s manifesto with a popularized exposition of its foundations, “Kul’tura Kommunizma”, “Futurizm i Kommunizm” and “Beg revoljucii”. The brochures planned for area two were: “Tvorčestvo”, “Vdoxnovenie”, “Krasota”, “Proizvedenie iskusstva”. In addition was proposed a “Sbornik Kom-Futa”, which was to elucidate the struggle for a Communist ideology and culture and the tactics for its achievement. These publications were never realized, either.

Enthusiasm and optimism in regard to Kom-Fut’s development were great. After only two weeks in existence, “назрела потребность в организационном ее расширении”, and it was predicted that an entire series of parallel organizations would arise. To coordinate these organizations it would “probably” be necessary to summon a conference of Communist Futurists. Until this conference the collective of the Viborg District was to function as the central organ of all groups.<sup>14</sup> No Kom-Fut conference was ever assembled, nor do we have any information about any “parallel organizations” at this time.<sup>15</sup>

Why, then, did nothing come of Kom-Fut? A collective had been founded, it had a manifesto, statutes and an organizational plan, courses and plans for publications had been announced. Officers had been elected. A conference was anticipated.

Kom-Fut was intended to be a collective within the Viborg District of RKP (b). On January 28, 1919, one week after the last organizational meeting, the Viborg District Party Committee reviewed the question of registering Kom-Fut as a Party collective and resolved not to do so on the grounds that “уставом нашей партии не предусмотрены подобного рода коллектива” and that “утверждением

подобного коллектива мы можем создать нежелательный прецедент в будущем”.<sup>16</sup> Boris Kušner commented on the decision as follows: “Думается, что всегда столь революционный Выборгский Районный Комитет впал на этот раз в ничем неоправданный формализм и проявил весьма не свойственную ему осторожность и робость. Разве устав нашей партии может предвидеть все формы организаций, выдвигаемые жизнью? Разве санкционирование новых, в процессе развития революции выдвинутых форм, когда-либо рассматривалось нашей партией, как ‘нежелательный прецедент’? Вряд-ли Выборгскому Комитету удастся долго удержаться на этой позиции, столь мало соответствующей духу коммунизма и лучшим партийным традициям.”<sup>17</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that the Viborg Committee did not make decisions of such a precedential nature without consulting higher authorities; the most likely, of course, being Anatolij Lunačarskij. A statement he made in 1927 seems to confirm this assumption: “Левое искусство, футуристы пришли к нам: это люди молодые, они даже хотели назваться комфутами, но мы им в этом отказали и сказали, чтобы они вошли в партию в обычном порядке, как все остальные.”<sup>18</sup> “My” can of course be interpreted as “the Party”, but there is every reason to believe that Lunačarskij participated personally in the decision.

Thus, the answer to the question why we know so little about Kom-Fut is that the collective died a natural death when it was refused registration in the Party. The whole idea with Kom-Fut, after all, was that it would be a *Party* collective of Communists and Futurists working to develop a cultural ideology for the Party. When it became clear that it could not function within the Party, therefore, it no longer had a *raison d'être*.

That Kom-Fut was dead as an organization already in its initial stages, however, does not mean that it left no traces whatever. Henceforward the names “Kommunisty-Futuristy” and “Komfuty” were the current terms for those Futurists who, with respect to their ideas and creative work, were close to Communism, even if they were not Party members. As late as 1923 Brik declared: “В настоящее [...] время название коммунисты-футуристы необходимо, так как отличает нас от коммунистов-пассеистов, которых, к сожалению, еще очень и очень много.”<sup>19</sup>

On May 17, 1920, Boris Arvatov gave a talk on “Kom-Fut” before

the “Худо̀жественный Совет Московского Пролеткульта” in which he pointed out a number of analogies between Futurism and proletarian culture: “[...] только они утверждают, что старое искусство является отжившим и ставят себе задачей — освобождение от старых форм; оба они идут к новому, динамическому; вместо творчества из ничего признают только творчество реальное. Это дает возможность футуристам быть, вместе с тем, и коммунистами. Коммунистический футуризм является прыжком через футуризм прежний.”<sup>20</sup> In the discussion that followed Arvatov’s talk participated, among others, Brik, Majakovskij and Bogdanov.

In general, it seems as though the Komfuturs gained a certain influence within Proletkul’t in 1920. The poet Vasilij Aleksandrovskij reported in the August–September issue of *Kuznica*: “В настоящее время в Пролеткульте образовалась и заняла центральное место группа комфутов. Мы с радостью слышали об этом и приветствуем их, если они не будут застаиваться и пойдут дальше.”<sup>21</sup>

The fact that the Komfuturs had obtained influence in Proletkul’t, however, aroused little enthusiasm in the Party, which took up precisely this circumstance in its decree “О Пролеткульта” of December 1, 1920: “[...] в области искусства рабочим прививали нелепые, извращенные вкусы (футуризм)”.<sup>22</sup> Opinions about the Komfuturs were divided within Proletkul’t as well. At a presidium meeting on November 24, 1920 a report was given entitled: “О допустимости ведения идейно-руководящей и творческой работы в студиях Пролеткульта лицам, заявляющим себя официально представителями футуристического или ком-футуристического направления.”<sup>23</sup> V. Ignatov moved that the meeting vote for the resolution “признать вообще недопустимым”, but he was defeated by four votes to three; Lebedev-Poljanskij then moved that the question be adjourned until the next plenary meeting of Proletkul’t’s Central Committee. At this meeting of December 17 the following resolution was adopted after a report by Lebedev-Poljanskij, possibly under the influence of the Party’s communication on Proletkul’t: “Считая футуризм и комфутизм идеологическими течениями последнего периода буржуазной культуры времени империализма, пленум Ц. К. Всероссийского Совета Пролеткульта считает это течение враждебным пролетариату, как классу, и признает недопустимым привлечение в студии Пролеткульта в качестве ответствен-

ных руководителей и в качестве инструкторов-специалистов а также лекторов, лиц, заявляющих себя в искусстве футуристами или комфутуристами.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in the decree on Proletkul't, the Party for the first time officially repudiated Futurism as the representative of “нелепые, извращенные вкусы”. Lunačarskij was evidently considered to be too tolerant toward the Futurists to be allowed to help formulate this communication. The remarkable circumstance that the Commissar of Enlightenment was not consulted in this question, which pertained directly to his commissariat, was commented on by Lunačarskij himself as follows: “Я не осведомлен об этом ближе, но думаю, что здесь была большая капля меду самого Владимира Ильича. В то время, и совершенно ошибочно, Владимир Ильич считал меня не то сторонником футуризма, не то человеком, исключительно его потворствующим, потому, вероятно, и не советовался со мною перед изданием этого рескрипта ЦК, который должен был, на его взгляд, выпрямить мою линию.”<sup>25</sup> Now, Lunačarskij was no uncritical supporter of Futurism, let alone a Futurist, but as the commissar in charge of cultural matters he had been forced to take into consideration various literary groupings and schools, including Futurism.

The first draft of the decree on Proletkul't was worked out instead by Zinov'ev, and the final text was formulated by Lenin and Krupskaja.<sup>26</sup> Lenin's negative attitude to Majakovskij and Futurism is well-known. In a letter to “Pervaja Konferencija proletarskix pisatelej gor. Petrograda i Petrogradskoj gubernii” held on December 13–15, 1919, Zinov'ev had given advance warning of the Party's final condemnation of Futurism: “Мы позволили одно время нелепейшему футуризму прослыть чуть не официальной школой коммунистического искусства. [...] Этому пора положить конец.”<sup>27</sup> Nadežda Krupskaja followed up the ideas in the Party decree in an article in February, 1921: “[...] футуристы, выразители худших элементов старого искусства, низводящие искусство на низшую ступень — превращающие его из выразителя человеческих чувств в выразителя ощущений, при том крайне ненормальных, искаженных”.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.

The condemnation of Futurism by the Party was probably one of the reasons why a new Kom-Fut organization was formed on January 13,

1921, the second anniversary of the first organizational meeting in 1919. This new Kom-Fut has hitherto remained unknown, but its existence can be established through Osip Brik's archives.<sup>29</sup>

The "Первое организационное собрание ассоциации коммунистов-футуристов (Комфут)" was held on January 13. Its chairman was Osip Brik and its secretary Lili Brik, who also took the minutes upon which this information is based. Present were: Majakovskij, Mejerchol'd, V. M. Bebutov, L. Ju. Brik, O. M. Brik, B. F. Malkin, David Šterenberg, E. V. Ravdel', Natan Al'tman, V. L. Xrakovskij, A. I. Ivanov, Boris Kušner, Aleksej Gan and D. E. Arkin. Thus, three of the central personalities from 1919—Majakovskij, Brik and Kušner—were also present now. At this first organizational meeting it was established that the formation of a Kom-Fut organization was "neobходимо". Further discussion included the manifesto theses and the statutes (the other points are of less interest in this connection).

