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# Avant-Garde Art

EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPEAN MODERNISM

## in Everyday Life

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# John Heartfield

WALLPAPERING THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF LEFTIST GERMANY

ANDRÉS MARIO ZERVIGÓN



In Germany's turbulent Weimar Republic, political orientation defined the daily life of average communists and their fellow travelers. Along each step of this quotidian but "revolutionary" existence, the imagery of John Heartfield offered direction. The radical-left citizen, for instance, might rise from bed and begin his or her morning by perusing the ultra-partisan *Die rote Fahne* (The Red Banner); at one time, Heartfield's photomontages regularly appeared in this daily newspaper of the German Communist Party (KPD).<sup>1</sup> Opening the folded paper to its full length on May 13, 1928, waking communists would have been confronted by the artist's unequivocal appeal to vote the party's electoral list. Later in the day, on the way to a KPD-affiliated food cooperative, these citizens would see the identical composition — *5 Finger hat die Hand* (The Hand Has Five Fingers) (plate 13) — catapulting from posters plastered throughout urban areas.

At an afternoon rally for the Red Front Fighters' League, the KPD's paramilitary organization, Heartfield's photo-based emblem of a clenched fist would be flourished. A didactic communist play with a stage set he had created might run at a local theater that evening.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, no matter what time of day, members of Germany's leftist circles during the 1920s and early 1930s would have found John Heartfield's imagery inescapable. Even *Die Arena*, the unofficial sports and leisure magazine of the KPD, sported jumping and sprinting photomontage covers by Heartfield.<sup>3</sup> After January 1930, the weekly photo-filled *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (or *AIZ*, Workers' Illustrated Magazine) featured some of his most compelling montages, including *Alle Fäuste in einer geballt* (All Fists Clenched into One) (1934, plate 14). Nearly a hundred novels specifically published for a leftist readership with free time boasted covers that Heartfield composed from appropriated or commissioned photographs, such as the one he designed for a 1923 German edition of Upton Sinclair's grim 1906 saga, *The Jungle* (plate 15).<sup>4</sup> Even children of radical families could enrich their day with political books penned for young readers and bearing covers or interior illustrations created by this same German avant-garde artist. In fact, through the second half of the Weimar Republic and into the 1930s,



John Heartfield

13

John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), *The Hand Has Five Fingers* [*5 Finger hat die Hand*], 1928; gravure, 98.4 × 71.3 cm.

14

John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), four issues of *Workers' Illustrated Magazine* [AIZ, *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*]:

**A.** *All Fists Clenched into One* [*Alle Fäuste in einer geballt*], October 4, 1934;

**B.** *The Meaning of the Hitler Salute*. Motto: *Millions Stand behind Me!* [*Der Sinn des Hitlergrusses*. Motto: *Millionen stehen hinter mir!*], October 16, 1932;

**C.** *AIZ Wishes You Happy Travels into the New Year* [*Glückliche Reise ins neue Jahr wünscht die AIZ*], January 1, 1933;

**D.** *The Meaning of Geneva: Where Capital Lives, Peace Cannot Survive* [*Der Sinn von Genf. Wo das Kapital lebt, kann der Frieden nicht leben*], November 27, 1932; gravures, 38.1 × 28 cm.

15

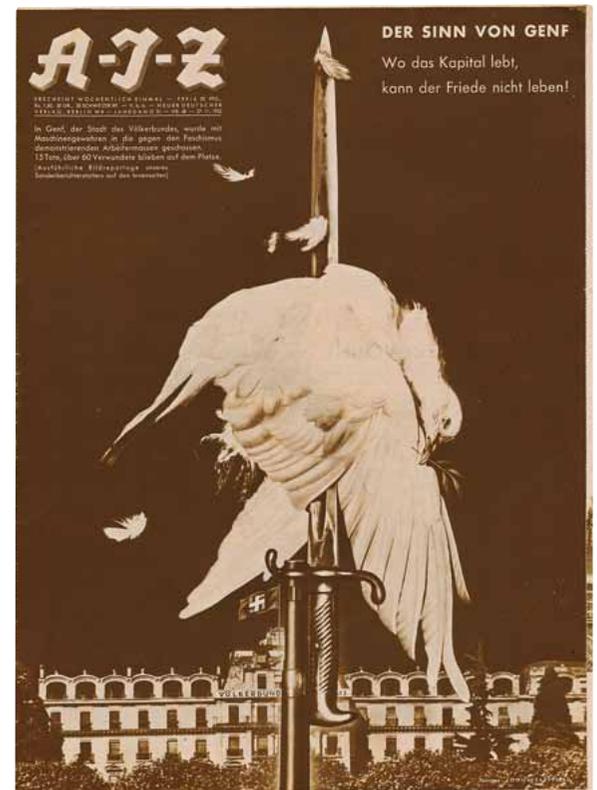
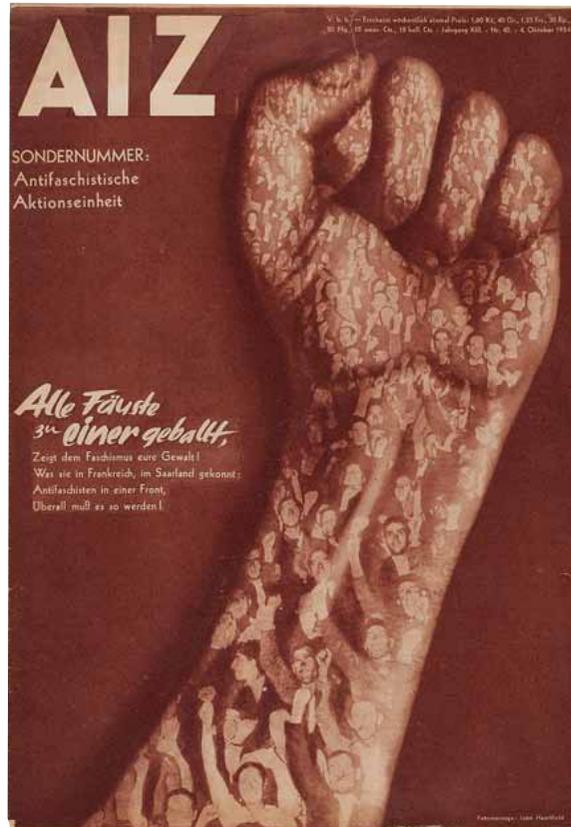
John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), covers for four novels by Upton Sinclair:

