

Introduction

The name of Osip Brik is frequently mentioned along with the names of his more famous friends and contemporaries, like Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, and Victor Shklovsky. When referring to Brik, former colleagues are profoundly apologetic for their belated and inadequate recognition: 'I am guilty before many people. I am guilty before Osip Maksimovich Brik because I rarely speak of him with gratitude,' writes Victor Shklovsky.¹

Yet no literary historian has ever attempted to assess his role in the evolution of Russian Futurism, his contribution to Formalism, and his significance in the controversies on the nature of art required by the new society which polarised the Russian literary world of the twenties.

Osip Maksimovich Brik was born in Moscow in 1888. Brik's father was a dealer in coral, his mother a cultivated and well-read woman. As a student Brik ran a course on political economy in Valitskaya's gymnasium for girls. There he met his future wife and life-long friend – Lilya Yurievna K. Brik graduated from the Law Faculty of Moscow University, but never practiced as a lawyer. The only application of his professional training was perhaps his brief period of working in the Cheka² soon after the Revolution. By that time Brik had already established himself as a leading Futurist theorist – Mayakovsky's closest associate – and a prominent Formalist critic of Opoyaz (The Society for the Study of Poetic Language). Since 1918 he had been one of the editors of the Futurist paper *Art of the Commune*, and a member of the Section of Fine Arts of the Commissariat of Enlightenment – IZO Narkompros. It is virtually impossible now to get any information about Brik's work in the Cheka. We know only that he acted as an investigator in cases connected with violations of Soviet law. In itself this fact only attests to Brik's unreserved devotion to, and identification with the Revolution. He joined the Bolshevik party after the October Revolution, but was expelled during the first purge in 1921 on the grounds of his 'unproletarian' origin and never applied for readmission.

Brik's concern with the social role of art gave impetus to his literary and organisational activities in the years following the October Revolution.

¹ Proletarian revolution demands the radical reorganisation of all

forms of cultural life. It cannot be confined to separate reforms or mere popularisation of the existing cultural values.' (From Brik's paper 'The Museum and Proletarian Culture' read at the collegium meeting on February 7, 1919.)³

This principle underlay the incessant search for new artistic forms appropriate to the tasks of social reconstruction, and pointed towards utilitarianism of art and the reinterpretation of artistic values.

Almost all the discoveries and achievements of Russian avant-garde art in the twenties, as well as its failures and misconceptions, can be followed in Osip Brik's writings of the time. As the main proponent of Constructivism, he championed the idea of bringing art into production. Brik founded the theory of 'social demand' (*sotsial'ny zakaz*) and played an important part in *Lef's* promulgation of 'literature of fact'. His inquiry into the problems of art production and consumption, the evolution of artistic forms, traditions and innovations, in particular the innovations required by emerging social changes, covered various forms and aspects of contemporary art: photography, painting, cinema, literature, popular entertainment.

The great experiments carried out by the Soviet film-makers of the twenties attracted Brik both as a polemicist in theoretical debate, and as a professional scriptwriter conversant with the specific requirements of the cinema. His main achievement was the script of Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia* (*The Heir to Genghis Khan*), released in 1928.

From the first revolutionary years Brik took an active part in the creation of the Soviet press and was on the editorial board of various art magazines: *Iskusstvo Kommuny* (*Art of the Commune*), 1918-1919; *Khudozhestvennaya Zhizn'* (*Artistic Life*), 1919-1920; the humourist journal *BOV*, 1921; *Sovetsky Ekran* (*Soviet Screen*), 1925-1929; *The Weekly of the Central House of the Workers in Education and Art*, 1922; *Novy Zritel'* (*New Spectator*), theatre weekly of the Moscow education department – *MONO*, 1924-1929.

His major activity during the 1920s was undoubtedly his editorial work and theoretical contributions to Mayakovsky's *Lef* (1923-1925) and *Novy Lef* (1927-1928). Brik resigned from *Lef* in 1928 together with Mayakovsky to organise REF, proclaimed to be 'to the left of *Lef*'. Soon after that *Lef* ceased publication. Mayakovsky joined RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) in 1930; several months later he committed suicide. In 1932 the Writers' Union was established and all the previous literary groupings were abolished.

Brik continued writing during the thirties and early forties. Apart from literary journalism and criticism, he wrote opera libretti, theatre adaptations of Russian classical novels and film scenarios. However, his most interesting and illuminating works of this period were articles on Mayakovsky, and retrospective accounts of the

literary battles of the 1920s.

Brik died in 1945. The Writers' Union administration did not deem him worthy of an obituary in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (*The Literary Gazette*).

Osip Brik joined the ranks of the Futurists at a time of extreme confusion in the arts. The years preceding the first world war in Russia witnessed an unprecedented artistic upheaval, the emergence of new belligerent movements and the disintegration of old schools and traditions.

In 1912 Aleksandr Benois, the prominent painter and art critic of the 'World of Art' wrote in the newspaper *Rech* (No 100, April 13, 1912):

'Future generations will either ridicule the time we are living in or see it as unhappy and tragically insane. There have already been such periods in history, when considerable sections of society withdrew into labyrinths of obscure theorisation and lost all joy of life. But our epoch can hardly be compared to any of the previous ones. For the last ten years we have had an uninterrupted and ever-growing nightmare in art, which is the most reliable thermometer of public spiritual health.'⁴

The new art asserted itself by mocking all the prevailing conventions. It exposed the illusory nature of realism, as something 'mirroring' a fictitious world, and debunked the 'objective' cognitive function of representational art.

The first Futurist manifestos rent the air. *Zaum* was declared the primary basis of art – the trans-sense use of primary elements of art: the 'self-orientated word' in poetry, or line and colour in nonobjective painting, ie when the material of a given art is liberated from its 'traditional subservience to meaning'⁵ and used as an expressive entity in its own right. It was discovered that 'the artist sees his pictures as an interplay of colours; verses come to the poet as a rhythmical impulse and obscure sounds before they are expressed in words.'⁶

Painting departed from the 'literary plots' which had been so characteristic of nineteenth-century Russian art. 'Wild' artists' rooms became part of every Petersburg exhibition. The works of Larionov and Goncharova, which revived the tradition of Russian icon-painting and *lubok* (peasant woodcuts) were displayed next to genteel 'World of Art' paintings. Russian Primitivism, blended with European Modernist movements, evolved into Rayonism. Malevich launched Suprematism, the first systematic school of abstract painting. Tatlin laid the foundations of Constructivism.⁷

'A civil war of forms was going on in poetry. Now painting invaded poetry.'⁸ Most of the Russian Cubo-Futurist poets came to poetry from painting: David Burlyuk, Mayakovsky, Kruchenykh, Elena Guro. The same applies to members of other Futurist groups:

38 Sergei Bobrov of the Centrifuge, and Khrisanf (Lev Zak) of the Mezzanine of Poetry. One can also mention Khlebnikov, Kamensky, Zdanevich and Nikolai Burlyuk, who painted and made drawings and book illustrations. The interplay of visual and verbal images can be seen in all Mayakovsky's early poems ('Port', 1912; 'From Street to Street', 1913; 'What about you?', 1913; 'Great Big Hell of a City', 1913), which appear as poetic illustrations of contemporary Modernist paintings.⁹ Kruchenykh, in the 'Declaration of Word as Such' in 1913, pointed out the similarity of the devices used in Futurist poetry and painting:

'Futurist painters (*budetlyane*) like to use parts of the body, cross-sections, Futurist poets (*budetlyane rechetvortsy*) use chopped words, half words, and their whimsical, intricate combinations (trans-sense language).'¹⁰

The very name 'Cubo-Futurism' adopted by Moscow Futurists in about 1913, synthesised the close affinity between Futurist poetry and Cubist painting. Historically, it attested to the syncretisation of the traditionally incompatible devices of temporal and spatial arts. Ironically enough, the commonly accepted term encapsulated the two artistic trends which were equally 'incomprehensible' to the contemporary public and to art critics. The important point is that both Futurism and Cubism confronted readers and viewers with the deliberate distortion of reality, impeded form ('as if it were written with difficulty and read with difficulty'¹²), an orientation towards the linguistic or pictorial material and an emphasis on technique. Thus, already at this stage the Futurists were inclined to dispense with 'inspiration' and the concept of 'poetry as magic' and to see themselves primarily as craftsmen. This development is crucial for the understanding of post-revolutionary Futurist aesthetics.

The emergence of the Formal School of literary criticism was very closely related to Futurism. The Futurist revolutionary innovations in poetry and, in particular, their insistence on the 'emancipation' of the poetic word and experiments in trans-sense language, defied the purely thematic interpretation of verse, as well as the symbolist belief in the evocative power.¹³ The new study of poetic language as a special type of human discourse orientated towards a specific function – aesthetic effect – was historically bound up with Futurist experiments, in which the poetic devices were deliberately 'laid bare'. The analysis of trans-sense poetry was a starting point for the differentiation of 'poetic' and 'practical' speech set forth in the pioneering Formalist essay *Resurrection of the Word* by Shklovsky (1914). It established the Formalist orientation towards the perception of literary work and introduced the concept of 'perceptibility' or 'palpability' (*oshchutimost'*): automatisisation and de-automatisisation of perception – 'recognition' versus 'seeing', which later crystallised into the theory of

'making strange' and 'art as a device'.¹⁴

Brik's creative initiative played a significant part in the formation of Opoyaz (1916-1917) and the methodological discussions of the Moscow Linguistic Circle (1919-1920). Brik's study of poetic euphony and rhythm, and his ideas on the autonomous value of sounds in poetry were instrumental in the Formalists' endeavour 'to liberate the poetic word from the fetters of philosophical and religious tendencies, which had achieved considerable prominence in Symbolism'.¹⁵ The attention paid to the phonic form of poetic language in early Formalists' works (L Yakubinsky's 'The Sounds of Poetic Language' and 'The Accumulation of Identical Liquids in Practical and in Poetic Speech', Polivanov's 'Sound-Gestures in the Japanese Language' and Brik's 'Sound Repetitions'¹⁶) promoted the differentiation of 'poetic' and 'practical' speech according to its purpose, and assisted in undermining the prevailing theory of poetry as 'thinking in images'.

In his first published essay on 'Sound Repetitions' (1917) Brik refuted the traditional dichotomy of content and form in poetry, when the latter – the immediately perceivable euphonic means like rhyme, assonance, alliteration and sound-imitation – is regarded either as a purely external embellishment (nineteenth-century realism), or as the embodiment of poetry's evocative power (Symbolism). Brik's discovery and classification of the repetitions of consonantal groups in Russian verse was used to demonstrate the innermost ties between sound and meaning in poetry, ie the role of euphony in the creation of figures of speech, the interaction of phonic and semantic devices. Sound orchestration, Brik argued, is not an extrinsic device applied to poetic creation. Very often the poet starts from a consonant word prompted by the ear and works towards its logical justification. Rhyme and alliteration are only the most obvious euphonic devices; the whole sound structure is involved.

The convergence of poetic movement and literary scholarship took the form of close collaboration through co-operative work and personal friendships. The Petersburg flat of Osip and Lilya Brik soon became a gathering place where young Formalist researchers in literature and Futurist poets held their discussions.

Mayakovsky wrote later in his autobiography 'I Myself': 'Most Joyful Date. July, 1915. Made acquaintance of L Y and O M Brik.'¹⁷ This must have been equally true for Osip Brik – since that day his life acquired new meaning and orientation. Lilya's sister, later known as the French novelist Elsa Triolet, took the young boisterous Futurist to the Brik's. Lilya cautiously warned her not to ask him to read his poetry. But Elsa disobeyed her: Mayakovsky read 'Cloud in Trousers'.¹⁸ The Brik's were fascinated. Osip Brik immediately decided to put up the money for its publication. Thus a small publishing enterprise was born – OMB, Brik's initials. In the same year Brik published the Futurist anthology *Took: A*

40 *Futurists' Drum (Vzyl: Baraban Futuristov)*, which carried his first laudation of Futurism, 'Bread!'. Brik compared Mayakovsky's verse to daily bread long awaited by everyone who had become fed up with the symbolist 'sugary cakes'. In 1916 Brik published Mayakovsky's poem 'Backbone Flute', and later the two earliest collections of Formalist essays on the theory of poetic language *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo yazyka* (in 1916 and 1917).

Mayakovsky introduced his Futurist friends Khlebnikov, Burlyuk, Kamensky and Victor Shklovsky to the Briks. Soon they were joined by young philologists: Kushner, Yakubinsky and Polivanov. In his recollections of Mayakovsky, Vasily Kamensky noted: 'To visit the Briks became a matter of culture and of great pleasure'.¹⁹

The February Revolution (1917) was greeted with great enthusiasm by the artistic world, left and right alike. The unprecedented liberalisation spurred the political activities of all sections of the population. For the artists it meant the possibility of creating autonomous corporate organisations independent from the State. Another reason which prompted the artists to take the initiative in cultural affairs was the immediate need to take measures for the protection of art collections and historic monuments, which were under the constant threat of destruction during the period of war and revolution.

On March 8, 1917, Gorky published his appeal to the intelligentsia:

'Citizens! The old masters have departed, leaving behind them a great inheritance which now belongs to the entire people.

Citizens, protect that inheritance. . . .

Art – is the beauty which men of talent were able to create even in conditions of despotic oppression, bearing witness to beauty and the might of the human soul. . . .'²⁰

The Provisional Government formed a Committee responsible for the preservation of art treasures and put forward the idea of replacing the Imperial Palace Ministry, which controlled the imperial theatres, the Academy of Arts and the royal palaces, with a Ministry of Fine Arts. The artists saw this as an attempt by the government to take the arts under its own control. The matter was discussed at a meeting of Petrograd writers and artists held on March 12, 1917. This meeting led to the creation of the Artists' Union, which opposed the government and declared itself the sole authority responsible for all artistic activities in the country.

From the very beginning the Union split into three factions: the right (*delovoi blok*) led by F Sologub, the 'left bloc' including Mayakovsky, Brik and Punin, and the 'non-party centre'. It was the 'left bloc' members who, after the October Revolution, went to work in Lunacharsky's Commissariat for Enlightenment and became the main spokesmen for socialist culture. However, their

political awareness at that time is often overrated, and their transition from left-wing bohemian rebellion to Communist ideology was not as smooth as it is usually presented.