The day after this first meeting, January 14, Bjuro Kom-Fut held its first meeting. Kušner was chairman, Lili Brik secretary. Present in addition were Majakovskij, Osip Brik, Šterenberg and Xrakovskij. This meeting took up Kom-Fut's relationship to the Party, which was formulated as follows: "Являясь активной группой в отношении теоретической разработки, выявления и проведения в жизнь основ коммунистической и переходной к коммунистической культур, Ком-Фут представляет собой внутри партии определенное культурно-идеологическое течение." This formulation, that Kom-Fut was an "определенное культурно-идеологическое течение" within the Party, is considerably more cautious and vague than that of 1919, in which Kom-Fut claimed to represent Communist cultural ideology. It was still the case, however, that Kom-Fut was intended to be a *Party* collective. In contrast to 1919, Majakovskij was this time among the officers. Whether or not he was thinking of entering the Party then is unknown. Work was assigned as follows: IZO—Ivanov, Ravdel', Xrakovskij, Šterenberg; TEO—Bebutov, Gan, Mejerchol'd; MUZO—Kušner; LITO—Osip Brik, Majakovskij; FOTO-KINO—Osip Brik. The commission for the drafting of theoretical theses on "коммунистический быт" consisted of Lili and Osip Brik and Malkin, and the commission for "производственная пропаганда" was made up of Arkin, Kušner and Majakovskij.

Production propaganda was high on the agenda in a Russia that



had just survived a civil war. In November, 1920, Lenin had presented his "Tezisy o proizvodstvennoj propagande", which he developed further in his talk to the "VIII Vserossijskij S"ezd Sovetov" in December, and on January 9, 1921, *Pravda* could communicate that the Orgburo of the Party had approved the establishment of an All-Russian Bureau for Production Propaganda ("Vserossijskoe bjuro proizvodstvennoj propagandy").<sup>30</sup> Thus, the formation of a commission for production propaganda within Kom-Fut was opportune. In addition, Majakovskij had experience from Rosta. It is possible that the work in the Kom-Fut commission provided the basis for Majakovskij's and Brik's lectures on this subject during the next few months and for the "план организации художественных сил для ведения производственной пропаганды" which David Arkin presented to (and which received the approval of) the All-Russian Bureau's "Худоџественная комиссия" on January 21, 1921. The same day the Commission assigned Majakovskij the task of drafting a "проект организации художественной пропаганды".<sup>31</sup> Thus, Kom-Fut's commission for production propaganda coincided with a general discussion and development of this question.

On January 23, Bjuro Kom-Fut held its second (and evidently last) meeting. Only four members participated: L. Brik, Osip Brik, Kušner and Malkin. Kušner's theses on music were approved, on the condition that he add an analysis of "the transitional epoch to Socialism". A resolution concerning work among the masses was then adopted: "Сосредоточить усилия на работе среди масс. Установить контакты с возможно большим количеством партийных ячеек, используя их как агитационные базы." It was further decided that Osip Brik and Kušner formulate a manifesto ("письмо-декларация") to be sent to all Party members in Moscow and Petrograd.

We know of no other minutes from the Kom-Fut of 1921. It is possible that several meetings were held in the spring of that year; at any rate, seven of the members stepped forward collectively with the name "Kom-Fut" in late April, 1921, when "15000000" was published. Although the author was not indicated on the cover, Majakovskij sent a copy to Lenin with the inscription: "Товарищу Владимиру Ильичу с комфутским приветом Владимир Маяковский." There were six signatures beneath the dedication: L. Brik, O. M. Brik, Boris Kušner, B. Malkin, D. Šterenberг, Nat. Al'tman.<sup>32</sup> Did Majakovskij send

Lenin the book out of naïveté? Or was it an attempt to convince the leader of his talent? He certainly must have known how Lenin felt about Futurism. And did he ever learn of Lenin's reaction?: "Вздор, глупо, махровая глупость и тенденциозность! По моему, печатать такие вещи лишь 1 из 10 и не более 1 500 экз. для библиотек и чудаков. А Луначарского сечь за футуризм."<sup>33</sup>

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Why, then, was a second Kom-Fut founded in January, 1921? We have already indicated one possible answer: the Party's repudiation of Futurism in the decree on Proletkul't and elsewhere. But this was hardly the decisive reason—the Futurists were aware of the Party's negative attitude long before the publication of this decree. We will find the most essential motive for the formation of the 1921 Kom-Fut if we examine the membership register. The composition of the Kom-Fut organization shows that this reason was "Misterija-buff".

On December 20, 1920, Majakovskij first read the second version of "Misterija-buff" to the theatrical collective at Teatr RSFSR Pervyj. The play was accepted, and rehearsals began in early January.<sup>34</sup> The first version, it will be remembered, had encountered stiff opposition and could be staged only on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Revolution. The second version was also violently attacked almost immediately. Majakovskij and his colleagues were forced to defend themselves. Most of the members of Kom-Fut were involved in one way or another in the staging of "Misterija-buff". Vsevolod Mejerxol'd and Valerij Bebutov were to direct the play. Vladimir Xrakovskij was (together with Lavinskij) stage designer. Efim Ravdel' and Natan Al'tman were going to design the scenery for a version in German to be played at the congress of the III International in June, 1921.

At Kom-Fut's first organizational meeting on January 13, 1921, it was decided that the most urgent task was to "организовать выступления Маяковского и Мейерхольда с 'Мистерией-буфф'", and this was entrusted to Malkin and Ravdel'. Several readings took place in January, and it is likely that it was indeed Malkin, head of *Centropечат'* ("Central'noe agentstvo po rasprostraneniju i ékspedirovaniju pečati"), who organized at least one of them (at Dom Pečati on January 19).

The debate on "Misterija-buff" is very well documented<sup>35</sup> and will

not be considered in any detail here. The first climax in the dispute was reached when a group of writers went so far as to write a petition to the Central Committee of the Party (January 20) requesting that a "competent commission" review the question of the staging of the play.<sup>36</sup> This action led Majakovskij to seek the support of the workers—just as he had done in 1918 in connection with the first version of the play. He did not, according to his own account (XII, 259), manage to visit all the districts (as he had done in Petrograd in 1918), but he was given a positive reception: "При голосовании из аудитории Рогожско-Симоновского Района [...] против пьесы подняли <руки> 5 человек, а за пьесу все остальные, то есть около 645 человек рабочих и красноармейцев" (XII, 259). Majakovskij's report is confirmed by Malkin: "На одном из таких собраний в Рогожско-Симоновском районе я присутствовал, и у меня до сих пор остался в памяти тот необычайно теплый и дружеский прием, который оказала рабочая аудитория своему поэту и который являлся живым опровержением лживых толков о 'непонятности' Маяковского."<sup>37</sup>

The positive reception Majakovskij was given in the workers' districts, of course, did not suffice to convince those who were skeptical or downright hostile toward the play. For this reason, Bebutov, in collaboration with Majakovskij, arranged on January 30 an extensive debate on the theme "Nado li stavit' 'Misteriju-buff'?" at Teatr RSFSR Pervyj.<sup>38</sup> Among those invited were representatives of the Central and Moscow Committees of the Party, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin), TEO, MONO, the All-Russian Union of Cultural Workers (Vserabis) and Glavlitprosvet. In the course of the discussion it became apparent that the writers who were protesting (Serafimovič, V. A. Karpinskij, Z. K. Karpinskaja, D. F. Čiževskij) had based their petition on the printed text of the play, that is, on its first version, even though this variant was by now outdated! And even though Majakovskij had read the second version in the presence of one of the authors of the petition the day before they sent it off! The result of the discussion was that the petitioners (represented by Karpinskaja) did an about-face, and the following resolution was adopted: "Мы, собравшиеся 30 января в Театре РСФСР Первом, прослушав талантливую и истинно пролетарскую пьесу Вл. Маяковского 'Мистерия-буфф' и обсудив ее достоинства, как агитационного и революционного произведения,

требуем настоятельно постановки ее во всех театрах республики и напечатания в возможно большем количестве экземпляров” (XII, 606). This resolution, however, did not mean that all difficulties had been overcome; when “Misterija-buff” was finally staged on May 1, 1921, it was in spite of the hate campaign directed against the play (and against Majakovskij and Mejerxol’d) as it was being prepared.

3.

*А вы  
ее  
сыграть  
могли бы  
на флейте дальне-  
восточных труб?*  
— Надпись Маяковского  
С. Третьякову на издании  
“Мистерии-буфф”, 1921.

The need to organize always arises from the feeling that one is at a disadvantage. Majakovskij concluded his contribution to the debate “Nado li stavit’ ‘Misteriju-buff’?” with the words: “Мне хождения по мукам в течение трех лет страшно надоели” (XII, 259). This admission referred to the difficulties encountered in connection with “Misterija-buff” (both its publication and staging), but also to the delay of the printing of “150 000 000”, the various campaigns against Futurism, the closing-down of *Iskusstvo Kommuny* and *Iskusstvo*, distrust of the Futurists’ sincerity, etc.

Kom-Fut obviously yielded no tangible results in 1921, either, although the group continued to exist under the same name.<sup>39</sup> But Majakovskij was keenly aware of the need to organize. In the winter of 1921, therefore, he contacted the group of Siberian Futurists led by Nikolaj Čužak. The so-called “Tvorčestvo” group had been formed in Vladivostok in 1920, and included, beside Čužak, Nikolaj Aseev, Sergej Tret’jakov, David Burljuk, Petr Neznamov, Viktor Pal’mov and Sergej Alymov. During the spring of 1921, the group was forced by the fighting between Reds and Whites to move to Čita, the new provisional capital of the DVR (Dal’nevostočnaja Respublika).