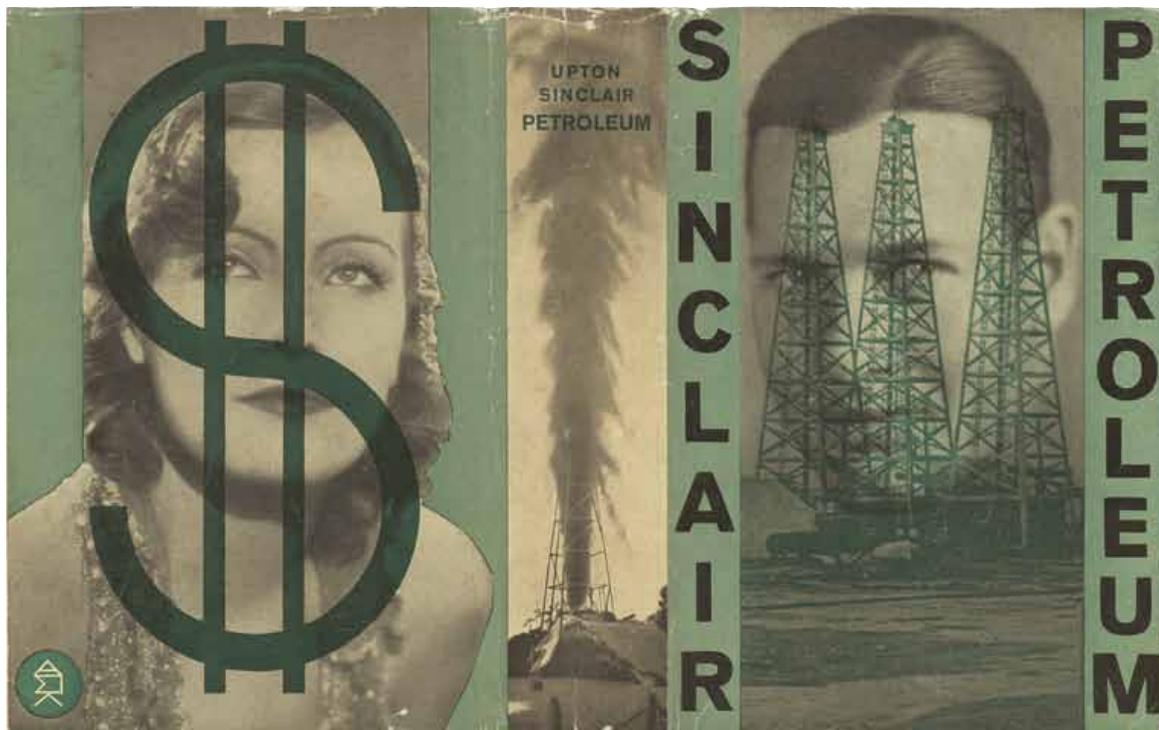
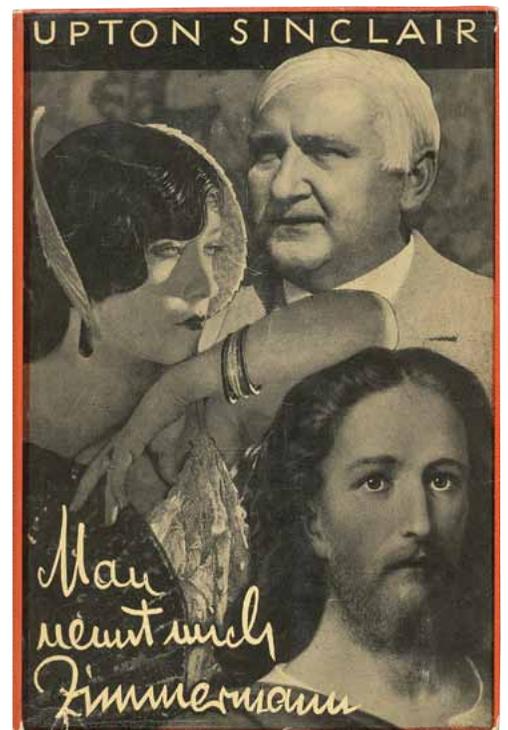
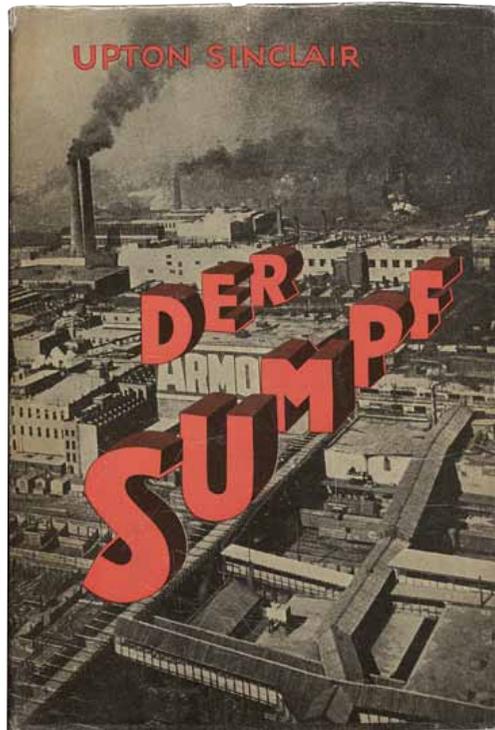
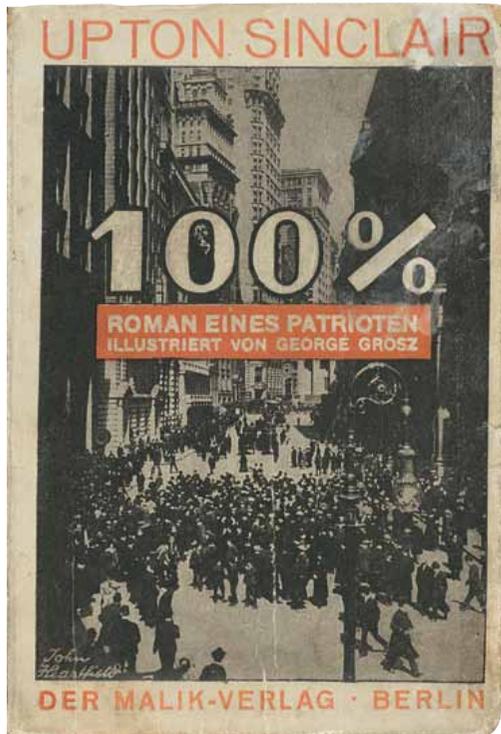
**A.** *100%: The Story of a Patriot* [*Hundert Prozent: Roman eines Patrioten*], 1921;