This left faction, united in the 'Freedom for Art' federation, was in fact most belligerent on the question of the autonomy of art. The 'Freedom for Art' group immediately elaborated the programme which they wanted to serve as the basis for the activity of the Artists' Union:

'Freedom to art: abolition of State control. Complete decentralisation of artistic life and autonomy of all institutions and societies, which should be financed by the municipal authorities. The establishment of all-Russian Congresses of Artists. The Artists' Union to be represented in legislative organs by its executive committee. Abolition of all Academies and their replacement by the Arts Universities responsible for the education of art teachers. Replacement of patronage by public support in the form of grants and advances. . . .'²¹

Since the left artists found themselves in the minority in the Union, they decided to promulgate their programme prior to the general meeting. The 'Freedom for Art' federation issued a declaration which expressed its categorical protest against 'the undemocratic attempts of certain groups to obtain control of the arts through the establishment of a Ministry of the Arts', and appealed 'to all persons active in the arts sympathetic to it to come today at two o'clock to a mass meeting of artists in the Mikhailovsky Theatre and vote for the following, who are defending the freedom of artistic life: N I Altman, K I Arabazhin, V A Denisov, I M Zdanevich, S K Isakov, M Kuzmin, V N Kulyabko-Koretskaya, V Mayakovsky, V E Meyerhold, N N Punin, S Prokofiev, V N Soloviev'. Mayakovsky's speech at the March 1917 meeting gives a clear idea of the leftists' political beliefs and inclinations at that time:

'I have come on behalf of the artists who have raised the flag of revolution – art is in danger. In the days of great upheavals art always dies down. The arm raised against the Tsarist system has come down on the palaces, and the protection of palaces was a task of those who founded the commission with Gorky. This task can be easily done, just by positioning groups of soldiers. The other task is more complex and essential. Whenever there is a surge of social unrest, they say there is no room for artists, for art, that every artist has to contribute to political work, pertaining to Russia's new model. This matter we can absolutely entrust to the Provisional Government which has proclaimed freedom and is its guarantor. All these tasks we can transfer [a gap in the transcript] . . . and to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Our cause – art – must mean in the future state the right of free determination for all creative artists. A Provisional Committee has

42 now been appointed numbering 12 persons.* It seems to me that this committee cannot be competent even as far as the protection of monuments is concerned, because it has not been elected according to democratic principles. I respect all persons who are members of this committee, I have a deep respect for Gorky, who has fought for the freedom of art, but I am against its organisational defects. If there is a ministry, then only the well-known group of the 'World of Art' will be a part of it. Benois is a follower of a definite trend in art, to me incomplete. Palaces where Somov's works are stored will be protected [a gap in the transcript]. . . . There exists a distinctive Russian art which is the expression of democratic tendencies. Benois cannot deal with art realised through a broad democracy [a gap in the transcript]. . . . For a broad scope, broad representation is essential. [Applause.] You have been given a programme of organisation of art which seems acceptable to us. There will be an organising committee which will prepare a provisional assembly dealing with current needs of art. In this way the Constituent Assembly will be prepared and when our friends come back from the front, it will decide how to administer Russian art. I am against a ministry, etc. I regard it as essential that art be concentrated in one definite place. My motto, and that of everybody is – long live the political life of Russia and long live art free from politics!'

When someone protested by asking why cab drivers, cobblers and bakers could participate in politics and artists could not, Mayakovsky replied: 'I do not withdraw from politics, only in the sphere of art there should be no politics'.²²

It is interesting to note that at this time the extreme bohemian demand for the autonomy of art was in no way dictated by the artist's rejection of the existing political power. It simply stressed the fact that the government should not meddle with the arts nor artists with politics. The meeting passed a motion expressing its support for the Provisional Government, the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies²³ and the Executive Committee of the State Duma.²⁴ It seems that the left and the right were at one on this point. This, of course, reflects the initial intoxication of the intelligentsia with the Provisional Government regime which affected even the artists politically close to Bolshevism. It took some time for a critical sense to develop, and this soon became apparent in Mayakovsky's own poetry.

One can see that at that stage the fight on the artistic front was not primarily political. It was a fight for dominance in the arts and an attempt on the part of avant-garde artists to secure the supremacy of their own artistic trends. All this partially explains Mayakovsky's and Brik's 'delay'²⁵ in joining forces with

* The reference is to the Committee appointed by the Provisional Government for the protection of art treasures.

Lunacharsky, People's Commissar of Education, after the October Revolution. It also adds a new dimension to the study of the Futurists' polemics with Proletkult in 1918-1919, and with The Association of Proletarian Writers during the 1920's.

The 'left bloc', which was formed in order to counteract the 'power-hungry' people of the 'World of Art', was torn by further disagreements. Mayakovsky soon declared that he 'did not recognise any left, except himself, Burlyuk and Larionov'.²⁶ At the meeting of the 'Freedom for Art' federation held on March 21, 1917, he proclaimed himself and his followers to be 'to the left of the left federation', called for the intensification of the ideological struggle and the creation of a special syndicate of Futurists headed by him.²⁷

Politically, Mayakovsky's support for the Soviet Government was expressed unequivocally immediately after the October Revolution.²⁸ But in the sphere of art the leftists at first behaved in solidarity with the rest of the Artists' Union, defended their autonomy and showed great resistance to Lunacharsky's attempts to create an alliance with the intelligentsia.

Lunacharsky's cultural policy was broad enough to welcome artists of all schools and traditions as long as they were willing to lend their professional assistance in cultural and educational matters. At the Union meeting held on November 12, 1917, Punin presented Lunacharsky's proposal for the creation of a joint Soviet on art affairs, consisting of artists and representatives of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The Union rejected the proposal unanimously. After this Lunacharsky tried to approach the Union with a suggestion for a more limited collaboration in the protection of art treasures.²⁹ This time Osip Brik acted as a mediator between the People's Commissar and the Artists' Union. On behalf of Lunacharsky he suggested the formation of a committee consisting of 30 people – 15 from democratic organisations and 15 from the Union – which would be responsible solely for the protection of historic monuments. This move was also rejected (with two abstentions, one is believed to have been Mayakovsky). Sologub's position that 'Lunacharsky is not the people, but a "gentleman in a jacket"', from whom it is necessary to protect art, which is the property of the whole people³⁰ met only one objection, put forward by Mayakovsky. Though agreeing with Sologub in principle, Mayakovsky maintained that in order to gain access to that property, artists must 'welcome the new power and open up relations with it'.³¹ Most of Mayakovsky's biographers mention only the last part of this speech. Others present, including Brik, stood for the immediate calling of an All-Russian meeting of artists and writers, to be the only representative authority on artistic affairs.

Although many of the left wing artists were very close to the Bolsheviks in their political outlook, once again the disagreement

44 between the artistic left and right was not defined in political terms. This was confirmed in Sologub's second speech: 'There is no difference in our attitude to Golovin³² or Lunacharsky. The basis for disagreement is our different artistic views'.³³ The shortsightedness of this statement is obvious. It did not take long for the gulf between the right and the left to widen. The final split occurred in the spring of 1918, when the left artists left the Union. And while the bulk of the Russian intelligentsia decamped to Europe or withdrew into internal emigration, the left artists became virtually the only artistic group which offered its support to the Soviet Government, and began to participate in its cultural organisations and institutions.