Nikolaj Čužak (1876–1937) was a veteran Party member and an ardent Bolshevik. He was the theoretician of the “Tvorčestvo” group

and edited the Party's literary and political periodical *Tvorčestvo* and its newspaper *Dalnevostočnyj Telegraf*. He had not discovered Majakovskij until late 1919, when he first read "Oblako v štanax",<sup>40</sup> but he soon became one of the leading defenders of Majakovskij and Futurism. The editorial policy of *Tvorčestvo* was strongly pro-Futurist. The "Tvorčestvo" group developed into Futurism's bastion in the Far East. Majakovskij wrote later: "Движение нашего искусства выявило нашу силу организацией по всей РСФСР крепостей левого фронта. Параллельно этому шла работа дальневосточных товарищей (журнал 'Творчество'), утверждавших теоретически социальную неизбежность нашего течения, нашу социальную слитность с Октябрем (Чужак, Асеев, Пальмов, Третьяков). 'Творчество', подвергавшееся всяческому гонениям, вынесло на свою долю всю борьбу за новую культуру в пределах ДВР и Сибири" (XII, 42).

We know that Majakovskij had already read the first six issues of *Tvorčestvo*, published in Vladivostok, by the turn of the year 1920–21. (The seventh and last issue would be printed in Čita.) Čužak wrote: "В январе с. г., от вернувшегося из Москвы П. М. Никифорова, члена правительства ДВР, мы узнали впервые, что редактируемое нами дальневосточное 'Творчество' (приморские №№ 1–6) попало (впервые же) в Москву, где было вручено, в числе других, В. В. Маяковскому."<sup>41</sup>

Majakovskij, of course, knew not only of the existence of the "Tvorčestvo" group, but had also known many of its members personally even before the revolution. In the first six issues his Futurist colleagues had on several occasions declared that Majakovskij was the outstanding poet of the Russian Revolution. The magazine, which was firmly pro-Bolshevik and contained many articles on political matters, had printed not only excerpts from Majakovskij's poems "Oblako v štanax" and "Vojna i mir" but also articles dedicated to and praising the poetry and political standpoint of the poet. David Burljuk published here two interesting memoir fragments: "Vladimir Majakovskij. Poët revoljucii" (No. 1, 1920), and "Ot laboratorii k ulice. Ėvoljucija futurizma" (No. 2, 1920). Nikolaj Čužak wrote an article on Majakovskij's poetry, more specifically on "Oblako v štanax" ("Trinadcatyj apostol", No. 3, 1920).<sup>42</sup> In the forthcoming, seventh, issue Sergej Tret'jakov was to publish an enthusiastic and interesting review of Majakovskij's first collected works, *Vse sočinen-*

*noe Vladimirom Majakovskim*, from 1919 (“Poët na tribune. Poslednie stixi Majakovskogo”).

But propagandizing of Majakovskij took place not only in the columns of *Tvorčestvo* and, to a certain extent, in Čužak’s newspaper. The poets of the “Tvorčestvo” group also read lectures on Majakovskij and recited his works before workers’ and party audiences.<sup>43</sup> They even planned to stage, in December, 1921, Majakovskij’s ‘Tragedija’, which had been staged only once before, in 1913. The role of Majakovskij was to be played by Sergej Tret’jakov.<sup>44</sup> Several discussions on Futurism were also held.

But Futurism ran into opposition in Siberia as well, especially from within the Party. In contrast to the situation in Moscow, however, the question was discussed openly, with the participation of both supporters and opponents of Futurism. This “cultural struggle”—as Čužak called it—in the Party was waged in Vladivostok. Čužak: “Инициаторами борьбы, конечно, были препарированные интеллигенты (из ‘сочувствующих’ партии), но ярым проводником гонения и здесь явился некий ‘пролетарский поэт’, идейную беспомощность которого мы однажды отметили, случайно оказавшийся во Владивостоке. Дело началось с жалобы обиженного автора в Губком Р.К.П. и, после упорных настояний, комитет был вынужден рассмотреть вопрос о допустимости печатания произведений футуристов в партийной газете (‘Красное Знамя’).

Это был форменный суд — столько же над футуризмом, сколько и над пишущим эти строки, как редактором. Борьба была горячая, но победила группа молодых работников (не из интеллигентов), и футуризм был признан равноправным (не правда-ли, оригинальный случай обсуждения партийной организацией вопроса об искусстве по существу? не знамени ли времени, свидетельствующее о том, что искусство для рабочего большое и нужное дело?).

Но дело на этом не кончилось: вопрос был перенесен на общегородскую конференцию (!) партийных работников, где снова был подвергнут обсуждению по существу, и резолюцией, принятой единогласно, футуризм получил право гражданства! А было на этой конференции *не менее ста рабочих*, а было это — заметьте! — уже после того, как ‘директива’ (‘нужно положить конец’) была здесь напечатана! (Čužak is referring to Zinov’ev’s statement on Futurism quoted above, B. J.)”

“Дальневосточная организация явилась”—concluded Čužak—  
“едва ли не первой, где эта внутренне-партийная борьба была  
проведена и где ‘творчество’ победила.”<sup>45</sup>

The struggle being waged by Čužak and the other Futurists in Vladivostok and, later, in Čita, naturally aroused Majakovskij’s interest and admiration. He was particularly interested in Čužak, who was new to him. A certain L. Borisov, who as a student (“kursant”) in Moscow had met Majakovskij in the spring of 1921 (presumably in late March), reported in *Tvorčestvo*: “Маяковский расспрашивал меня о сибирском житье-бытье. Его интересовала работа Д. Бурлюка в колчаковские времена, работа Асеева и других, не мало он расспрашивал и о тов. ..., о его работе, о его личности, и масса других вопросов. [...] Маяковского радовало присутствие на Дальнем Востоке тов. ... и других, вдали от центра культурной жизни защищающих и стойко проводящих культуру. Он высказал свое желание увидеть тов. ..., но по совету одной из своих сотрудниц просил передать, что приезд товарища ... в Москву был бы очень приятен, но в интересах дела тов. ... от этого должен воздержаться ...”<sup>46</sup> Judging by Majakovskij’s letters to Čužak during the spring of 1921 and later, it is the latter who is concealed by Borisov’s ellipses. We also know that at some time in early 1921, Majakovskij used Čužak’s article “Опасност’ аракчеевщины” (*Tvorčestvo* 1921: 5) as the starting point for one of his public appearances: “[...] наша скромная статья [...] ‘Опасность аракчеевщины’ [...] не прошла бесследно [...], явившись, между прочим, и предметом специального публичного выступления В. В. Маяковского”.<sup>47</sup>

When Majakovskij established through Borisov closer contact with Čužak and the others in the “Tvorčestvo” group in early 1921, therefore, he knew a great deal about the people he was going to deal with. It is no exaggeration to say that the Siberian group of Futurists was the most important center of Futurism outside Moscow in the years following the Revolution.<sup>48</sup>

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L. Borisov arrived in Čita in early April. With him he had letters from Majakovskij and Majakovskij’s friends and the manuscript of “150 000 000”. Borisov said of his meeting with Majakovskij: “Из его слов было ясно, что последние произведения совершенно не

печатаются: Гос. Издательство заявило, что оно печатает 'более нужные произведения и вещи'. О возможности печатания на Дальнем Востоке он был плохо информирован [...]."<sup>49</sup>

The background of the situation was as follows:

In April, 1920, Majakovskij had handed over the manuscript of "150 000 000" to LITO<sup>50</sup> ("Literaturnyj Otdel Narkomprosa"; in these years all fiction published by Gosizdat had to be recommended by LITO). LITO, in its turn, forwarded the manuscript to Gosizdat, and on August 31 of the same year Valerij Brjusov, LITO's vice director, sent a letter to the publishing house concerning the printing of the poem. The letter stressed that "150 000 000" had an "исключительное агитационное значение", and Gosizdat was asked to publish it "в самом срочном порядке".<sup>51</sup>

The poem, however, was not printed, and on October 20 Majakovskij himself sent a letter to "Kollegija Gosizdata" (with a copy to LITO) in which he complains of the bureaucratic procedures delaying the printing of his poem. The letter ended in this way: "Товарищи! Если эта книга с вашей точки зрения непонятна и ненужна, верните мне ее.

Если она нужна, искорените саботаж, иначе чем объяснить ее непечатанье, когда книжная макулатура, издаваемая спекулянтами, умудряется выходить в свет в две недели" (XIII, 38).

But the poem was neither returned to its author nor printed, and in early November Majakovskij again turned to "Kollegija Gosizdata" (with copies to LITO and Lunačarskij) and explained in detail how the people of Gosizdat had tried—and managed—to put off the printing of the poem. He wrote: "На писание этой книги мною потрачено полтора года. Я отказался от наживы путем продажи этой книги частному издателю, я отказался от авторства, пуская ее и без фамилии, и получив единоголосное утверждение ЛИТО, что эта книга *исключительна и агитационна*, вправе требовать от вас внимательного отношения к книге." And he finished by once again demanding that the manuscript be returned: "Категорически требую — верните книгу. Извиняюсь за резкость тона — вынужденная" (XIII, 39).

Eventually, on November 22, "150 000 000" was sent to the printer's.<sup>52</sup> But nothing happened during the whole winter, and on April 5, 1921, Majakovskij wrote a long letter on matters of principle to "Komissija SK RKP(b) po delam pečati" in which he related three cases when



the bureaucracy had hindered and delayed his work. The two most important cases were the delayed printing of "150 000 000" and the opposition to the printing and staging of "Misterija-buff" (XIII, 42-44).

Thus, when Majakovskij sent "150 000 000" to Čita the poem had not yet been printed.<sup>53</sup> In *Tvorčestvo* no. 7 (April-June, 1921), it was announced as forthcoming in Čita: "Печатается поэма '150 000 000' со статьей Н. Чужака о народности произведения с классовой точки зрения. Выйдет в начале июня." No Čita edition ever appeared, however, probably because the poem was published in Moscow in the latter half of April. But Čužak did write one of the first reviews of the work ("Ivannoe. Kritičeskaja poëma"; *Dal'nevostočnyj Telegraf*, 13 August, 1921).