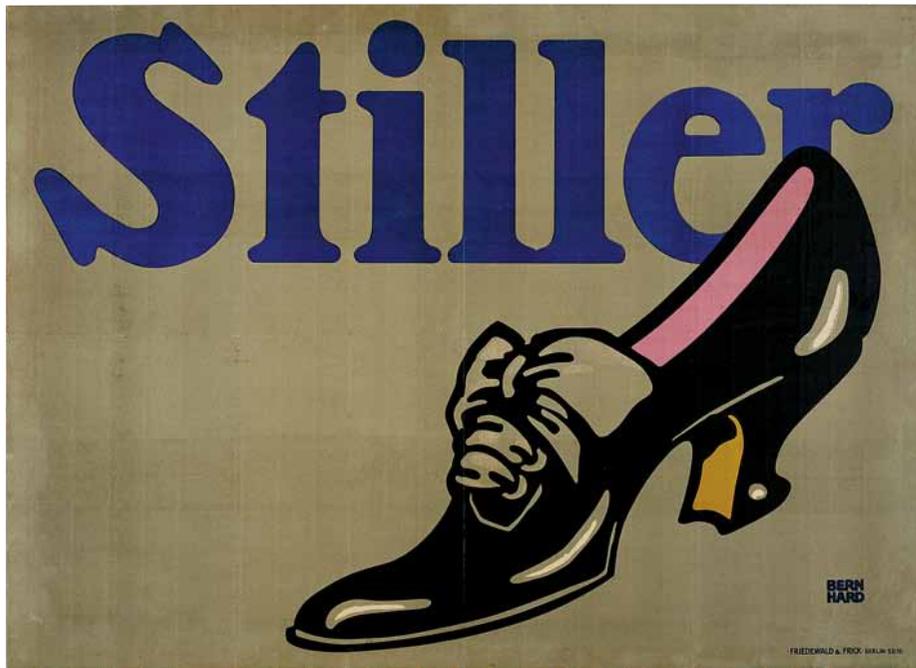
**B.** *The Jungle* [*Der Sumpf*], 1928;

**C.** *They Call Me Carpenter* [*Man nennt mich Zimmermann*], 1922;

**D.** *Oil!* [*Petroleum*], 1927; lithographs and letterpress, 18.9 × 13 cm, except *Hundert Prozent*, which is 18 × 12.9 cm.







1.1

Lucian Bernhard  
(American, born Germany,  
1883–1972), *Stiller*, 1908;  
lithograph, 69 × 95.2 cm.  
The Museum of Modern  
Art, New York.

Heartfield's pictures and those of his many followers wallpapered this alternative society to such an extent that he became the pictorial designer of Germany's everyday socialist life.<sup>5</sup>

How did Heartfield achieve this success? How could an artist who trained in corporate advertising and first won fame in Berlin Dada—an art movement pilloried by the far left as “decadent”—pictorially conquer the ordinary spaces of that political class? Factors such as his extraordinary artistic talent and his deeply felt commitment to communism clearly played a role. But it was chiefly his pioneering use of photography that won him the approval of party leaders and a mass audience alike. Adapting the medium from both his advertising training and his experiments in Dada, Heartfield fashioned a photographic style that was widely accessible and intensely moving for those committed to leftist causes. Curiously, however, his success at this adaptation depended not on his faith in the medium's representational accuracy but on his anxiety-fueled determination to manipulate photographs until they revealed the jarring truths that they normally obscured. This persistent ambivalence enabled

Heartfield to accommodate difficult and sometimes unpopular innovations in avant-garde photography to the quotidian world of Germany's radical left.

Born in Berlin in 1891, his father a socialist playwright and his mother a radicalized textile worker, Helmut Herzfeld was trained early in the photographically based advertising techniques that many fine artists would only discover years later. In 1908 he entered the *Königliche Akademie der Kunstgewerbe* (Royal Bavarian Academy of Applied Art) in Munich to study the relatively new field of graphic art. Upon completing the program four years later, he accepted a job as a packaging designer in Mannheim but soon moved to Berlin to continue his studies with Ernst Neumann, one of Germany's most renowned professors of advertising design. Under his mentor's guidance, the young Helmut learned to produce what the increasingly professional world of German advertising called the *Blickfang*. Literally translated, the word means eye-catcher and describes an image, packaging, or object that attracts the attention of potential customers by means of an optical surprise. Its key features are simplicity, often achieved by minimizing visual distractions and the pairing of two often-outsized figures.<sup>6</sup>

Around the time Heartfield began his studies, the most common form of the *Blickfang* was a poster called the *Sachplakat*. Meaning “object poster” and suggesting *Sachlichkeit*, or objectivity, these compositions generally highlighted a company's trademark or commodity but without the biomorphic flourishes of *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau's emanation in Germany and Austria), which had been popular at the turn of the century. They also avoided allusions to complex allegories and scenarios. The Berlin poster artist Lucian Bernhard is credited with introducing this distinctive advertising vehicle by limiting his images to an essential text and product image. A classic example of his style is *Stiller* (1908, fig. 1.1), in which a schematically rendered shoe surprisingly obscures a portion of its manufacturer's oversized trademark name; word and

image float tantalizingly over a field of gold.<sup>7</sup> “These two hieroglyphs suffice entirely,” Bernhard told the critic Adolf Behne in 1919, suggesting that a legible and alluring pictographic vocabulary lay at his disposal.

The poster should stimulate the eye through a perplexing appearance in its entirety, and already at the moment in question the passerby should be able to extract from the poster: . . . a boot, or chocolate, or wicker furniture . . .! [And] the passer-by, without needing to detain himself any longer, one — two — three — should also have already read the name of the firm: Schultze, Müller, Lehmann.<sup>8</sup>

Under Neumann’s tutelage, Heartfield learned to master this technique. His 1928 KPD poster *The Hand Has Five Fingers* vividly illustrates how this advertiser of Communism grasped the *Blickfang* approach. In it, the photograph of a splayed hand—chosen from scores of prints Heartfield had commissioned of factory workers’ hands—thrusts forward from a blank white background. Below the hand, a bold red 5 appears twice—first to signify the number of fingers and, second, to denote the KPD’s list of candidates, through whom the voter can—as the poster declares—“seize” the bourgeois “enemy.” According to Heartfield’s wife, Gertrud, the poster had such an impact throughout Germany that “comrades and many other people in [conservative] Bavaria” began greeting one another with the same open-handed gesture.<sup>9</sup> True to the bold “one—two—three” impact that Bernhard attributed to an effective *Sachplakat*, Heartfield had forcefully and unequivocally broadcast his party’s message from walls and poster columns nationwide. And he had even managed to transform, however temporarily, the daily gesture of mutual recognition among members of his intended audience. Whether he chose to focus on a hand, a number, or even a bit of text, Heartfield was able to pinpoint and intensify either the affirmative or the negative power of any motif he selected. But more specifically, he had adapted the pairing, distillation, and deformation of the *Blickfang* to photography. This allowed him to power his images through the sudden enhancement or overturning of a given photograph’s

first flush of meaning. This innovation in fact resulted from his ambivalence toward photography, fraught feelings generated by his disheartening experience of World War I propaganda—an experience that also taught him a welcome lesson on exploiting the photograph’s persuasive potential.