The Section of Fine Arts – IZO (*Otdel izobrazitel'nykh iskussty*) of Narkompros was created in Petrograd on January 29, 1918. The head of IZO and of its Petrograd section was the painter David Shterenberg. The Moscow branch was led by the Constructivist Tatlin. From the very beginning the IZO Art collegium consisted almost exclusively of avant-garde artists.³⁴ Brik and Mayakovsky joined the Art collegium of IZO in the Autumn of 1918.

But while the Futurists were keen on presenting their art as the artistic counterpart of the October Revolution – an idea prompted by their equation of avant-garde art with revolutionary politics and traditional art with reactionary politics – the Soviet authorities were not so sure. The Futurists' dominance in the Narkompros Art Section immediately put the Soviet press on the alert. On December 29, 1917, *Izvestia* published an article which cautioned the proletariat to maintain its critical judgement of artists who hurried to climb on the bandwagon of its victory:

'The Futurists, penetrating into the proletarian milieu, could bring the putrid poison of the decaying bourgeois organism into the healthy spirit of the proletariat'.³⁵

According to the author of the article, the proletariat needed an art in which 'beautiful form is the reflection of a rich content'.³⁶ The non-traditionalists' idea of art which could express the very essence of the revolutionary process was a diametrically opposite one – 'break and destroy forms in order to create new ones',³⁷ make the revolution in art:

'If we, destroying old forms of human culture, created new forms appropriate to new content, we have the right to state that we are doing great revolutionary work'.³⁸

This was the line taken by the Futurist paper *Art of the Commune*, officially the organ of IZO Narkompros, which began to appear in Petrograd in December 1918. The editors of *Art of the Commune* were Osip Brik, the painter Natan Altman, and the art critic Nikolai Punin. Other people who contributed to the paper included Mayakovsky, the artists Malevich, Chagall, and Ivan Puni,

the Formalist theorists Boris Kushner and Victor Shklovsky, and the theatre director Meyerhold. The belligerent tone of the paper and its exaggerated claims to represent the officially accepted artistic trend made Lunacharsky intervene with an article, 'A Spoonful of Antidote' (No 4, December 29, 1918), and the paper was closed after 19 issues in 1919.³⁹

It should be noted at this point that the very term Futurism was now used rather loosely, often meaning avant-garde art in general. The term was applied to a rather heterogeneous conglomeration of artistic trends, all of which were intensely hostile to a realist representation of life and repudiated traditional artistic values. From now on in this article the use of this term will therefore refer to the artists who identified themselves under this name rather than to Futurists in the strict sense of the word.

The avant-garde artists were naturally drawn to the revolution and were inspired by it, for they believed that the overthrow of the old order and the emancipation of the working masses would also mean their own liberation from the oppressive constraints of bourgeois artistic production and consumption. The artist could now transcend his social isolation and overcome his traditional alienation from the public. However, despite this unifying principle among the left artists, the direction of their formal experimentation and their political awareness varied considerably.

The revolution gave a new impetus to the Futurists' attacks on the art of the past, which could now be discarded as being superfluous to the needs of the victorious proletariat. But merely adhering to proletarian ideology could not in itself solve the Futurists' aesthetic predicament of the primacy of form over content. The notion that new words create new meanings was now rephrased, but not revoked: 'New phenomena should be rendered in new words.' 'We need a new art form', Mayakovsky declared, 'It is not enough to build a statue of a metal worker, it is essential that the statue should be different from the monument of the Printer erected by the Tsar'.⁴⁰ Thus the idea that art should put itself at the service of the revolution was closely linked to the idea of a corresponding revolutionary development in art itself, which should have a disturbing effect on the human psyche, thereby causing a radical change in man's vision of the world.

The new Futurist aesthetic asserted itself under an array of external and internal pressures. Having jostled away its right-wing opponents with relative ease, the Futurists had to stand up to a more difficult ideological adversary on the left. The main rival for the monopoly of the country's artistic life was Proletkult – the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organisation founded by A A Bogdanov in 1917. The Proletkult leaders distinguished three independent aspects of the working class movement: economic, political and cultural. While trade unions and the party could direct the economic and political struggle, the task of a cultural organisa-

46 tion was to explore the proletariat's cultural needs and to encourage grass-roots creativity. To complete its victory the proletariat – now the ascendant class – had to reappraise the bourgeois cultural heritage and create its own class culture: 'Having defeated the bourgeoisie physically, we must also defeat it spiritually'.⁴ To this end Proletkult demanded complete autonomy from Narkompros, in which class allegiance was inevitably weakened by the obligation to educate the whole of the country's population. Moreover, in a certain sense Proletkult challenged the Party's role as the sole political and ideological vanguard of the proletariat.

Proletkult saw itself as 'a laboratory of pure proletarian ideology' and believed that a truly proletarian art could only be born as a result of the proletariat's experience – its working and social conditions. To achieve this, Proletkult founded a network of art and literary studios at factories throughout the country. Admission to the studios was restricted to industrial workers, excluding even administrative personnel.

The Proletkult position was opposed by Osip Brik in the second issue of *Art of the Commune*. Brik maintained that proletarian art was not art for the proletariat or art of the proletariat but art by a proletarian artist – an artist with both talent and a proletarian consciousness. For Brik 'art for the proletariat' implied 'clarity and 'easy accessibility' and therefore was condescending and stupefying, while 'art of the proletariat', ie when one lays claim to proletarian art simply on the grounds of being a worker, could only result in a mediocre imitation of antiquated artistic conventions.

According to Brik the proletarian artist differed from his bourgeois counterpart not because he worked for a different client or came from a different social class, but because his attitude to art and the artist's place in society was different. The artist was no longer an outsider, a devotee of pure beauty, an individualist aesthete producing for a private client. In his article 'The Drainage of Art', Brik urged artists to share in the process of social reconstruction by bringing their talent and professional skill to the aid of the working masses: 'Streets, factories, workshops await the artists who could give them the models for new unknown objects'.⁴ The principle of innovation in form was reorientated towards new objectives – the practical demands of the day. This was the first pronouncement of production art and it anticipated later *Le Corbusier* theories of 'social demand' and 'art as life-building'. To prove himself a useful and active citizen, the artist had to transcend the traditional realm of art – henceforth labelled as 'individualist', 'speculative', 'hedonistic' and so on – and bring art into production, join the worker in the construction of useful material objects and contribute to the creation of a new way of life. According to Brik, this was not 'the death' of art, but its necessary 'drainage' – the only guarantee that 'art will not perish but will find its place

within the very structures of communal life'. Only socially useful work can 'give the artist the right to stand next to other working members of the Commune: cobblers, carpenters, tailors'.⁴³ Thus in fact the Futurists turned the tables on Proletkult (which expected workers to become artists) by urging artists to become workers.