Somewhat later in the spring of 1921, Čužak also received "Misterija-buff" from Majakovskij. Both "150 000 000" and "Misterija-buff" greatly attracted the interest of Majakovskij's Futurist colleagues. On May 31, a reading of "150 000 000" was arranged in the Čita Workers' Club, and on June 7 Nikolaj Aseev read "Misterija-buff" there.<sup>54</sup> In addition, it was reported that a staging of "Misterija-buff" was being prepared in Vladivostok.<sup>55</sup> This staging evidently never took place, but in October, 1921 (at a "Majakovskij evening"), a "многоголосая декламация отрывков из 'Мистерии'" was organized.<sup>56</sup>

But Čužak's delight at the reception given Majakovskij's latest works was equalled by the ire he felt over the difficulties the poet was experiencing in getting them published. He described the letters Borisov has brought with him from Majakovskij's friends (Brik, Al'tman, Rajt and others<sup>57</sup>) as a "[...] сплошной вопль по поводу бессмысленного, недостойного пролетарского отечества, чиновного гонения на так называемый 'футуризм', — с первых же шагов революции, один из всех течений в русском искусстве, под свистопляску символистов, реалистов и др., пошедший вместе с пролетариатом и никогда ему не изменявший.

Люди с застоявшейся восприимчивостью и психологией стали между революционными массами и новым искусством и пытаются сверху, каким-то головным путем, привить этим массам свое застарелое представление о художестве, бюрократически оберегая их от нового искусства."

Čužak then continues with a sharp attack on the Moscow bureau-

crats' refusal to print Majakovskij's works: "История с 'Мистерией-буфф' Маяковского и, особенно, история с новой его поэмой ... для напечатания которой, через год после нелепых проволочек то с госиздательством, то с пролеткультом, величайший из поэтов современности вынужден посылать свою рукопись в Читы, — эта история *страницей позора впишется со временем в историю революционных нравов России.*

Произведение в котором бьется окровавленное сердце эпохи; произведение, которое одной из самых волнующих страниц войдет в историю 'словесности российской' — будет напечатано впервые в зачлустной Чите! Очень большая честь для Читы! Еще больше позора для тех мещанствующих недореволюционеров в революции, которые берут на себя функции Пришибеевых!"<sup>58</sup>

As I have mentioned above, Majakovskij had been influenced by Čužak's article "Opasnost' arakčeevščiny" and had made it the subject of a public appearance. In the letter he sent with Borisov he also refers to Arakčeev (the ellipses are Čužak's, who is quoting the letter): "... Шлю ... Последнее. Аракчеевы разрослись. По всему фронту перестрелка. Печатайте ... Аракчеевы канителят меня год. Организуемся. Вступите через ... в постоянные сношения..."<sup>59</sup>

Through these letters from Majakovskij and his friends, Čužak learned of the four writers' petition to the Central Committee, and he in turn alludes to Majakovskij's letter: "[...] мы решительно против того, чтобы 'товарищи Карпинские', невежественные и не творящие, воскрешали в 1921 году в пролетарской России нравы Аракчеева; мы против того, чтобы они превратили Цека в Чека".<sup>60</sup>

It may be of interest in this connection to relate briefly Čužak's long article "Opasnost' arakčeevščiny", which is dedicated to "Единому мыслителю до дна, великому аналитику и интуитивисту, действительному водителю человечества — Владимиру Ленину".

The main attack in "Opasnost' arakčeevščiny" is directed at literary bureaucrats, at all those "Иван Иванычи", who do what they can at all levels to obstruct the writers, who work and function only on directives and whose lives are but a "сплошная механика". How can such men understand the Revolution "как творчество и чудо", when the Revolution is their "служба"? Čužak also criticizes fiercely the anti-Futurist statements made by Frič and Zinov'ev, and at the

same time hails Majakovskij as the great revolutionary poet he had always been, even before the Revolution. He prophesies that Majakovskij's name will be "так же связано с эпохой, как не вытравить из нее имя Ленина".

"Аракчеевщина", finally, Čužak characterizes as follows: "Недо-сужная недоглядка коммунистических идеологов-вождей (застаре-лая революционная болезнь); капральское бросание полу-вождями сверху непродуманных демагогических ('для галерки') директив; вынужденная, в силу интеллигентского саботажа, спе-циализация в делах художества невежественных и культурно-застоявшихся людей; оставление этих людей у власти над ху-дожеством и ныне, когда вынужденность явно миновала; куль-тивирование лишь тематически (но не изнутри) революционной поэзии и искусства при помощи наголодавшихся, на все готовых лукоморцев; изготовление дипломированных социалистических ремесленников пролет-поэзии; использование юных, неокреп-нувших рабочих талантов в качестве церберов художества и чиновников цензурного ведомства, — все это создает для моло-дой великой революции российской определенную опасность аракчеевщины. [...] Борьба с казарменной тенденцией в области познания при помощи искусства есть очередная культурная за-дача партии. Чиновники должны быть прогнаны от художества!"

It was, of course, not difficult for Majakovskij to agree with this description of "аракчеевщина". He had himself, especially in the case of "150 000 000" and "Misterija-buff", become a victim of directives from people with no knowledge of literature; he had him- self always fought against those simplifiers of the poetical craft who claimed that good form would automatically follow from good content; and he had firmly opposed the theory that a proletarian poet just because he had the proper origin and class consciousness, also possessed unique talents for writing and judging literature.

\*

Majakovskij highly valued the struggle waged by the Far Eastern Futurists. In a letter to Aseev (from about August 25, 1921) he wrote: "Громовой привет и широкое футуристическое мерси за агита-цию нашего искусства и за восславление моей скромной фигуры, в частности" (XIII, 50). In the same letter Majakovskij expressed his wish to go to Čita ("Хочу приехать в Читу"). Majakovskij's trip

to Čita together with Sergej Tret'jakov, who was in Moscow at the time, was even announced in *Dal'nevostočnyj Telegraf*: “Из Москвы получено сообщение, что на днях оттуда выехали в Читу поэт Влад. Влад. Маяковский и С. М. Третьяков” (August 28). On September 8, however, the following message was communicated: “Приезд в Читу поэта В. В. Маяковского отложен на некоторое время.”<sup>61</sup>

Ironically enough, it was precisely “Misterija-buff” that prevented Majakovskij from visiting the comrades who had propagandized the play with such enthusiasm in Čita and Vladivostok. Tret'jakov probably left Moscow on August 25 or 26.<sup>62</sup> On August 25, the legal proceedings concerning payment of the fees for the publication of “Misterija-buff” took place, and Majakovskij was unable to get away from Moscow. Gosizdat had refused to publish the play, but *Vestnik teatra* printed it as a supplement to nos. 91–92 (June 15, 1921). *Vestnik teatra* was subordinate to TEO Glavpolitprosveta, and fees for materials published in the paper were paid by Gosizdat. Gosizdat's officials, however, refused to pay Majakovskij anything, so he appealed to MGSPS (“Moskovskij Gorodskoj Sovet Professional'nyx Sojuzov”) and took the matter to court. “Gubernskij disciplinarnyj| tovariščeskij sud” examined the case and instructed Gosizdat to pay the money. The defense appealed, however, and Majakovskij did not receive his fees until after new proceedings on September 8.<sup>63</sup> Majakovskij, then, could not go to Čita, but in a letter to Čužak (which, like the letter to Aseev, was sent with Tret'jakov) he explained his situation: “Работать почти не приходится: грызня, агитация и т. п. выжирают из меня все вместе с печенками. Для иллюстрации шлю копию моего заявления в МГСПС о Госиздате.<sup>64</sup> 25 числа дисциплинарный суд. Обвиняемый — Госиздат [...]. Обвинитель — я. Постараюсь перегрызть все, что возможно. Не считайте изложенное в заявлении за исключение: таких случаев тыщи. Со ‘150 000 000’ было так же, если не хуже” (XIII, 51).

\*

Majakovskij never visited Čita, where his Futurist colleagues had done so much to popularize him and his works. However, this did not mean that their collaboration ended; in 1922, Čužak, Aseev, Tret'jakov, Neznamov and other members of the “Tvorčestvo”

group returned to Moscow, some of them to work with Majakovskij in *Lef*.

I have attempted above to elucidate somewhat Majakovskij's relations with Čužak in 1920–1921; their relationship has thus far received little attention. Much remains to be done, however, including a more thorough investigation of Čužak's activities in the Far East. The contacts between Majakovskij and Čužak during this period are of considerable importance to research on Majakovskij. In Nikolaj Čužak, an old and convinced member of the Bolshevik party, Majakovskij found an ally who not only defended and propagandized Futurism and fought against bureaucracy but also stood for some of the ideological conviction and firmness (“partijnost’”) that Majakovskij himself was in search of. The future discord between Majakovskij and Čužak—on the policy of *Lef*, in 1923—will not be treated here.<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that in a letter to Čužak on this issue Majakovskij called him, despite their disagreement, an “испытанный друг и товарищ” (Majakovskij's italics), and “по-прежнему” considered him his “друг и товарищ по работе” (XIII, 61).

# Notes

## Abbreviations:

*I.K.* = Iskusstvo Kommuny, Pg. 1918–1919.

*P.K.* = Proletarskaja Kul'tura, M. 1918–1921.