## II

Conscripted into military service in mid-September 1914, six weeks after the outbreak of World War I, Heartfield had to abandon his studies with Ernst Neumann and undergo the notoriously demeaning Prussian barracks drill in Berlin. His fervent opposition to the war soon provided a fresh focus for his talent: subverting the aggressive dissemination of pro-war propaganda, much of which used photography, to reassure the German populace of a victorious outcome. Together with his new friend, the painter George Grosz, Heartfield began sending postcards manipulated with photomontage to soldiers at the front—sympathetic acquaintances and strangers alike. As his brother, the poet and publisher Wieland Herzfelde, later recalled, these “photographic clippings had been assembled such that they said in pictures what would have been censored had it been said in words.”<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, none of these compositions survives.<sup>11</sup> Yet their creation suggests that Heartfield and Grosz learned a bitter lesson about the effectiveness of photographic propaganda: “You can lie to people with photos, really lie to them,” Heartfield observed near the end of his life. “Photos of the war zones were being used to support the policy of persevering long after the conflict had been settled on the Marne and Germany’s army had been beaten.”<sup>12</sup> The postcards he and Grosz assembled no doubt juxtaposed images such as these with sharply ironic captions, gruesome amateur pictures taken at the front, or even kitschy pro-war images whose heavy-handed intentions were easy to ridicule. The two men had come to see that the meaning of any photograph is fluid and, therefore, contingent upon its context. By altering that context, they could suggest an alternative “veiled” reality—

16

John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), *Self-Portrait [Selbstporträt]*, 1919; letterpress, 19.3 × 13.5 cm. Markings on the reverse indicate that this image was intended for reproduction in the anthology *Dadaglobe*, planned in 1920 by the Dadaist Tristan Tzara, but never realized.

1.2

John Heartfield (German, 1861–1968), cover for *Der Dada, The Tire Travels the World [Das Pneuma umreist die Welt]*, 1920; newsprint, 23.2 × 15.7 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago.

as Heartfield later called it—and do so in a visually stunning manner and in a form that could conceivably be mass-produced. Thus political resistance could tap the logic of the *Blickfang* and succeed in ways similar to popular advertising. Heartfield even applied this subversively attention-grabbing ploy to his personal identity—by informally anglicizing his given name, Helmut Herzfeld, in or just before August 1917.<sup>13</sup> At a time in the war when Germans regularly greeted each other with the salutation “God punish England!,” the artist’s new name boldly announced his resistance to his nation’s xenophobia.

In his photographic work, Heartfield continued injecting a bracing dose of manipulated corrective. He had developed what might be termed photo-ambivalence—a simultaneous suspicion of and attraction to the medium’s documentary capacity. These conflicting sentiments prompted him to experiment with a medium whose persuasive capacity fueled its effectiveness as a propaganda tool. Before long, Heartfield’s embrace of Dada would push this investigation to an extreme. Conceived in the neutral safe haven of Zurich in 1916, Dada reached wartime Berlin a year later. Always politically motivated at some level, the movement developed an expressly politicized wing in the starved and depressed German capital. “Instead of continuing to produce art,” Zurich cofounder Richard Huelsenbeck declared from Berlin in 1920, “Dada . . . went out and found an adversary.”<sup>14</sup> A primary goal of Berlin Dada, which Heartfield joined in 1918, was to provoke a large and passive population with shocking reflections of the war’s repressed traumas.

The upheaval that key members of Berlin Dada were hoping for actually took place, if only momentarily, when the German Revolution erupted in November 1918, replacing the imperial government with a republic and thereby hastening the end of the war. Swept along by this short-lived uprising, Berlin Dada sought to aid in the dissolution of the Wilhelmine monarchy. Heartfield, his brother, and Grosz all joined the country’s newly founded KPD and began fashioning images and staging performances to reflect

and accelerate the national upheaval. They and other Berlin Dadaists began to recognize the invaluable contribution photography would make to their artistic and political aims. It would greatly enhance their efforts to affront public taste in art and position the camera as a modern, more democratic alternative to the conventional work of academically trained artists.

Some of Heartfield’s pictures from this time call to mind the methods of the soapbox agitators who were ubiquitous fixtures in postwar urban Germany. In a photographic self-portrait of 1920, the artist opens his mouth as if to roar and clenches his fist in apparent rage (plate 16). He intended this photograph to shock viewers and jar convention at a time of nationally jangled nerves. Heartfield achieved similar effects in Futurist-inspired collages that jumbled photographic fragments and clippings from illustrated newspapers and advertising posters. In his widely reproduced *Das Pneuma umreist die Welt* (The Tire Travels the World) (1920, fig. 1.2), a careening tire appears to batter the component fragments of once forceful advertisements for products or party agendas, all of which have lost their original message. The resultant wreckage constitutes a deliberate political and antiartistic act.

Heartfield’s output of scrambled photomontages, which peaked in late 1919 and the first half of 1920, reduced mass-media signification to primitive building blocks. This breakdown served to mirror an “unutterable age, with all its cracks and fissures,” as the Dada poet Hugo Ball declared of an aggressive Zurich-era performance by Huelsenbeck.<sup>15</sup> Heartfield’s brazen attempts to dismantle entrenched perceptions were intended to help speed the larger dissolution of Germany’s old order. For this advertiser-turned-Dadaist, applying avant-garde techniques to the popular culture of the street and the market amounted to an assault on the status quo. Suspicious of photography’s ability to convey truth and produce meaning, he attempted to expose the conditions under which it might fail to do so.