The important question is whether this extreme utilitarianism should be considered merely as an accommodation to the external situation, or whether there had been something inherent in previous artistic experiments which was stimulated by the revolution. It would be ludicrous to deny the tremendous impact of the October Revolution on the intelligentsia. The 'proletarianisation' of Futurist aesthetics was partly a response to the social changes, which questioned the role of art and artists in a new society. The proletariat became the hero of the time as the only class capable of changing the face of the earth, and the intelligentsia began to feel 'inferior'. The problem was even more acute for the Futurists, who constantly had to defend their art against charges of its unintelligibility to the masses. Moreover, it was the conjunction of the social revolution with the envisaged technological 'take-off' that appealed to the Futurists' urban and technicist drive. Their allegiance to the proletariat was not exclusively political but was to some extent dictated by their fascination with machine industry and with the new dynamic man who mastered the machine.

It thus appears that the revolution acted as a catalyst for tendencies already present in the movement. The Futurist activist notion of art, not as a passive reflection of life, but as its creative disruption, was reoriented towards positive goals. This was not a compromise towards representation, but a further move towards the decanonisation and de-aestheticisation of art, which had been so characteristic of Futurism from its very beginning. The idea of bridging the gap between artistic creation and real life was not new to the Futurists. It had been expressed before the revolution in the attempts to dispense with picture frames or in Tatlin's reliefs – 'real material in real space'. 'We go hand in hand with house-painters',⁴⁴ announced Larionov as early as 1913, and indeed, 'The Target (*Mishen*)', an exhibition held by his group in Moscow the same year, included six works by members of 'The Second Workshop of Sign Painters'. The same tendency was apparent even in such eccentric 'happenings' as at the opening of the cabaret 'Pink Lantern' in October 1913, where Larionov and Goncharova put paint on their own and other people's faces. The manifesto 'Why we paint ourselves' proclaimed:

'We have linked art with life. After the long seclusion of the master, we loudly called life in, and life invaded art. It is time for art to invade life. The painting of faces is the beginning of the invasion.'⁴⁵

In poetry it manifested itself in the Futurists' attempts to fuse their

poetry with 'the street' by adopting its language and by their desire to write verses 'on the corners of walls, fences, roofs, the streets of our cities and villages, on the backs of automobiles, carriages, streetcars, and on the clothes of all citizens!'⁴⁶ (This suggests that together with their political awakening it was also their previously developed artistic techniques that enabled the Futurists to put their art at the service of the revolution in a much more effective and spontaneous way than could have been done by artists of other schools. Futurist agit-prop verses, poster designs and advertising jingles were not a concession to dictates from outside, but a conscious drive to apply their skill to the most urgent social tasks, which required a unique ability to communicate in a laconic, graphic, eye-catching form.)

In the sphere of the visual arts the earlier Futurist preoccupation with the material of their art as an expressive entity in its own right passed its 'trans-sense' stage and looked for some functional implementation. The starting point of Constructivism, which emphasised both the visual and the tactile qualities of the chosen artistic medium, and introduced real space as a pictorial element, made a logical transition from abstract planimetric composition to abstract spatial construction and eventually to the application of its artistic principles in the design of useful material objects. An important precondition for this development was also the Futurist concept of 'art as labour' – a conscious effort with a calculated effect – as opposed to 'inspiration', 'magic' and similar notions, which were now discarded as part and parcel of bourgeois cultural mystification. The very terms 'creation', 'talent', 'work of art' were gradually replaced in the Futurist vocabulary by concepts like 'skill', 'craftsmanship', 'construction of materials', and 'manufacture of material objects'. Similar 'functionalist' tendencies were manifested outside Russia (though often through the direct or indirect influence of Russian artists), notably at the Weimar Bauhaus. This reinforces the idea that the development of functionalism was not dependent on a particular political milieu, that it had an ideological imperative engendered by a particular kind of alienation experienced by modern man: 'The loss of creative unity which has resulted from technological development. . . . The loss of contact between the individual and the community.'⁴⁷

The first objection to the subordination of art to practical purposes within the Futurist camp was voiced in *Art of the Commune* by the artist Ivan Puni (Jean Pougny).^{*} Puni argued that the construction of a functional object is entirely determined by its intended purpose. The artist has nothing to do in industry, his role can only be subsidiary. Far from the artist's influencing material

* The similarity of the names Puni and Punin led to a misprint in Richard Sherwood's introduction to *Documents from Lef (Screen, v 12, no 4, Winter 1971/72)* where Puni's position was inadvertently ascribed to Punin.

production, the reverse takes place – the works of left artists reflect their own enthrallment by the visual and structural aspects of modern material culture, which was created spontaneously, without the artist's participation. Hence 'the unity of the principle of construction, utility, will create beauty, and beauty will create us artists'.⁴⁸

A more radical opposition to the reduction of art to mere engineering was soon to come from other avant-garde artists like Kandinsky and Malevich, who, each in his own way, defended the autonomy of art as a spiritual activity with a validity of its own. The increasing bias towards functionalism in the newly established Soviet art schools Vkhutemas (Higher Studios of Art and Design, 1920-1925) and Inkhuk (Institute of Artistic Culture, 1920-1924) led to a split between avant-garde artists in 1921, when Kandinsky and 'pure' constructivists Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner left Inkhuk. After the departure of Kandinsky⁴⁹ the post of chairman of Inkhuk was held successively by Rodchenko, Brik and Arvatov, who championed Constructivism and production art.

Inkhuk,⁵⁰ which was set up by IZO Narkompros as a research institute for the theoretical study of the visual arts, immediately became a centre of fierce artistic and ideological debate. The artists and theorists who formed the Constructivist group, Rodchenko, Stepanova, the Stenberg brothers, Popova, Gan, Brik, and Kushner, took up the argument of *Art of the Commune*. Brik spoke on 'What should the artist do in the meantime?', Tarabukin gave a paper entitled 'The last easel picture has been painted'. Their polemics were directed against all forms of 'pure' or easel painting. Their opponents, led by Babichev,⁵¹ who believed that production art should develop alongside the traditional easel and monumental forms, found themselves in a conspicuous minority at the Institute.

In this debate on the future development of the visual arts Brik took the most extreme position. His total condemnation of easel painting was based on two assumptions: one, that easel art was timeless and non-utilitarian and served no other purpose than that of 'delighting the eye', while contemporary cultural work should be entirely purpose-orientated; two, that the methods and devices of easel art are of no use to an artist-engineer, whose task of designing articles suitable for mass production requires a special professional training, a *sui generis* technique, which is neither derived from nor, in any sense, 'inferior' to the technique of easel painting.⁵² To work out the most rational principles of production design the artist must master all the skills that go into the making of the final product. Already in the days of *Art of the Commune* an idea was put forward for the creation of a new type of art school, where workers from different branches of industry could study artistic technique related to their professional skills: carpenters would work with wood, metal workers with metal, and

This implies that for Brik (as later for other theorists of *Lef*) production art was not confined to a social 'redemption' of the artist, but had a more radical aim of overcoming the producer's alienation from his product and, finally, of abolishing the social division between mental and manual labour:

'We want every worker who shapes and colours an object to understand why this object should have this very shape and colour. We want the worker no longer to be a mechanical executor of some unknown project. The worker must become a conscious, active participant of the creative process of making an object.'⁵⁴

Though some of the Constructivists did go to work in factories (Tatlin worked in the Lessner metallurgical factory near Petrograd, Popova and Stepanova designed fabrics in the Tsindel textile factory near Moscow), most of the Vkhutemas projects remained on paper. This was partly due to economic exigencies, but also to the obduracy of established tastes, which rejected these innovations.