*CGALI* = Central'nyj Gosudarstvennyj Arxiv Literatury i Iskusstva, Moscow.

*IMLI* = Institut Mirovoj Literatury im. Gor'kogo (Manuscript section), Moscow.

## Introduction

1. K. Malevič, *O novyx sistemax v iskusstve*, Vitebsk 1919, p. 10.
2. N. Punin, "Balans", *I.K.* 1919: 10, p. 1.
3. K. Ėrberg, "O novyx dogmatax i eresjax", *Znamja*, M. 1920: 6 (8), column 49.
4. Edward J. Brown, *Mayakovskij. A poet in the revolution*, Princeton 1973, p. 197.
5. N. Xardžiev, "Zametki o Majakovskom", *Vladimir Majakovskij. Memoirs and Essays* (Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature 2), Stockholm 1975, p. 96.
6. In *ibid.* N. Xardžiev gives one such example (p. 97).
7. Henceforth the references to Majakovskij's works are to *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v trinadcati tomax*, M. 1955–1961. The volume is given in Roman numerals, the page in Arabic.

## Gazeta Futuristov

1. According to what L. Grinkrug has told the author.
2. Manuscript. Quoted with the kind permission of L. Grinkrug.
3. Letter to L. Brik (middle of January, 1918), Majakovskij XIII, 30. On "Kafe Poëtov", see also S. Spasskij, in *V. Majakovskij v vospominanijax sovremennikov*, M. 1963, pp. 161–177, V. Kamenskij, *Žizn' s Majakovskim*, M. 1940, pp. 189–202, and *Put' entuziasta*, Perm' 1968, pp. 208–213. On café "Pitoresque", see V. Lapšin, "Iz tvorčeskogo nasledija G. B. Jakulova", *Voprosy sovetskogo izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva i arxitektury*, M. 1975, pp. 275–303.
4. *Figaro*, M. 1918, 15 April.
5. L. Grinkrug, *op. cit.*
6. According to what L. Grinkrug has told the author, the printing cost 2 300 roubles.
7. L. Grinkrug, *op. cit.*
8. "ASIS" was Majakovskij's own publishing-house, i.e. under this name he published, in February of 1918, two of his own poems—"Čelovek", and the

second, uncensored edition of "Oblako v štanax"—on money borrowed from his friends (see V. Katanjan, *Majakovskij. Literaturnaja xronika*, 4-e dopoln. izd., M. 1961, p. 95, and E. Dinerštejn, "Izdatel'skaja dejatel'nost' Majakovskogo", *Kniga. Issledovanija i materialy*. Sb. XVII, M. 1968, p. 156).

9. L. Grinkrug, *op. cit.*
10. Four of Burljuk's poems were published for the first time in *Gazeta Futuristov*. "Utverždenie vkusa" was first published in the almanac *Strelec* (No. 1, Pg. 1915, p. 57) under the title "Plodonosjaščie" and in a slightly different version. "Utverždenie bodrosti" had been printed earlier in the almanac *Doxlaja luna* (M. 1913, p. 114) under the title "I.A.R.", i.e. "Iz Artjura Rembo"; for the publication in *Gazeta Futuristov*, however, Burljuk deleted two lines. It is a more or less literal translation of Rimbaud's "Faim" from *Une saison en enfer*.
11. I have not been able to establish the identity of this "Dokto". Judging by an autograph (printed in *Moj žurnal*, M. 1918: 6) "Dokto" appears to have been a woman: "я футуристка / моя мысль — для меня действительность / докто".
12. See V. Trenin/N. Xardžiev, "Anonimnyj Majakovskij", *Tridcat' Dnej*, M. 1936: 11, p. 93.
13. This manifesto was first published in Russian in Bengt Jangfeldt, "Notes on 'Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov' and the Revolution of the Spirit", *Vladimir Majakovskij. Memoirs and Essays* (Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature 2), Stockholm 1975, p. 156.
14. In his article "Edinaja estetičeskaja Rossija" in the almanac *Vesennee kontragentstvo muz* (M. 1915) Burljuk proclaimed "уважение к чужому мнению" and continued: "— Пусть каждый имеет своего бога! — Путь свободен на свою веру! — В мире творчества это значит — 'видит мир по своему' — проводит и чтит красоту так, как он ее понимает! —" (p. 103).
15. See A. Lunačarskij's *Reč', proiznesennaja na otkrytii Petrogradskix Gosudarstvennyx Svobodnyx Xudožestvenno-Učebnyx Masterskix 10-go Oktjabrja 1918 g. S predisloviem N. N. Punina*, Pg. 1918.
16. The demands in "Manifest Letučej Federacii Futuristov" were not unique. A year earlier, the representatives of the left bloc within "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv" had put forth identical demands. Majakovskij had belonged to the federation "Svoboda iskusstvu", for which V. Denisov had proposed the following theses: "[...] устранение общегосударственной опеки. Полная децентрализация художественной жизни и автономия всех учреждений и обществ [...]. Упразднение академий всех видов [...]. Замена меценатства общественной поддержкой в виде стипендий-авансов" (*CGALI*, 336-7-80). These demands were repeated in Boris Kušner's pamphlet *Demokratizacija levyx dejatelej iskusstva* (Pg. 1917, pp. 9-11).

In his article in *Gazeta Futuristov* Burljuk wrote: "Долой чины, экзамены, звания — да здравствует коммунальное начало." On April 24, 1918, the art students of Petrograd and Moscow held a conference, which resulted in this resolution: "Долой дипломы, чины, ордена и преимущества, позорящие великое имя художников" (*Plamja*, M. 1918: 2), and a few days earlier

(on April 19, a week after the abolition of the Academy) Lunačarskij had in a speech to "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv" explained the government's standpoint; he said that "the government [...] stood for the complete separation of art from the state, for the complete liquidation of all diplomas, titles, honours and exclusive privileges, and opposed state support of any single artistic group or organization [...] The Academy of Arts had been abolished because to maintain it meant giving state support to one privileged artistic group" (*Novaja Žizn'*, Pg. 1918, April 21. Quoted from Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1970, p. 115).

17. V. Kamenskij, *Žizn' s Majakovskim*, M. 1940, pp. 204–210.
18. V. Keržencev, "Iskusstvo na ulicy", *Tvorčestvo*, M. 1918: 3, p. 13.
19. O. Brik, "IMO — iskusstvo molodyx", *Majakovskomu*, L. 1940, p. 90.
20. V. Kamenskij, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
21. According to what L. Grinkrug has told the author. See also V. Kamenskij, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
22. *Zvučal' vesnejanki*, M. 1918, p. 148.
23. *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo pervyx let Oktjabrja*, M. 1971.
24. M. Šagal, "Pis'mo iz Vitebska", *I.K.* 1918: 3, p. 2.
25. Since 1920: ulica Ogareva.
26. At the discussion "Iskusstvo i žizn'", 2 March, 1919. Report in *I.K.* 1919: 5, p. 3.
27. *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo ...*, p. 88. This "happening" obviously annoyed Lenin (see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, p. 126).
28. *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo ...*, p. 166.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. I. Puni, "Sovremennye grupirovki v russkom levom iskusstve", *I.K.* 1919: 19, p. 3.
33. V. Xovin, *Segodnjašnjemu dnuj*, Pbg. 1918, pp. 5–6.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
35. B. Kušner, "Rukopožatie", *Naš put'*, M. 1918: 2, May, p. 186.
36. *Ibid.*
37. V. Trenin/N. Xardžiev, "Majakovskij v Novom Satirikone", *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1933, t. 7/8, pp. 335–336.
38. N. Xardžiev, "Majakovskij i živopis'", *Poëtičeskaja kul'tura Majakovskogo*, M. 1970, p. 23.
39. See Majakovskij XI, 481.
40. See Majakovskij XIII, 155.
41. L. Poljak/N. Reformatskaja, "Nesobrannye proizvedenija poslerevoljucionnogo Majakovskogo", *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1933, t. 7/8, p. 338.

## The Futurists and IZO

1. *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1958, t. 65, p. 107.
2. A. Smorodin, *Poëzija V. V. Majakovskogo i publicistika 20-x godov*, L. 1972, p. 21.



3. On "Sojuz dejatelej iskusstv", see E. Dinerštejn, "Majakovskij v fevrale-oktjabre 1917 g.", *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1958, t. 65, pp. 541-570.
4. Quoted from Majakovskij XII, 594.
5. O. Brik, "Majakovskij — redaktor i organizator", *Literaturnyj Kritik*, M. 1936: 4, p. 114.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. D. Šterenberg, *Obzor dejatel'nosti otdela izobrazitel'nyx iskusstv N.K.P.*, Pb. 1920, p. 8. In his article quoted above, Brik repeats word by word whole passages from this work, without indicating the source, as if he had written them himself.
9. *Ibid.*
10. O. Brik, "IMO — iskusstvo molodyx", *Majakovskomu*, L. 1940, p. 93.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
12. Šterenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 9. On IZO, see also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 122 ff.
13. A receipt from Majakovskij shows his personal contribution to the publication of the first two issues of *Iskusstvo Kommuny*:

Счет

расходов по организации издания газеты "Искусство Коммуны"

Раз'езды 5 декабря по организации распространения	80 р.
6 декабря	40 р.
За выпуск № 1	200 р.
Перевозка 1 000 экз. № 1	25 р.
Ночная поездка в типографию (экстр. коррект.) к выпуску № 2	90 р.
Мальчику за разноску кор.	3 р.
Трамвайных денег выдано	13 р. 20 к.
Доставка плакатов	30 р.
	Итого 481 р. 20 к.