## III

Less than a year after it erupted, the German Revolution—to which Heartfield linked his new art—had failed, enabling the new Weimar Republic to consolidate itself in the summer of 1919. Similarly, by the fall of 1920, Berlin Dada had dissipated. Rather than embrace Dada as a revolutionary assault on the old order, moreover, the fledgling KPD condemned it as childlike and “bourgeois.” Dada was nothing more than a minor irritant to what the KPD deemed the West’s valuable “cultural inheritance.” The movement’s photomontages and other “assembled” works were “glued together silly kitsch” that, far from assisting rebellious workers, posed a “degenerate” danger to them.<sup>16</sup> This hostility to Dada never changed. Yet the KPD abandoned its praise for the West’s cultural inheritance shortly after the inflation of 1923 had been halted. In the fleeting episode of stability that followed, the KPD began fostering an autonomous and pointedly “proletarian” culture in its ranks.<sup>17</sup> This was part of its larger effort to develop a cultlike following among its members, whom it engaged in a perpetual frenzy of Party activities. In June 1924, for example, the KPD chapter in Essen provided its officers with a list of events that included at least one activist meeting every weekday evening; toward the end of 1927, the Halle-Merseburg chapter reported to Berlin’s Central Committee that it would have staged 640 talks, rallies, and discussions between November 1, 1927, and January 31, 1928.<sup>18</sup> Affiliated clubs and societies such as Red Aid, Artists’ Aid, and the Workers’ Gymnastic and Sports Association added their own cultural offerings to these routines, making for a busy parallel society within the broader Weimar Republic. Even language developed a distinctive socialist phraseology; the Austrian author Karl Kraus sarcastically called this jargon *Moskauderwelsch*, a neologism that blended the name of Russia’s capital with *Kauderwelsch*, the German word for gibberish.<sup>19</sup>

In 1926 the writer Heinrich Mann praised the recently founded periodical *AIZ*, which was secretly financed by the Communist International in Moscow, for bringing “to view the proletarian world, which, remarkably, appears to be unavailable in other illus-

trated papers.” He stressed that “what is happening in life is seen here through the eyes of the workers.”<sup>20</sup> Mann and others holding this view were encouraged by the prospect of a “class vision” and more specifically “the working man’s eye,” which, they believed, could see below the illusory surface of appearances, particularly as that surface was reproduced in mainstream culture.<sup>21</sup>

Although Heartfield had irritated the KPD with his aggressive Dada photomontages, his abiding photo ambivalence enhanced his understanding of this piercing class vision and emboldened him to forge a unique visual culture for the radical left. His first opportunities came in 1921, shortly after Dada’s demise. His brother, Wieland Herzfelde, had been directing the left-wing Malik Verlag (Malik Press), which Heartfield had founded during the war. In the immediate aftermath of the failed revolution, Herzfelde began publishing realist novels that revealed the hidden machinations of capitalism and the overlooked heroism of workers in highly accessible journalistic prose. Typically authored by foreign or obscure German writers, this new and unfamiliar “proletarian literature” required keen marketing. Heartfield, who had essentially become Malik’s house designer, answered this challenge by composing covers that would attract readers and, at the same time, alert them to the books’ unusual content and approach. His task, in other words, was to design a *Sachplakat* for each volume. As his brother later explained:

In 1921, as our press began publishing novels, it required particularly expressive jackets and book covers. These surfaces were meant to prompt not only the few leftist booksellers but also those of a different opinion to display our new publications and reprints in their shop windows. Therefore the books had to be attractive at first sight and at the same time have an agitational effect. For we felt that even people who did not buy one of our books should be influenced by the content as it was expressed on the cover.<sup>22</sup>

This goal forced Heartfield to make his photomontages simple and “laconic,” as the Soviet author Sergei Tret’iakov characterized these new works.<sup>23</sup>

Heartfield experimented liberally with his book covers, exploring various typographic styles and even abstract planes of color inspired by contemporary avant-garde painting. Ultimately, however, photography proved most effective for his new *Blickfang*. In 1921 he created a cover for the translation of Upton Sinclair's novel *100%: The Story of a Patriot* that sports an appropriated photographic view down Wall Street (plate 15). In its relative seamlessness, the image visually equates colossal architecture with New York's corridors of economic power. Heartfield's composition graphically affirms this relationship, which is central to Sinclair's story, by stretching the title across the deep concrete canyon where, as it happens, the novel begins. Like the book, Heartfield's cover criticizes American capitalism but by means of an eye-catching photograph instead of prose.

In 1922 Heartfield, who had done a brief stint in the German film industry, realized that his new photomontage technique could be significantly enhanced by the pictorial language of cinema, now popular in Germany.<sup>24</sup> He adapted the film still, the establishing shot, and the movie advertisement to his purposes, employing devices that ordinarily condensed a film's temporal unfolding and character development into a single, well-organized image. His cover for Sinclair's *They Call Me Carpenter* (plate 15), for example, features the stock figures of the overfed businessman, the diva (taken from a still of the screen actress Gloria Swanson), and Jesus himself. New here was the degree to which his stark juxtapositions of these figures suggest the unfolding moral conflicts that drive the novel's social criticism.