The drive towards the fusion of art with life, the transformation of the aesthetic function into a powerful weapon for the reconstruction of society, formed the aesthetic programme of *Lef* (1923-1925) and *Novy Lef* (1927-1928), which once again united the artistic avant-garde on a common platform.

Despite the fact that his written contributions were few, Brik appears to have been the moving force behind the activities of *Lef*. He was an efficient organiser, an ideologue and a spokesman of the movement. This can be established from his theoretical articles and statements, which summarise the collective views of *Lef* and suggest the direction of further research. Brik's most important role was as a link-man between Futurism and the formal school of literary criticism.

The aesthetic argument of *Lef* was a further attempt to reformulate avant-garde views and Formalist literary theory in the light of Communist ideology. Brik was amongst the first Formalists to question the earlier notion of the autonomy of artistic evolution:⁵⁵

'Art is first and foremost a social phenomenon. Changes in the psychology of the artist and the public, and changes of artistic forms are but a reflection of deeper changes which take place in the social nature of art.'⁵⁶

The Formalists, who initially saw literary evolution as a ceaseless alteration in the hierarchy of literary genres, now acknowledged a constant shift in the boundaries that delimit art from extra-aesthetic phenomena. This theoretical premise was both a repercussion of and a justification of new trends in Futurism, agit and production art, and later, literature of fact.

Yet despite his emphasis on art's social role, Brik's aesthetic

views are still subsumed within the basic tenets of Formalism. As has already been pointed out, production art was an offshoot of non-objective art. It conformed to the Formalist idea that art was not a mode of cognition, and on this assumption it was presented as a socialist alternative to representational forms. In production art the artist's craft in transforming raw material into 'an object' is still in operation (though in a somewhat modified way), and from this point of view it could be argued that there was no qualitative difference between writing lyrical verses and designing utilitarian articles:⁵⁷

'There is no 'pure' and 'impure' art . . . the only difference between a picture and a signboard is that they are different things, not that they are products of two different kinds of activity, of which one is 'pure' and the other is 'impure'.

This was Brik's rebuttal to the accusation by the Imagist poet Shershenevich that the Futurists were merely 'hack-workers':

'If the poet writes agit and advertising jingles investing the maximum of his creative ingenuity, then it is by no means hack-work, but real art.'⁵⁸

The view that verses are *made* by a poet using a set of previously elaborated and accumulated poetic devices was set out by Mayakovsky in his account of his poetic work:

'Poetry is a manufacture. A very difficult, very complex kind, but a manufacture. . . . You mustn't make the manufacturing, the so-called technical process, an end in itself. But it is this process of manufacture that makes the poetic work fit for use.'⁵⁹

Thus art was still 'a device',⁶⁰ what had changed from the original Formalist interpretation was the application of the device. The emphasis was shifted from the aesthetic function of the device to its use in the service of a 'social demand'. All the manifestations of the device, including the extreme case of 'the device laid bare' in trans-sense poetry, were now considered in the light of their potential social utility: '*not an aesthetic end in itself, but a laboratory for the best possible expression of the facts of the present day*'.⁶¹

By positing 'social demand' as the mandatory determinant Brik endeavoured, in his article 'The So-called "Formal Method"',⁶² to vindicate the device as the unique 'hero', the sole matter of investigation of scientific poetics.⁶³ The article was written in reply to numerous critics of Opoyaz, who ranged from the literary historian Pyotr Kogan, who prided himself on never having had 'time for the study of literary form',⁶⁴ to such a connoisseur of literature as the Centrifuge poet and mathematician Sergei Bobrov.⁶⁵

Brik's article preceded Trotsky's charge⁶⁶ that Formalists reversed the order of consciousness and being. Therefore Brik does not

attempt to refute this charge, arguing entirely within the confines of the Formalist method. He retains the 'objectivist' aspect of Formalism by leaving the personality of the artist out of consideration: 'The social role of a poet cannot be understood from an analysis of his personal qualities and habits.' The poet's choice of subject is determined by his social milieu and therefore is of interest only to his biographer. The sole matter of concern for a literary scholar is 'why, in the processing of themes, poets use certain devices and not others; what causes the appearance of a new device; how an old one dies'. Having set out the main methodological principles of Opoyaz, Brik proclaims it 'the best educator for young proletarian writers', who are 'still afflicted with a thirst for "self-revelation"':

'Opoyaz will show them that everything great has been created in answer to questions of the day, that what becomes "eternal" today, was once a topic of the time, and that the great poet does not reveal himself, but simply fulfils a social demand. . . .

'Opoyaz will come to the aid of proletarian creative work not with hazy little chats about the "proletarian spirit" and "Communist consciousness", but with exact technical knowledge of the devices of contemporary poetic work.'

Thus the two notions regarded by Brik as essential for the creation of a class-conscious, revolutionary art – the awareness of a social demand and expert knowledge of artistic technique – not only retain their autonomy vis-à-vis one another, but also remain extrinsic to the artist's personality and social experience – 'the poet is a craftsman in his trade. That is all'.⁶⁷

The theory of 'social demand' immediately came under attack, for it was equally unacceptable to critics like Voronsky and Polonsky, who supported the traditionalist literature of the 'fellow-travellers', and to the stalwarts of the *On Guard*⁶⁸ group. In spite of their differences both camps subscribed to the idea that art was an unconscious reflection of the artist's world-view. They accused Brik of divorcing the artist from his class, of presenting the relationship between the artist and his class as a transactional arrangement between a client placing an order and a person filling the order. But 'social demand' found some supporters in the ranks of Marxist critics like Pavel Kogan, who went so far as to suggest that Marxist literary criticism should concentrate on 'investigating the paths leading from the class-client to the artist-craftsman'.⁶⁹ However, the weight Brik gave to the principle of social demand antagonised some of his fellow Formalists, as well as the politically uncommitted writers associated with *Lef* like Boris Pasternak, who deplored that *Lef* theorists 'had all but declared that the cleaning of brass door-handles was art'.⁷⁰

Brik's aesthetic argument was an attempt to correlate his awareness of artistic form with his concern for the social role of art.

Sometimes one won over the other. Yet despite the apparent rigidity and rigorousness of his views, he was a searcher, not a dogmatist. His excesses, illusions, and mistakes, are still valuable.