Деньги четыреста восемьсот один руб. двадцать коп. (481 р. 20) от тов. Брик получил сполна.

16/12 18 г.      В. Маяковский

The receipt is in Majakovskij's handwriting (*IMLI*, 18-2-1), and is reproduced in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1958, t. 65, p. 591.

14. "IMO", the publishing house led by Majakovskij and Brik and financed by Narkompros, indicated in its publishing plan among other books "Iskusstvo Kommuny. Sbornik statej po voprosam stroitel'stva kommunističeskoj kul'tury" (XIII, 202). This book, however, was never published. In Vol. I of *Sobranie sočinenij* (1928), Majakovskij named one of the sections "Iskusstvo Kommuny"—this section contains the poems from *Iskusstvo Kommuny*, but also other poems treating the theme of the poet and literature in the new society.
15. N. Al'tman, "'Futurizm' i proletarskoe iskusstvo", *I.K.* 1918: 2, p. 2.

16. N. Punin, "Razorvannoe soznanie", *I.K.* 1919: 7, p. 2.
17. N. Punin, "Kak moglo by byt' inače?", *I.K.* 1919: 7, p. 1.
18. "Kommunisty-Futuristy", *I.K.* 1919: 8, p. 3.
19. At a discussion at "Krasnyj Petux", report in *Vestnik teatra*, M. 1919: 11, 11–12–13 March, p. 5.
20. N. Punin, "Levye – pravye", *I.K.* 1918: 3, p. 1.
21. A. Lunačarskij, *Ob izobrazitel'nom iskusstve*, M. 1967, t. 2, p. 116.
22. On Lunačarskij, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1970; N. Trifonov, *A. V. Lunačarskij i sovetskaja literatura*, M. 1974, and P. Bugaenko, *A. V. Lunačarskij i sovetskaja literaturnaja kritika*, Saratov 1972.
23. See *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo pervyx let Oktjabrja*, M. 1971, pp. 34–39.
24. V. Krjažin, "Futurizm i revoljucija", *Vestnik žizni*, M. 1919: 6/7, p. 72.
25. L. Pumpjanskij, "Iskusstvo i sovremennost'", *Plamja*, M. 1919: 51, p. 11.
26. Report by F. Varst in *Iskusstvo*, M. 1919: 5, p. 3.
27. *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo ...*, p. 39.
28. On "Misterija-buff", see A. Fevral'skij, *Pervaja sovetskaja p'esa*, M. 1971, pp. 94 ff.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
30. *Iskusstvo*, M. 1919: 7, p. 6.
31. V. Friče, "Literaturnoe odičanie", *Večernie Izvestija Moskovskogo Soveta*, M. 1919: 172, 15 February, p. 1.
32. V. Friče, "Lže-proletarskaja poëzija", *Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 178, 22 February, p. 1.
33. V. Friče, "Citadel' 'svobodnogo tvorčestva'", *Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 183, 28 February, p. 1.
34. K. Malinin, "O futurizme", *Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 188, 6 March, p. 1. See also the protocol from the meeting with the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet, *Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 185, 3 March, p. 2.
35. "Den' Krasnogo Podarka" was held on February 23, 1919, the anniversary of the creation of the Red Army. 20 000 placards were produced and sent to the fronts. Only 250 of these were made by students of the "Svobodnye Masterskie". As these placards were large, it was impossible to send them to the fronts and they were put up in Moscow: "Ими будут украшены казармы, театры, улицы" (*Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 175, 19 February, p. 3). Obviously, these placards were the most interesting ones: "С точки зрения художественной некоторые из плакатов, особенно новых направлений, представляют несомненный интерес" (*Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 174, 18 February, p. 3). Nevertheless they were much criticized, and Ol'ga Kame-neva (Troickij's sister), who was the organizer of "Den' Krasnogo Podarka", found it necessary to denounce these "leftist" placards in an open letter to *Večernie Izvestija*. She called these "упражнения под модный 'футуризм'" "издевательством над вкусом и смыслом трудящихся", and claimed that she had had nothing to do with these placards. She continued: "Мало того. Я лично неоднократно предупреждала товарищей [...], что подобные плакаты — только лишняя и бессмысленная трата денег, и что опыт

октябрьских празднеств должен был бы всех нас предостеречь от любезных предложений заказов оптом профессиональным союзам или целым школам” (*Večernie Izvestija ...*, M. 1919: 184, 1 March, p. 3).

36. *Vestnik žizni*, M. 1919: 6/7, p. 72.
37. “Literatura za dva goda sovetsoj vlasti”, *Tvorčestvo*, M. 1919: 10/11, p. 49.
38. P. Bessaľ’ko, “Futurizm i proletarskaja kul’tura”, *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1918: 10, p. 10.
39. N. Punin, “Futurizm — gosudarstvennoe iskusstvo”, *I.K.* 1918: 4, p. 2.
40. *Ibid.*
41. N. Punin, “Revoljucionnaja mudrost’”, *I.K.* 1919: 6, p. 2.
42. N. Punin, “Protivniki”, *I.K.* 1919: 16, p. 2.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. N. Punin, “Balans”, *I. K.* 1919: 10, p. 1.
46. N. Al’tman, “V grjaduščee, tovarišči!”, *I. K.* 1919: 10, p. 1.
47. Šterenberġ, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
49. “Futurizm — gosudarstvennoe iskusstvo”, *op. cit.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Pravda*, M. 1919, 9 April. Quoted in Bugaenko, *op. cit.*, p. 100, 101.
53. Quoted in Bugaenko, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
54. V. Katanġan, *Majakovskij. Literaturnaja xronika*, 4-e dopoln. izd., M. 1961, p. 116.
55. Fevral’skij, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
56. Reports in *Iskusstvo*, M. 1919: 5, p. 3; *Vestnik teatra*, M. 1919: 11, pp. 4–5; *Vestnik žizni*, M. 1919: 6/7, pp. 82–83.

## The Revolution of the Spirit

1. *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1919: 4, p. 9.
2. *Poščečina obščestvennomu vkusu*, M. 1912.
3. N. Punin, “K itogam oktjabr’skix toržestv”, *I.K.* 1918: 1, p. 2.
4. N. Punin, “Revoljucija i iskusstvo”, *Novaja večernjaja počta*, Pg. 1917: 1, 11 (24) November, p. 3. (Reprinted from *Novyj žurnal.*)
5. N. Punin, “Bombometanie i organizacija”, *I.K.* 1918: 2, p. 3.
6. From Punin’s appearance at the meeting “Staroe i novoe iskusstvo”. Report by N. in *I.K.* 1919: 5, p. 2.
7. O. Brik, “Majakovskij — redaktor i organizator”, *Literaturnyj Kritik*, M. 1936: 4, p. 124.
8. A. Men’šutin/A. Sinjavskij, *Poëzija pervyx let revoljucii*, M. 1964, p. 104.
9. *CGALI*, 1372-1-1.
10. A. Benois, “O pamjatnikax”, *Novaja Žizn’*, Pg. 1917: 64, 2 (15) July, p. 5.
11. Brik, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

12. See A. Benois, *op. cit.*, and Majakovskij XII, 150.
13. Benois, *op. cit.*
14. V. Trenin, "Razgovor Majakovskogo s Puškinym", *Tridcat' Dnej*, M. 1936: 10, p. 93.
15. Report by N. in *I.K.* 1919: 5, p. 2.
16. A. Lunačarskij, "Ložka protivjadija", *I.K.* 1918: 4, p. 1. Only half of the article was printed; the part dealing with Majakovskij in particular was published only later in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1958, t. 65, pp. 572-574.
17. "Ot redakcii", *I.K.* 1918: 4, p. 1.
18. O. Brik, "Ucelevšij bog", *I.K.* 1918: 4, p. 2.
19. *Novaja Žizn'* and *Delo Naroda*, Pg. 1917, 3 November. Quoted from Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1970, p. 14.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See e.g. L. Farber, *Sovetskaja literatura pervyx let revoljucii. 1917-1920 gg.*, M. 1966, p. 216.
22. K. Malevič, "O muzee", *I.K.* 1919: 12, p. 2.
23. These theses have kindly been put at my disposal by V. Katanjan. They are undated, but were certainly written in these years.
24. N. Trifonov, *A. V. Lunačarskij i sovetskaja literatura*, M. 1974, p. 126.
25. There were, of course, Proletkul'tists who were positive towards the cultural heritage; I am speaking here of those within Proletkul't who denounced this heritage.
26. A. Fevral'skij, *Pervaja sovetskaja p'esa*, M. 1971, pp. 162-163.
27. "Sten'ka Razin" was staged in Moscow on the first anniversary of the Revolution. See *Agitacionno-massovoe iskusstvo pervyx let Oktjabrja*, M. 1971, p. 98 and S. Ginc, *Vasilij Kamenskij*, Perm' 1975, pp. 142-144.
28. See R. Jakobson, "Novye stroki Majakovskogo", *Russkij Literaturnyj Arxiv*, New York 1956, p. 181, and Majakovskij I, 26.
29. "My" reads in a first draft: "my futuristy" (IV, 287).
30. V. Kamenskij, *Zvučal' vesnejanki*, M. 1918, p. 148.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
32. V. Kamenskij, *Ego-moja biografija velikogo futurista*, M. 1918, pp. 145, 176.
33. N. Čužak, *Čerez golovy kritikov*, Čita 1922, p. 37.
34. N. Čužak, "Opasnost' arakčeevščiny", *Tvorčestvo*, Vladivostok 1920: 5.
35. S. Tret'jakov, "Poët na tribune", *Tvorčestvo*, Čita 1921: 7, p. 88.
36. It is a curious detail that S. Mjasoedov, who participated in *Sadok Sudej* (I) in 1910 but then disappeared from literature, organized in the spring of 1917 in Petrograd a union for a spiritual revolution, "Sojuz duhovnoj revoljucii". Mjasoedov, who was at this time "učitel' real'nogo učilišča", held the following speech: "Союз духовной революции' учреждается для борьбы с теми пережитками прошлого, которые свили себе прочное гнездо в психике каждого человека. Можно изменить внешние политические формы государственной и общественной жизни, отменить старые законы и ввести новые, упразднить бюрократические учреждения и создать демократические, даже архидемократические; но все эти перемены еще не гарантируют изменения внутреннего строя души. Наоборот, пред-

посылкой государственного обновления должно быть внутреннее обновление человека, а для того нужна работа вишь и вглубь. Вишь — в смысле широкого распространения культуры в массах, и вглубь — в смысле внутреннего самоуглубления и самосовершенствования” (*Novaja Žizn'*, Pg. 1917: 25, 17 (30) May, p. 6). According to the report, about 150 people joined the union after the speech.