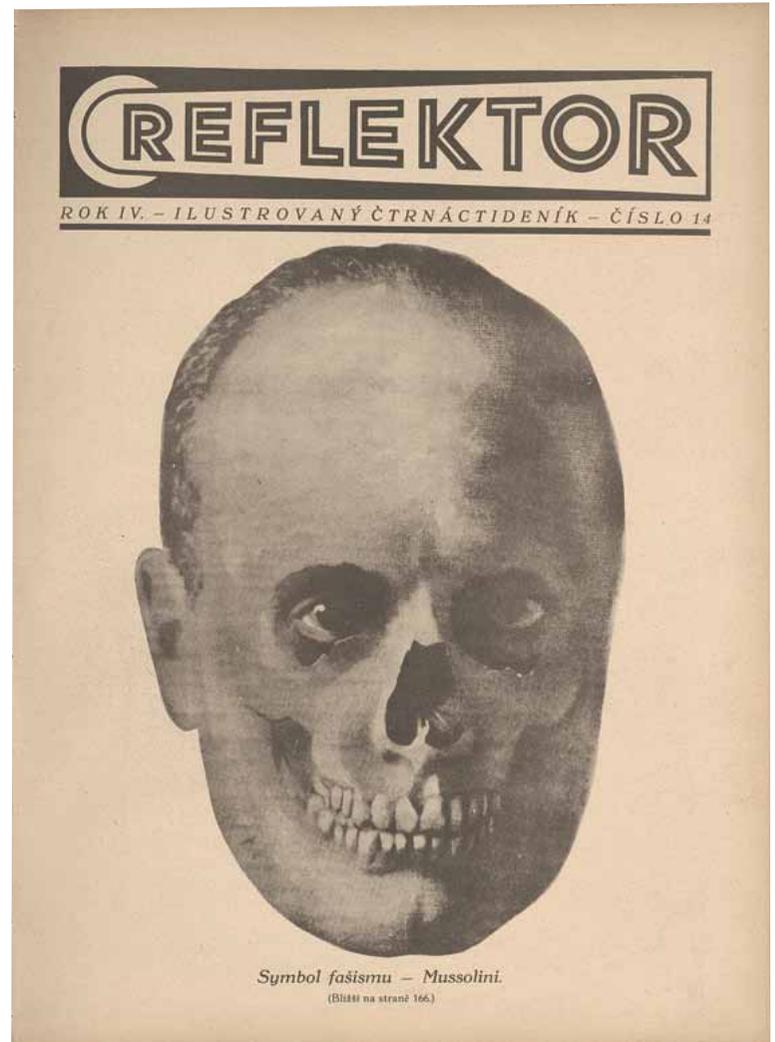
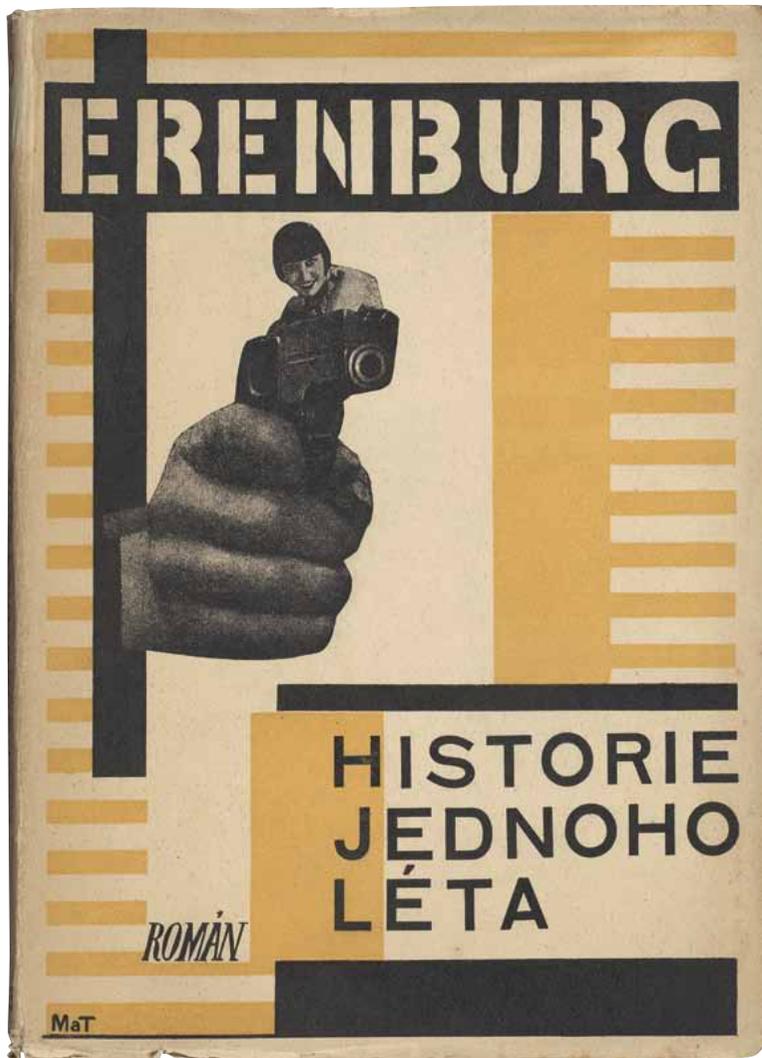
Heartfield quickly learned how to restructure other found and commissioned photographs to produce similar filmlike distillations. His cover for Sinclair's *The Jungle* uses the logic of a narrative establishing shot to set the stage for this exposé of horrific abuses in Chicago's meatpacking industry and the debased lives of its laborers. As the city's slaughterhouses and surrounding factories recede in a dynamic diagonal along the length of the dust jacket, so do the bold red

capital letters of the title. Adolf Behne remarked about this distinctive and gripping style: "The photomontage of Heartfield: that is photography plus dynamite."<sup>25</sup>

Thanks in part to these almost incendiary covers, Malik's output of publications soared. The press's translation of Sinclair's 1927 novel *Oil!*, for example, with its two American film-studio portraits (one each on the front and back covers), sold more than one hundred twenty-five thousand copies (plate 15). Noting this success, other leftist artists followed Heartfield's example, and by 1928 Germany's book market was flooded with volumes boasting stunning photomontage covers. Artists and photographers in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union followed suit. Heartfield's style of montage also began appearing in other contexts, becoming practically a ubiquitous feature of Weimar's radical propaganda.

Between 1926 and 1928, the artist himself worked in the Agitation-Propaganda department of the KPD, the party that earlier had condemned his work. KPD posters and magazine covers plastered Germany's urban surfaces, adorned its newspaper kiosks, and even surfaced in Czech left-wing books and magazines (plates 17 and 18). Heartfield's use of photographs enabled him to suggest a specifically leftist vision of a world threatened by capitalist and right-wing illusion. In addition, his skill in the medium brought a vast public audience to modern design based on the overlapping visual languages of cinema, the newspaper, and advertising.

John Heartfield's greatest success came in 1930, when, tiring of internal KPD battles, he moved to the relatively autonomous Neuer deutscher Verlag (or NDV, New German Press), which was headed by the radical-left propaganda master Willi Münzenberg.<sup>26</sup> The charismatic Münzenberg had already hired Heartfield in 1927 to create magazine covers and even the complete visual program for *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* (Germany, Germany above All), a classic antimilitarist photobook by the country's most notorious satirical essayist, Kurt Tucholsky (plate 19). The Dada-inspired cover for this book, however, did not anticipate what Heartfield soon would do.



17

Otakar Mrkvička (Czech, 1898–1957) and Karel Teige (Czech, 1900–1951), cover for Il'ia Erenburg, *History of One Summer* [*Historie jednoho léta*], 1927; letterpress, 20 × 14.2 cm. Mrkvička and Teige added a female figure to the fragment of a hand and gun from Heartfield's cover for Franz Jung, *The Conquest of the Machines* [*Die Eroberung der Maschinen*], 1923.

18

Karel Teige (?) (Czech, 1900–1951), cover for *Headlight* [*Reflektor*] after John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), *The Face of Fascism* [*Das Gesicht des Faschismus*], July 15, 1928; lithograph, 37 × 27.6 cm.



19

John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), cover and illustrations for Kurt Tucholsky, *Germany, Germany above All* [*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*], 1929; letterpress inset on canvas, 23.8 × 18.6 cm.