The magazines *Lef* and *Novy Lef* were an artists' 'guild', which provided scope for divergent views and free discussion among its members. *Lef's* aesthetic platform was moulded in this atmosphere of collective work and ceaseless debate, and then presented in all its divergency in the pages of the magazine. It was this principle of the creative 'laboratory' that Brik defended against Chuzhak's view that *Lef* should become a rigid, unified organisation:

'We'll always have many disagreements, but we should not suppress them, because without disagreements *Lef's* life would immediately wither.'⁷¹

Even when all the literary groups were disbanded and the Writers' Union formed, Brik continued to argue in favour of what he defined as 'creative union' against the pejorative 'coterie'. Writers who share common aesthetic views need to nourish one another – the absence of such groupings will only result in alienation and individualism, and will create the illusion 'that all the problems of creative work have already been solved or are being solved by some kind of authoritative commissions'.⁷²

Roman Jakobson points out in his recollections that Brik's actual contribution to the Formalist study of literature was more significant than the small number of his publications might suggest. ('Sound Repetitions', 1916, and 'Rhythm and Syntaxis', *Novy Lef*, 1927, no 3 – 6.) Many of his works to which Jakobson refers with high praise, remained unfinished. Still more important was his unstinting contribution to the collective work of Opoyaz:

'He liked to cope with an intricate problem, then to recount his results, and felt quite happy if his listeners were ready to develop and utilise them, while he himself could go over to a new, unexplored domain.'⁷³

The influence of his far reaching criticism was also acknowledged in the works of former colleagues like Zhirmunsky and Eikhenbaum. The only thing, Jakobson adds, which prevented Brik from becoming a widely known professional scholar was his total lack of personal ambition.

There must have been yet another reason – Brik's exclusive commitment to social demand rather than academic studies. From the early days of the Revolution Brik directed all his energy and imagination to those areas of 'cultural life' which he considered most important for the revolution: organisation of museums and art schools during the years of IZO Narkompros, lectures and debates on art and revolution, posters and propaganda material for 'TASS Windows'⁷⁴ during the Second World War.

When Brik was invited in the twenties to enliven the work of the agit-theatre 'Blue Blouse', which was to perform political sketches in places like pubs, he responded to this task with all the fervour and inventiveness of a true Futurist.

A friend in Moscow told me how once, in the late thirties, when all the turbulence and ardent polemics of *Lef* were relegated to the past, he came across a newspaper item criticising the Moscow laundry service. The biting wit and precision of its author was unmistakable – the item was signed Osip Brik. He was still a protagonist of 'literature of fact'.

Brik never repudiated his views and, unlike many of his former colleagues, he never recanted his 'errors'. The two articles which appear in this issue – 'Imo-Art of the Young' (1940) and 'Mayakovsky and the Literary Movements, 1917-1930' (1936) – despite their moderate tone, are rather an attempt to salvage the past and record it for future generations than a critical reappraisal. They appeared in the general wave of literature on Mayakovsky which followed Stalin's pronouncement in the mid-thirties: 'Mayakovsky is the best, the most gifted poet of our Soviet epoch'. Along with the heartfelt recollections of people like Eikhenbaum and Kamensky, and Aseev's poem 'Mayakovsky begins', there appeared articles and treatises determined to prove that Mayakovsky had never been a 'Futurist', to divorce 'the best and most gifted' from his 'accidental' companions. It is in this context that Brik's articles should be read.

Of the other works which appear in this issue, the unrealised script 'Thieves' and recollections of Khlebnikov, have never been published in Russian. 'From the Theory and Practice of a Script Writer' was published in a collection of articles *How We Work on Film Scenarios* in 1936.

Notes

1. Victor Shklovsky, *Zhili-byli*, Moscow, 1964, p 372.
2. The Cheka or Vecheka – the initials of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution, Sabotage and Speculation set up in December, 1917.
3. *Izobrazitelnoe Iskustvo*. IZO Narkompros, Petersburg, no. 1, 1919, p 86.
4. Quoted by Shklovsky, *op cit*, p 81.
5. A Kruchenykh, 'Novye puti slova', *Troe*, Moscow, 1914.
6. Shklovsky, *op cit*, p 223.
7. See Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, London, 1971, Chapters 4-6.
8. Shklovsky, *op cit*, p 230.
9. The reciprocal tendencies can be observed in painting and book design of the time, which tried to give graphic equivalents to poetic images. Many of the avant-garde artists gravitated to literature and wrote poetry. See: N Khardzhiev 'Mayakovsky i zhivopis', *Mayakovsky. Materialy i issledovaniya*, Moscow, 1940.
10. A Kruchenykh, V Khlebnikov, *Word as Such*, Moscow, 1913, p 13.
11. The name is frequently used to designate the whole movement in

contra-distinction to Ego-Futurism, the Petersburg faction led by Igor Severyanin and Vadim Shershenevich. See Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism*, London, 1969.

12. A Kruchenykh, *Word as Such*, *op cit*.
 13. Symbolist aesthetics valued the poetic word not for what it was, but for what it suggested
 14. Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism. History – Doctrine*, 3rd ed. The Hague – Paris, 1969.
 15. Boris Eikhenbaum, *Literatura*, Leningrad, 1927, p 120; quoted by Victor Erlich, *op cit*, p 71.
 16. *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo yazyka*, I, 1916 and II, 1917, Petersburg.
 17. *Mayakovsky and his Poetry*, compiled by Herbert Marshall, London, 1942, p 26.
 18. Lilya Brik recalled this episode later: ‘His reading was fascinating. It was what we had been waiting for. We had not been able to read anything for some time. All poetry seemed worthless – poets were writing not in the right way and not about the right things, and here suddenly was both.’ ‘Iz vospominany’, *Al'manakh s Mayakovskim*, Moscow, 1934.
 - 19a. Vasily Kamensky, *Yunost' Mayakovskogo*, Tiflis, 1931, p 67.
 - b. It is worth noting that the stimulating atmosphere of ‘the evenings at Brik’s flat’, which in later years was turned into the editorial office of *Lef*, owed a great deal to the attractive personality of the hostess. Much of what was going on, the specialised theoretical discussions or the painstaking technical analysis of the verse, never concerned her. But she passionately loved poetry, knew all of Mayakovsky’s by heart, and was a very keen and appreciative listener. She had a peculiar charm and talents of her own: inimitable taste in arranging her home and offering unobtrusive hospitality, which made one feel at ease and disposed to talk. She related to the outside world through the men who surrounded her. But she has always been a devoted and faithful friend to them, and deserves to be mentioned with greater respect and fairness than is frequently done by literary historians. Mayakovsky’s love for Lilya Brik became part of his literary biography. The fact that Lilya and Osip Brik never separated, and the unbiased genuine friendship that united the two men is hardly a reason for dubbing their relationship a ‘ménage à trois’ This is how Lilya herself described their union:

‘When I told my husband that Mayakovsky and I had fallen in love, the three of us decided never to part. Mayakovsky and Brik had already been close friends, united by their ideological beliefs and common literary work. And so it happened that we lived all our life together, close in spirit, and most of the time sharing the same flat.’
- Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, v 65, *Novoe o Mayakovskom*, Moscow, 1958, p 101.
20. *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, v 65, *Novoe o Mayakovskom*, Moscow, 1958, p 543, quoted by Wiktor Woroszyński, *The Life of Mayakovsky*, London, 1972, p 175.
 21. E H Dinerstein, ‘Mayakovsky v fevrale-oktyabre 1917’, *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, *op cit*, p 567 n.
 22. *Ibid*, p 546-547, quoted by Woroszyński, *op cit*, p 175, 176, 177.
 23. The February Revolution of 1917 in Russia was followed by the period of the so-called ‘dual power’, when the authority was divided between the Provisional Government, the legal successor of the Tsarist Government, and the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’

Deputies, created by the spontaneous action of Petrograd workers and dominated at that time by the Mensheviks.