37. Proletkul't's relationship to the Party and State will not be treated here. See V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't*, M. 1974.
38. “Poëty i revoljucija”, *Skify II*, M. 1918, p. 4.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
40. “Socializm i revoljucija”, *Skify I*, M. 1917, p. 308.
41. *Skify I*, p. xi.
42. “Socializm i revoljucija”, p. 307.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
44. A. Belyj, *Revoljucija i kul'tura*, M. 1917, p. 19.
45. Published by G. Nivat, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, Vol. XV, 1–2, Paris–La Haye 1974, p. 78.
46. “Kommunizm i futurizm”, *I.K.* 1919: 17, p. 3.

## The Futurists and Proletkul't

1. P. Bessal'ko, “Futurizm i proletarskaja kul'tura”, *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1918: 10, p. 10.
2. *P.K.* 1920: 17/19, p. 74.
3. *P. K.* 1919: 7/8, pp. 69–70.
4. N. P<unin>, “Gonenija”, *I.K.* 1919: 14, p. 2.
5. P. Jarovoj, “Čerez sodержanie k texnike, čerez texniku k massam”, *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1921: 1/3, p. 53.
6. V. Aleksandrovsij, “O putjax proletarskogo tvorčestva”, *Kuznica*, M. 1920: 4, p. 34.
7. F. Kalinin, “O futurizme”, *P.K.* 1919: 7/8, pp. 41–43; P. Bessal'ko, “Futurizm i proletarskaja kul'tura”, *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1918: 10, pp. 10–12. Both articles were reprinted in F. Kalinin/P. Bessal'ko, *Problemy proletarskoj kul'tury*, Pb. 1919.

Bessal'ko's article was answered directly by Osip Brik in “Nalet na futurizm” (*I.K.* 1919: 10, p. 3), in which Brik eloquently polemizes with Bessal'ko's ill-informed and sometimes even childish arguments. Bessal'ko claims, for example, that Futurism is not a Russian movement, citing as evidence the fact that even the word “Futur” is foreign. It was of course not difficult for Brik to show that this was not a very convincing argument, since many words are of foreign origin, like “socialism”, “communism”, etc.

I relate this as an example of the level on which the debate was conducted.

8. *Zarevo Zavodov*, Samara, 1919: 2, p. 29.
9. S. Spasskij, “Vstreča v Tiflise”, *Pered vami, bagdadskie nebesa*, Tbilisi 1973, pp. 200–203.

10. S. R(odov), *Rabočij žurnal*, Kiev 1919: 2, pp. 28, 29.
11. A. M(aširov), *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1919: 2/3, p. 32.
12. V. Kazin, *Gudki*, M. 1919: 2, pp. 19, 25; Vak, *Gudki*, M. 1919: 3, p. 17.
13. A. O., *P.K.* 1919: 11/12, p. 71.
14. L. T(oom), "Ešče slovo o futurizme", *Vzmaxi* (I), Saratov 1919, pp. 112–115.
15. O. Olenev, "Nakonec-to!", *Gudki*, M. 1919: 1, pp. 17–19.
16. M. Kovylev, *Grjaduščaja Kul'tura*, Tambov 1919: 3, p. 25.
17. A. M(aširov), *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1919: 4, p. 16.
18. *CGALI*, 1230-1-7.
19. P. Keržencev, *K novoj kul'ture*, Pb. 1921, p. 45.
20. F. Kalinin, "Naši zadači i puti", *P.K.* 1919: 7/8, p. 6.
21. F. Kalinin, "O metodax raboty v Proletkul'tax", *P.K.* 1919: 11/12, p. 34.
22. *P.K.* 1920: 13/14, p. 79.
23. V. Poljanskij, "Samostojatel'nost' ili v putax buržuaznoj ideologii", *P.K.* 1920: 15/16, p. 43.
24. Keržencev, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
25. "V Moskovskom Proletkul'te", *Vestnik teatra*, M. 1919: 12, p. 6.
26. F. Kalinin, "O metodax raboty v Proletkul'tax", *op. cit.*, p. 34–35, 36.
27. F. Kalinin, "Proletariat i tvorčestvo", *P.K.* 1918: 1, p. 11.
28. F. Kalinin, "O futurizme", *op. cit.*, p. 43.

In connection with Proletkul't's attitude to the intelligentsia it must be pointed out that the organization's own leadership consisted to a great extent of "intelligenty". At the second Proletkul't congress in November, 1921, 99 of the 197 delegates were workers, 17 peasants and no less than 81 "intelligenty" (*Materialy diskussionnyx večerov delegatov <Vtorogo Vserossijskogo> S'ezda*, M. 1922; *CGALI*, 1230-1-44). Lebedev-Poljanskij, editor-in-chief of *Proletarskaja Kul'tura*, was in every respect an "intelligent": he had taken a degree at the Vladimir Theological Seminary, studied medicine and worked before the Revolution as a literary critic in the working-class press. In a speech at Proletkul't's first congress in 1920 he expressed the following seemingly self-evident ideas: "Говорят, что Пролеткульт есть организация интеллигентская и что нужно выживать оттуда интеллигентов. Дело не в этом, а в том, чтобы интеллигенты стояли на пролетарской точке зрения. Я должен сказать, что председатель Совнаркома, вождь революции, т. Ленин — помещик-интеллигент, но да будет таких помещиков побольше и наша революция идет до конца. Я должен констатировать, что Карл Либкнехт и Роза Люксембург были тоже интеллигенты, но они смогли сложить головы за пролетарский класс, а Шейдеман, который является пролетарием, предал интересы рабочего класса. Так что ссылаться на то, что мы пролетарии, еще нельзя. Недостаточно быть пролетарием, а нужно быть сознательным пролетарием" (*CGALI*, 1230-1-140). These views were diametrically opposed to those maintained by Proletkul't leaders with a proletarian background, for example, Kalinin and Besal'ko.

It must furthermore be emphasized that the Futurists (especially the Cubo-

Futurists) were practically all from un-privileged homes and had little in common (with respect to class) with the literary aristocracy of the preceding generation. To Proletkul't, however, this distinction was not so important: all writers who were not workers were "intelligently".

29. V. Pletnev, "O profesionalizme", *P.K.* 1919: 7/8, pp. 36-37.
30. Poljanskij, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
31. Keržencev, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
32. Bessal'ko, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
33. I. Trajnin, "Proletarskoe iskusstvo i futurizm", *Zarevo Zavodov*, Samara 1919: 2, p. 30.
34. Bessal'ko, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
35. B. Kušner, "Iskusstvo Kollektiva", *I.K.* 1919: 6, p. 2.
36. N. Al'tman, "'Futurizm' i proletarskoe iskusstvo", *I.K.* 1918: 2, p. 2. See also N. Al'tman, "V grjaduščee, tovarišči!", *I.K.* 1919: 10, p. 1.
37. "'Futurizm' i proletarskoe iskusstvo", *op. cit.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Bessal'ko, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
41. B. Kušner, "Iskusstvo Kollektiva", *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3. The following account of Kušner's views is based on this article.
42. A. Kručenyx/V. Xlebnikov, *Slovo kak takovoe*, M. 1913.
43. S. Kluben', "Proletkul't i Kom-Fut", *Grjaduščaja Kul'tura*, Tambov 1919: 4/5, p. 17.
44. A. Bogdanov, "Naša kritika. Stat'ja 2-ja. Kritika proletarskogo iskusstva", *P.K.* 1918: 3, p. 19.
45. Bessal'ko, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
46. For an analysis of the poetics of the proletarian poets, see K. Drjagin, *Patetičeskaja lirika proletarskix poetov èpoxi voennogo kommunizma*, Vjatka 1933, and A. Men'sutin/A. Sinjavskij, *Poèzija pervyx let revoljucii, 1917-1920*, M. 1964.
47. P. Jarovoj, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
48. O. Brik, "Vy pravyy, tov. Muštakov!", *I.K.* 1918: 3, p. 1.
49. "Avtobiografija V. Kirillova", *CGALI*, 1372-1-1.
50. L. Trockij, *Literatura i revoljucija*, 2-e, dopoln. izd., M. 1924, p. 148.
51. F. Kalinin, "Proletarskaja kul'tura i ee kritiki", *P.K.* 1919: 9/10, p. 2.
52. V. Boguševskij, "O repertuare rabočego teatra", *P.K.* 1918: 1, p. 23.
53. Quoted from V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't*, M. 1974, p. 95.
54. Bessal'ko, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
55. *CGALI*, 1638-1-7.
56. O. Brik, "Xudožnik-proletarij", *I.K.* 1918: 2, p. 1.
57. These notes are from the private archive of Osip Brik and have kindly been put at my disposal by V. Katanjan. They are undated but undoubtedly belong to the period in question.
58. "Xudožnik-proletarij", *op. cit.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*
62. N. Punin, "Proletarskoe iskusstvo", *I.K.* 1919: 19, p. 1.
63. "Xudožnik-proletarij", *op. cit.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. The notion of "professionalism" was also discussed within Proletkul't, where, however, it meant something else. There it was a question of whether a proletarian writer should devote himself full-time to his profession (be a professional writer), and thereby risk losing contact with his class and the labor process, or whether he should remain in production and maintain this contact (with the risk, of course, of becoming a poorer writer). Opinions on that in Proletkul't were divided.
66. See *I.K.* 1919: 11, p. 4.
67. *I.K.* 1919: 7, p. 2.