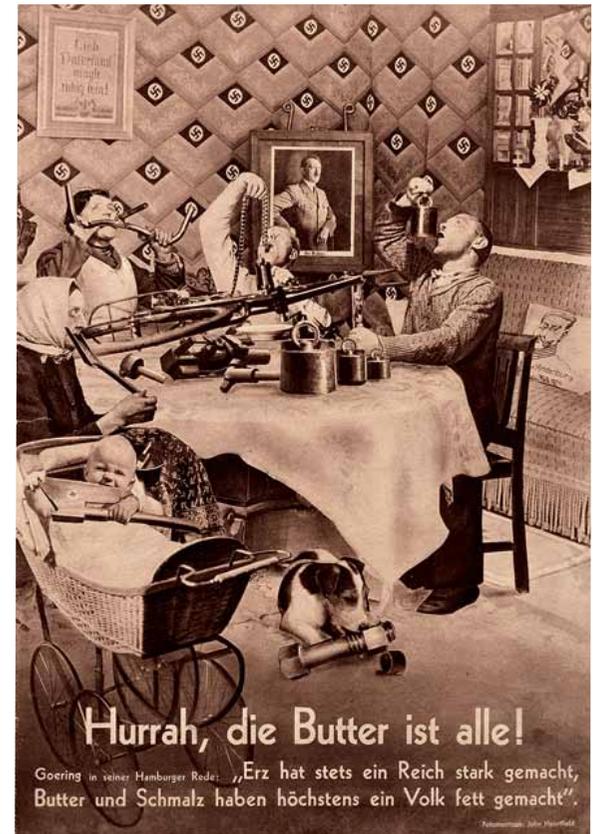


1.3

Press photograph from a National Socialist Party rally, 1932; gelatin silver print, 17 × 26 cm. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (920024).

1.4

John Heartfield (German, 1891–1968), cover for *Workers' Illustrated Magazine* [AIZ, *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*], *Hurrah, There's No More Butter!* [Hurrah, die Butter ist alle!], December 19, 1935; gravure, 38.1 × 28 cm.



As a contributor to *AIZ*, he could appropriate on a weekly basis the sorts of subtly propagandistic press photos that had frustrated him during the war and process them in what Tret'iakov would call his “socio-publicist lab.”<sup>27</sup> In one case, he took a widely circulated picture of Hitler speaking at a 1932 National Socialist Party rally (fig. 1.3), coupled it with the leader's oft-repeated declaration “Millionen stehen hinter mir” (Millions Stand behind Me), and—with a cut-and-paste—transformed the phrase into a pun indicting German industrialists (plate 14). Hitler's upraised hand, his signature gesture of power styled on the imperial Caesar, now showed him to be a puppet of capital. “Like no one else,” wrote the author Oskar Maria Graf in 1938, “Heartfield shows what is concealed behind things and appearances.”<sup>28</sup>

For Heartfield, the contemporary photograph obscured as much as it revealed, and his images sought to jar the viewer into a critical awareness of this fact. His preference for a sparse distribution of elements against a murky sepia ground transformed the *Sachplakat* format into an aggressive photographic amalgam that agitated not by appealing to reason but by tapping deep emotions. Within a year, the circulation of *AIZ*

exploded, and Heartfield photomontages appeared ubiquitously, sometimes in the form of posters directly derived from the magazine's pages. By forcing both communists and non-communists to view matters from a new perspective, Heartfield became a successful advertiser of Weimar radical-left ideology, a wallpaper designer for Weimar's everyday spaces, and, by extension, an architect of political consciousness.<sup>29</sup> He was quick to point out when his opponents, such as the Nazis, were employing a similar tactic. *Millions Stand behind Me* serves as one example. But after he fled the Nazi takeover of the German government in early 1933, his attacks on their propaganda became particularly elaborate. A December 1935 *AIZ* photomontage, *Hurrah, die Butter ist alle!* (Hurrah, There's No More Butter!) (fig. 1.4), shows a family eating government-subsidized armaments instead of food; the harsh message is that fascist weapons and propaganda have saturated the domestic space.<sup>30</sup>

"To make advertisements is to be a social artist," wrote the Hungarian essayist and artist Lajos Kassák in 1926.<sup>31</sup> Referring to the increasingly avant-garde German trade magazine *Die Reklame* (Advertising), Kassák was commenting on the ways cutting-edge artists were using advertising to introduce their aesthetic inventions into quotidian life. That life, so the thinking went, was correspondingly improved by good design. Many such artists entered the field of advertising as novices with these goals of betterment in mind. Heartfield, however, had been there all along. His photo-based *Blickfänge* had been impressing and influencing his constituency not just with superb design but with an altogether new manner of perceiving, a manner of casting a critical eye on the day-to-day world.