24. Russian Parliament.
25. Punin's report quoted by Dinerstein, *op cit*, p 564. See also Brik's articles in this issue.
26. *Ibid*, p 548.
27. Dinerstein, *op cit*, p 548.
28. 'To accept or not to accept? For me (as for the other Moscow Futurists) this question never arose. It is my revolution. Went to Smolny. Worked. Did everything that came my way.' 'I Myself', *Mayakovsky and his Poetry*, *op cit*, p 27. See also the testimonials of B F Malkin and M Y Levidov, quoted by Dinerstein, *op cit*, p 563, 569.
29. Lunacharsky's letter is quoted by Woroszylski, *op cit*, p 187.
30. Quoted by Dinerstein, *op cit*, p 566. (See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1970, Chapter 6, 'The Arts')
31. *Ibid*, p 566.
32. Commissar for the former Imperial Palace Ministry under the Provisional Government.
33. Quoted by Dinerstein, *op cit*, p 566.
34. Initially the Petersburg collegium consisted of the following artists and art critics: Punin, Altman, Matveev, Karev, Vaulin, Chekhonin and Yatmanov. Later they were joined by the architects: Il'in, Dubenetsky, Rudnev, Stalberg, Shchuko, artists Baranov-Rossine, Shkolnik.
35. Quoted by Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1970, p 123.
36. *Ibid*, p 123.
37. From Petrograd IZO statement, *Ibid*, p 123.
38. From the Shterenberg article, 'To the critics from Proletkult', *Art of the Commune*, no 10, 1919, *Ibid*, p 123.
39. See chapter 'The Art of the Commune' in Woroszylski, *op cit*, p 242.
40. *Art of the Commune*, no 4, December 29, 1918.
41. Lebedev-Polyansky, 'Revolution and the Cultural Tasks of Proletkult', *Proletarskaya kul'tura*, no 2, July 1918.
42. *Art of the Commune*, no 1, December 7, 1918.
43. Osip Brik, 'The Artist and the Commune', *Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo*, no. 1, 1919.
44. *Osliny Khvost i Mishen'*, Moscow, 1919, quoted by Camilla Gray, *op cit*, p 137.
45. Larionov and Zdanevich, quoted by Khardzhiev, 'Mayakovsky i zhivopis'', *op cit*, p 376.
46. *The Futurist Paper*, March 15, 1918, quoted by Woroszylski, *op cit*, p 194.
47. Walter Gropius, *Idee und Aufbau des staatlichen Bauhauses*, Weimar and Munich, 1923.
48. 'Creation of Life', *Art of the Commune*, no 5, January 5, 1919.
49. See Camilla Gray, *op cit*, pp 234-235.
50. See 'Institut khudozhestvennoi kul'tury' in *Russkoe iskusstvo*, 1923, no 2-3, pp 85-88; I Matsa, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo za pyatnadsat' let*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1933; L Zhadova, 'O teorii sovetskogo dizaina dvadtsatkykh godov' in *Voprosy tekhnicheskoi estetiki*, vol 1, Moscow, 1968.
51. See D Sarabryanov, *Aleksei Vasil'evich Babichev, Khudozhnik Teoretik Pedagog*, Moscow, 1974.
52. 'From Picture to Calico-print', *Lef*, no 2 (6), 1924, English trans-

- lation, *Screen*, v 12 n 4, Winter 1971/2, p 48 (now out of print).
53. *Art of the Commune*, no 4, December 29, 1918.
 54. O Brik, 'On the agenda', *Iskusstvo v proizvodstve*, Moscow, 1921.
 55. '... a work of art is perceived against a background of, and by means of association with, other works of art. The form of the work of art is determined by the relation to other forms existing before it. . . . A new form appears not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form, which has already lost its artistic value. . . .' Victor Shklovsky, 'The connection between devices of *syuzhet* construction and general stylistic devices' (1919), in *20th Century Studies*, December 7/8, 1972, the University of Kent, Canterbury, p 53.
 56. 'V chem krizis?', *Ezhenedel'nik tsentral'nogo doma rabotnikov iskusstv*, 1922, no 1.
 57. Shunning psychological and sociological considerations, the Formalists were apt to regard literary production as a special type of technical expertise. This is reflected in the very titles of their work, eg Eikhenbaum's 'How Gogol's "Overcoat" is made', Shklovsky's 'How Don Quixote is made'. 'The literary work of art is always something made, shaped, invented – not only artful, but artificial in the good sense of the word'. Eikhenbaum, 'Kak sdelana "Shinel" Gogolya', *Poetica*, Petrograd, 1919, p 161, quoted by Victor Erlich, *op cit*, p 190.
 58. 'Aesthetic Criminality', *Ermitez*, 1922, no 2.
 59. *How are Verses Made*, English translation by G M Hyde, London, 1970, pp 56, 57.
 60. The notion of 'making strange' and 'art as a device', introduced by Shklovsky in 1919, became key terms of the Formalist study of literature: 'What is called art exists in order to restore man's sensation of life, to make him perceive things, to make a stone stony. The aim of art is to impart the sensation of things as seen and not merely recognised; the device which art uses is the device of "making things strange" and of complicating the form, thereby increasing the difficulty and length of perception, so that the perceiving process becomes an end in itself and has to be prolonged. Art is a means of experiencing the making of a thing: what is made in art is unimportant'. 'Art as a Device', *Poetica*, *op cit*, p 105. English translation in *Russian Formalist Criticism, Four Essays*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1965.
 61. Mayakovsky and Brik, 'Our literary work', *Lef*, no 1, p 41, English translation *Screen* v 12 n 4, Winter 1971/2. (Now out of print.)
 62. *Lef*, no 1, 1923, English translation *Screen*, v 12 n 4, Winter 1971/2.
 63. 'The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness (*literaturnost'*), ie that which makes of a given work a work of literature. . . . If literary history wants to become a science, it must recognise the artistic device as its only concern.' Roman Jakobson, *Noveishaya russkaya poeziya*, Prague, 1921, p 11, quoted by Victor Erlich, *op cit*, pp 172, 77.
 64. Quoted by Victor Erlich, *op cit*, p 105.
 65. P S Kogan, *Pechat' i revolyutsiya*, 1922, no 2; *Izvestiya VTSIK*, 1922, no 166; Sergei Bobrov, *Krasnaya nov'*, 1922, no 1, quoted by Eikhenbaum, 'Vokrug voprosa o "formalistakh"', *Pechat' i revolyutsiya*, 1924, no 5.
 66. L Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, Moscow, 1923, English translation, The University of Michigan Press, 1968.
 67. 'The So-called Formal Method', *op cit*.
 68. The literary magazine of VAPP (All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers), see Glossary.

69. *Pechat' i Revolutsiya*, 1929, no 1, p 37.
70. In a letter to Osip Mandel'shtam, January 31, 1925, *Voprosy Literaturny*, 1972, no 9, p 161.
71. *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, 1925, no 1, p 94.
72. 'In favour of creative unions', *Literaturny kritik*, 1934, no 5, p 158.
73. Roman Jakobson, Postscript to *Two Essays on Poetic Language* by O M Brik, *Michigan Slavic Materials*, no 5, Ann Arbor, p 78.
74. Soviet Press Agency.