## Kom-Fut

1. Where not otherwise indicated, the accounts of this and the following meetings are based on a report signed V. in *I.K.* 1918: 3, p. 3: "Futurizm v rabočix."
2. Majakovskij used these meetings to sell books from IMO ("Iskusstvo molodyx"), the publishing house of which he was editor and publisher. IMO had been founded with Lunačarskij's approval in July, 1918. The books Majakovskij sold at his appearances were *Misterija-buff* and the anthology *Ržanoe slovo*. In accordance with an agreement with Narkompros, no fee was paid until the books had been sold, which made writers hesitate about sending in their manuscripts—they were forced to wait entirely too long for their money. Thus, the reason why Majakovskij sold his books so often when he appeared in public was in part a question of economics. On February 4, 1919, this point in the contract was changed so that thereafter the fees were paid when the manuscript was submitted. (See O. Brik, "IMO — Iskusstvo molodyx", *Majakovskomu*, L., 1940, p. 100, and XIII, 199–203, 402–403.)
3. Announcement in *Iskusstvo Kommuny*.
4. See A. Fevral'skij, *Pervaja sovjetskaja p'esa*, M. 1971, pp. 194–198.
5. "Macbeth" was in fact staged at the Teatr Muzykal'noj Dramy, scenery by Korovin.
6. V. Katanjan, *Majakovskij. Literaturnaja xronika*, 4-e, dopoln. izd., M. 1961, p. 111.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 112. In December, 1918, Majakovskij participated in many discussions on questions of art, but we are interested here only in his appearances before workers' audiences.
8. *I.K.* 1919: 8, p. 3.
9. B. Kušner, "Pryžok k socializmu", *I.K.* 1919: 8, p. 1.
10. *I.K.* 1919: 8, p. 3.
11. B. K(ušner), "Kommunisty-futuristy", *I.K.* 1919: 9, p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*



15. In a letter of March 8, 1919, from Vilna, however, one Al'bert Gran stresses the necessity of organizing a Kom-Fut collective there (*I.K.* 1919: 16, p. 4). But this letter is dated more than a month after the discussion on "организационное расширение".
16. B. Kušner, "Kommunisty-futuristy", *op. cit.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Desjat' let kul'turnogo stroitel'stva v strane rabočix i krest'jan*, M.–L. 1927, p. 114.
19. *Gorn*, M. 1923: 8, p. 254. Cf. Majakovskij at the discussion "Futurizm segodnja", 3 April, 1923: "Частное наше название — Комфуты" (XII, 261).
20. *Kommunističeskij trud*, M. 1920: 51, 23 May, p. 3. See also report in *Tvorčesivo*, M. 1920: 2/4, p. 35.
21. V. Aleksandrovskij, "O putjax proletarskogo tvorčestva", *Kuznica*, M. 1920: 4, p. 35.
22. *KPSS v rezoljucijax i rešenijax s'ezdov, konferencij i plenumov CK 1898–1970*, M. 1970, t. 2, p. 197–198.
23. *CGALI*, 1230-1-6.
24. *CGALI*, 1230-1-6. Lebedev-Poljanskij was obviously one of the most ardent anti-futurists among the Proletkul't leaders. In *Proletarskaja Kul'tura* he had already put forth this thought: "[...] Пролеткульты борются с футуризмом и имажинизмом, и супрематизмом, и в самих коммунистах-футуристах видят влияние умирающей буржуазии с ее извращенными вкусами" ("Samostožatel'nost' ili v putax buržuaznoj kul'tury", *P.K.* 1920: 15/16, p. 48).
25. A. Lunačarskij, *Sobr. soč. v vos'mi tomax*, M. 1967, t. 7, p. 405.
26. V. Gorbunov, *V. I. Lenin i Proletkul't*, M. 1974, p. 157.
27. *Grjaduščee*, Pg. 1920: 1/2, p. 28. Nikolaj Čužak saw this letter as the starting point of the Party's campaign against Futurism (see N. Čužak, "Naše bezkul'tur'e", in *K dialektike iskusstva*, Čita 1921, p. 99).
28. "Glavpolitprosvet i iskusstvo", *Pravda*, M. 1921: 32, 13 Feb., p. 1.
29. These protocols, in edited form, have kindly been placed at my disposal by V. Katanjan.
30. See Majakovskij XII, 687; XIII, 427.
31. See Majakovskij XII, 455, 687; XIII, 277, 278–286, 427–431.
32. See photograph in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, M. 1958, t. 65, p. 213.
33. *Bor'ba za realizm v izobrazitel'nom iskusstve 20-x gg.*, M. 1962, p. 61.
34. See Katanjan, *op. cit.*, p. 137, and Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, p. 128 ff.
35. Fevral'skij, *op. cit.* and Majakovskij's *PSS*.
36. See Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, p. 131 ff. and Majakovskij XII, 605–609.
37. Quoted from Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
38. See Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, p. 132, and Majakovskij XII, 259.
39. Nikolaj Aseev reported in May, 1922, to *Dal'nevostočnyj Telegraf* that he had been present at a "торжественный прием" for Lunačarskij at the Briks' and that "весь Комфут" had been there (see E. Rappoport, *Let molodyx našix porox*, Irkutsk 1974, p. 24).
40. N. Čužak, *Čerez golovy kritikov*, Čita 1922, p. 6.

41. "Moskva-Čita-Vladivostok", *Tvorčestvo*, Čita 1921: 7, April-June, p. 136.
42. This article was reprinted in Čužak's *K dialektike iskusstva*, Čita 1921, pp. 64-71.
43. See Rappoport, *op. cit.*, pp. 81 ff., and N. Dvorničenko, *Ix put' načinalsja v Zabajkal'e*, Irkutsk 1973, pp. 41-42, 60.
44. Rappoport, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 84. Rappoport claims that the play was staged. Dvorničenko, however, mentions only that the staging was planned but says nothing about whether it really took place (*op. cit.*, p. 60).
45. N. Čužak, "Opasnost' arakčeevščiny", *Tvorčestvo*, Vladivostok 1920: 5. Reprinted in *K dialektike iskusstva*, pp. 72-88.
46. L. Borisov, "Rasskaz kursanta", *Tvorčestvo*, Čita 1921: 7, pp. 134-135.
47. "Moskva-Čita-Vladivostok", *op. cit.*, p. 136.
48. The Tiflis group 41°, with Kručenyx, Igor' Terent'ev and Il'ja Zdanevič, had more of an experimental character and did not play the same social role as the "Tvorčestvo" poets.
49. Borisov, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
50. Katanjan, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 127, and V. Katanjan, *Rasskazy o Majakovskom*, M. 1940, p. 80.
52. See Majakovskij XIII, 305.
53. Majakovskij also sent "150 000 000" to Donbass, Tver', Prag and Berlin for publication (XIII, 45). Roman Jakobson got the poem from Majakovskij in April, 1920, when he went abroad (see R. Jakobson, "The drum lines in Majakovskij's '150 000 000'", *California Slavic Studies*, Vol. VI, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1971, p. 39).
54. Rappoport, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
55. V. N. K-ev., "Pis'mo iz Vladivostoka (k postanovke 'Misterii-buff')", *Tvorčestvo*, Čita 1921: 7, pp. 148-149.
56. Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, p. 201. The first version of "Misterija-buff" had reached Vladivostok already in 1919, and was read publicly in 1920 (*Ibid.*, pp. 106-107).
57. N. Xardžiev, "Zametki o Majakovskom", *Vladimir Majakovskij. Memoirs and Essays* (Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature 2), Stockholm 1975, p. 94.
58. "Moskva-Čita-Vladivostok", *op. cit.*, p. 136.
59. *Ibid.* This letter was reprinted for the first time in Bengt Jangfeldt, "Majakovskij and the Publication of '150 000 000'. New Materials", *Scando-Slavica*, t. 21, Copenhagen 1975, p. 56.
60. "Moskva-Čita-Vladivostok", *op. cit.*, p. 137.
61. Rappoport, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
62. *Ibid.*
63. For a detailed report on this question, see Fevral'skij, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-198, and Majakovskij XIII, 44-49, 173-174, 308-310, 385-388.
64. This "zajavlenie" was published by Čužak in *Dal'nevostočnyj Telegraf* (1921: 56, 9 October).
65. In this quarrel Čužak opposed, among other things, the publication of "Pro èto" and Osip Brik's short story "Nepopučica".

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