#### Notes

- Heartfield designed front pages for the daily *Die rote Fahne*, plus front pages and interior illustrations for at least two of its special issues, mainly in 1928.
- Heartfield created sets for productions staged by the left-wing theater director Erwin Piscator between 1920 and 1931.
- Die Arena* appeared irregularly in 1926 and 1927. A note on the KPD's membership is in order. Although the party associated the word *worker* with its periodicals, such as this "workers'" sports journal, most KPD members who saw themselves as workers were in fact destitute laborers from Germany's urban underclass. By the late 1920s, the majority of them were unemployed; see Eric Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- From the early 1920s to the late 1930s, Heartfield designed covers for Malik Press, which issued this translation of Sinclair's novel, and many other publishers.
- Toward the end of his life, Heartfield lamented to the West Berlin gallerist Jule Hammer, "I would have become the designer of socialism if they had only let me"; quoted in Peter Sager, "Demonstrations des Monteurs," *Zeitmagazin*, May 20, 1991. Citation taken from Michael Krejsa, "Wo ist John Heartfield," in *Kunstdokumentation SBZ/DDR, 1945–1990: Aufsätze, Berichte, Materialien*, ed. Günter Feist, Eckhart Gillen, and Beatrice Vierneisel (Berlin: Museumspädagogischer Dienst Berlin, 1996), p. 110 n.2.
- See Sherwin Simmons, "Advertising Seizes Control of Life: Berlin Dada and the Power of Advertising," *Oxford Art Journal* 22, no. 1 (1999), p. 119. For the term *Blickfang*, see Heinrich Behrmann, *Der farbige Kartonschnitt als Schaufenster Blickfang* (Hamm: Reimann Verlag, 1937); the periodical *Der Blickfang: Schaufenster und Werbung* (published in Frankfurt am Main from 1951 to 1958); and, more recently, Jürgen Holstein, ed., *Blickfang: Bucheinbände und Schutzumschläge Berliner Verlage, 1919–1933* (Berlin: Holstein, 2005).
- On the *Sachplakat*, see Jürgen Krause, "Reklame-Kultur," in 1910, *Halbzeit der Moderne: Van de Velde, Behrens, Hoffmann und die Anderen*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach et al. (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1992), pp. 185–91; Kevin Repp, "Marketing, Modernity, and 'the German People's Soul': Advertising and Its Enemies in Late Imperial Germany, 1896–1914," in *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Pamela E. Swett, S. Jonathan Wiesen, and Jonathan R. Zatin (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 39–45; and Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 137–43.
- Lucian Bernhard, quoted in Adolf Behne, "Alte und neue Plakate," in *Das politische Plakat* (Berlin: Verlag das Plakat, 1919), pp. 6–7; trans. Repp, "Marketing, Modernity," pp. 42–43.
- Gertrud Herzfeld, "Aktennotiz über das KPD-Wahlplakat 's Finger hat die Hand,'" in *John Heartfield, Der Schnitt entlang der Zeit: Selbstzeugnisse, Erinnerungen, Interpretationen*, ed. Roland März and Gertrud Herzfeld (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1981), p. 151.
- Wieland Herzfelde, *John Heartfield: Leben und Werk*, 3rd ed. (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1976), p. 18.
- For more on these postcards, see Andrés Mario Zervigón, "Postcards to the Front: John Heartfield, George Grosz, and the Birth of Avant-Garde Photomontage," in *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, ed. Jordana Mendelson and David Prochaska (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), pp. 54–69.
- John Heartfield, conversation with Bengt Dahlbäck, Moderna Museet Stockholm, August 1967, in März and Heartfield, *John Heartfield: Der Schnitt entlang der Zeit*, p. 464.
- The first known mention of this new moniker appears in a mid-August 1917 letter from the poet Else Lasker-Schüler to the novelist Franz Jung in which she refers to her young artist friend as "J. H." See Else Lasker-Schüler, *Werke und Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 7, *Briefe, 1914–1924*, ed. Karl Jürgen Skrodzki (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag, 2004), p. 144. John Heartfield remained a pseudonym until the artist officially changed his given name in the new German Democratic Republic after World War II. Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, Heartfield's brother, Wieland, changed his last name to Herzfelde at Lasker-Schüler's suggestion.
- Richard Huelsenbeck, "En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism (1920)," in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 41.

15. Hugo Ball, *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, trans. John Elderfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 56.
16. Gertrud Alexander, "Dada. Ausstellung am Lützowufer 13, Kunstsalon Buchard," *Die rote Fahne* (July 25, 1920).
17. In doing so, party leaders were to a certain extent following the model of the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who had unintentionally fostered social fragmentation with his antisocialist and anti-Catholic campaigns. By the late nineteenth century, these offensives had led to the establishment of parochial schools, separate socialist magazines, and even sectarian hiking clubs. See Heinrich August Winkler, *Weimar, 1918–1933: Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1993).
18. Weitz, *Creating German Communism*, p. 257.
19. Friedrich Torberg, ed., *Voreingenommen wie ich bin: von Dichtern, Denkern, und Autoren* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1991), p. 81.
20. Heinrich Mann, as quoted in *AIZ* 1, (probably May 22, 1926); reprinted in Leah Ollman, *The Camera as a Weapon: Worker Photography between the Wars* (San Diego, Calif.: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1991), p. 12. For more on the Communist International's direct financing of *AIZ* and its publishing house, see Sean McMeekin, *Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).
21. On working-class vision see, among others, Edwin Hoernle, "Das Auge des Arbeiters" (1930); reprinted as "The Working Man's Eye," in *Germany: The New Photography, 1927–33*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), pp. 47–49.
22. Herzfelde, *John Heartfield*, p. 44.
23. Sergei Tret'iakov, *John Heartfield: Monografia* (1936); excerpted as *John Heartfield: A Monograph* in März and Heartfield, *John Heartfield: Der Schnitt entlang der Zeit*, pp. 297–98.
24. Andrés Mario Zervigón, "A Political Struwwelpeter?: John Heartfield's Early Film Animation and the Crisis of Photography," *New German Critique* 107, 36, no. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 5–51.
25. Adolf Behne, "Künstler des Proletariats, Nr. 16" (1931); reprinted in März and Heartfield, *John Heartfield: Der Schnitt entlang der Zeit*, p. 186.
26. The NVD, which published *AIZ*, won its autonomy partly because of Münzenberg's force of personality but also because of bankrolling from Moscow's Communist International, as noted earlier.
27. Tret'iakov, *John Heartfield*, in März and Heartfield, *John Heartfield: Der Schnitt entlang der Zeit*, p. 299.
28. Oskar Maria Graf, "John Heartfield. Der Photomonteur und seine Kunst" (1938); reprinted in Peter Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef, *John Heartfield* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 207. For a brilliant analysis of Heartfield's *AIZ* photomontages, see Sabine Kriebel, "Manufacturing Discontent: John Heartfield's Mass Medium," *New German Critique* 107, 36, no. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 53–88. These montages are all carefully reprinted and accompanied by David Evans's useful introduction in *John Heartfield, AIZ: Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung, Volks Illustrierte, 1930–1938*, ed. Anna Lundgren (New York: Kent Fine Art, 1992).
29. Such skills were of course deployed across the political spectrum, though not taking Heartfield's approach or, necessarily, displaying his kind of skill. In the first months of the Weimar Republic, the expressionist writer Paul Zech headed a publicity/propaganda office for the new social-democratic government staffed by a team of advertisers and avant-garde artists; its aim was to quell the general unrest that had been stirred by the German Revolution. One staffer noted in 1920 that the office produced political posters in the same way as "a new mouthwash or a new film star is placed before the public overnight and hammered into the brain as the latest novelty." See Wilhelm Ziegler, "Reichspropaganda oder Reichsaufklärung" (1920); trans. in Simmons, "Advertising Seizes Control of Life," p. 135.
30. By the time Heartfield created this photomontage, he and *AIZ* were based in Prague, having fled Germany soon after the National Socialists came to power, in early 1933 — a move that led to a sharp drop in *AIZ*'s readership. To a certain extent, this composition can be seen as Heartfield's acknowledgment that the Nazis' propaganda had been as successful as their leaders in conquering Germany.
31. Lajos Kassák, "Die Reklame," in *Das Werk* (Zurich: Schweizer Werkbund Zürich), no. 7 (1926), p. 228.