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USSR IN CONSTRUCTION:
FROM AVANT-GARDE TO SOCIALIST REALIST PRACTICE

Volume 1

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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To Emilia

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INTRODUCTION

“I want to search unceasingly for new riches of photographic language, so that I may create things standing at a high political and artistic level, things in which photographic language serves Socialist Realism entirely.”

Aleksandr Rodchenko, “Reconstruction of the Artist,” 1936¹

The Soviet artistic avant-garde is generally thought to have been suppressed by the rise of Stalinism and to have been effectively disbanded in April 1932, when the Central Committee issued a resolution that abolished all independent cultural organizations in the Soviet Union. The revolution in vision promulgated by the Constructivists and Suprematists is believed to have been anathema to Socialist Realism. Yet as the above quote from a public presentation in 1936 by the renowned artist and photographer Aleksandr Rodchenko suggests, the avant-garde search for new visual languages was not necessarily irreconcilable with Socialist Realist practice. In the past decade previously secreted documents, publications, and art objects of the early Soviet period have become newly available to researchers. While scholarship on the work of critically celebrated Soviet artists during the 1920s has proliferated, the continued activity of these same artists during the 1930s has been given little attention. In particular, the work of these renowned artists for the Stalinist regime has remained a largely stigmatized subject. The refusal to acknowledge and fully interrogate the continued activity of these artists during

the 1930s has led to a misreading of their work of the previous decade. The Soviet avant-garde project has been defined in opposition to Socialist Realism, yet Rodchenko's statement in 1936 suggests that this may be a false opposition: he claimed that his photographic searches were intended to "serve Socialist Realism entirely." A more balanced, rounded understanding of the Soviet avant-garde project demands analysis of this work for the Stalinist regime as well.

This dissertation explores the persistence, modification, and transformation of Soviet avant-garde representational practice in light of the emergence of Socialist Realism during the early 1930s through a study of the photographic magazine *SSSR na stroike* (*USSR in Construction*; 1930-1941, 1949). With diverse contributions by both avant-garde innovators and proponents of more traditional cultural practices, *SSSR na stroike* provides a unique opportunity to clarify the nature and scope of the cultural transition from the avant-garde ideals of the 1920s to Socialist Realism in the ensuing decade. *SSSR na stroike* was published monthly to propagandize the progress of the transformation of the Soviet economy, society and culture during the industrialization drive that began in 1928. With editions in Russian, English, German, French, and Spanish, the magazine's intended audience was both domestic and international. Supervised by an editorial board that included many party figures central to the Five-Year Plans, this magazine brought together the upper party apparatus with leading artists, writers and photographers.

This study establishes the position of *SSSR na stroike* within the context of Soviet documentary expression and photojournalism, cultural conflict between the different

¹ Aleksandr Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," *Sovetskoe foto*, No. 5-6, 1936: 21.

creative groupings, and the development of a new Soviet photographic genre, the narrative photo-essay (*fotoočerok*). From its inception, *SSSR na stroike* emphasized photography as the ideal method of illustrating the dramatic changes taking place in the Soviet Union. While there is a growing literature on early Soviet photography, most studies have been largely confined to examinations of several renowned avant-garde photographers and photomontage artists and have failed to consider the broad array of practices, institutions, and theories that developed in the first decades of the Soviet Union.² This one-sided approach is problematic, as much of the history of the avant-garde has been treated in terms of conflict with other practitioners, about whom little is known. “Opponents” of the avant-garde have been reduced to two-dimensional binary opposites, collapsing subtle differences existing within the broad spectrum of Soviet cultural production. As a result of this simplification, avant-garde practice has been critically misinterpreted. One example of this simplification is the frequent reduction of the history of Soviet photography during this period to the work of Aleksandr Rodchenko.³ Aspects of Rodchenko’s work which do not fit into pre-conceived notions

² David Elliot, ed., *Photography in Russia, 1840-1940*, exhibition (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992). Margarita Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph, 1924-1937* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Viktor Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy: 1917-1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). One notable exception is Rosalinde Sartori, *Pressefotografie und Industrialisierung in der Sowjetunion: Die Pravda 1925-1933*, Veröffentlichungen der Abteilung für slavische Sprachen und Literaturen des Osteuropa-Instituts (Slavisches Seminar) an der Freien Universität Berlin, Band 51 (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1981).

³ For example, Aleksandr Lavrent’ev asserts that no Soviet photography was included in Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold, *Foto Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1929). While Rodchenko’s works were not included, this book contains photographs by Semen Fridliand, El Lissitzky, and an anonymous Soviet photographer. Furthermore, Lavrent’ev characterizes Al’pert, Shaikhet, Skhurikhin and others as part of

about the Soviet avant-garde, such as the questionable identification of his work as photojournalism before 1929, have been largely ignored, while the innovative nature of the practice of photojournalists who questioned the validity of Rodchenko's work has been overlooked. By articulating the wide array of factors and practices that shaped the formation of the *fotoocherk* as an important genre of Socialist Realist visual culture, I have sought to provide a more comprehensive approach to the study of Soviet photography. The broader institutional contexts of Soviet photography and graphic design have remained largely unexplored, in terms of both more traditional art institutions and of the mass media. The failure to consider works published in the Soviet illustrated press within this larger framework has resulted in significant critical misinterpretations. Because of these methodological problems concerning individuals and institutions, I have purposely avoided a monographic approach in this study, preferring to examine the broader context of the *SSSR na stroike* and its diverse group of contributors.

I am wary of many of the chronologies, categories, assumptions, and rationalizations that are regularly employed in discussions of Soviet art of the twenties and thirties. Many of these concepts are not grounded in the close study of surviving images and documents; rather, they were defined by Cold War aesthetics and rely upon the irreconcilable opposition of Modernism and Socialist Realism. Attempting to break from these received ideas about Soviet visual culture of this period, I have sought to base my study upon primary sources to the greatest extent possible. While most studies of the work of avant-garde artists during the 1930s have catalogued the breaks and ruptures

a "second generation" that followed after Rodchenko, Klutskis, and Lissitzky—even though these photographers were contemporaries. Lavrent'ev, "Photo-Dreams of the

from earlier representational practice, this dissertation seeks to identify and clarify continuities. I reject the frequent reduction of this problem to the classification of good and evil. By basing my work largely upon primary sources, I sought to avoid the usual tendency to explain away Socialist Realism as an aberration that arose from Stalin's aesthetic taste.⁴ By blaming Stalin for all the horrors of his time --from the purges to bad art-- cultural producers of his time have been freed from any accountability and their creative contributions have been obscured. Socialist Realism did not spring Athena-like from Stalin's head, fully formed and ready to be imposed upon Soviet visual culture. Rather, it emerged dynamically and was shaped by a variety of factors, ranging from avant-garde representational practice to the foreign mass media to the dictates of the political leadership.

Overview of the Chapters

The first chapter examines the origins and audience of *SSSR na stroike*, beginning in 1928 with the organization of the Soviet pavilion of *Pressa*, an international exhibition of the press in Cologne, Germany. Many of the editorial and creative contributors to the magazine collaborated on this pavilion. I clarify how *SSSR na stroike* was initially conceived as one of a group of periodicals devoted the representation of the achievements of the Soviet government's economic and agricultural programs. In this chapter I also examine the question of the magazine's ideal audience. While the contribution of avant-

Avant-Garde," in Elliot, *Photography in Russia*: 61, 65.

⁴ This tendency is perhaps best exemplified by Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).

garde artists to *SSSR na stroike* has been rationalized by the assumption that it was intended for a foreign audience, I argue that the magazine's ideal audience was already the Stalinist elite by the time that such individuals as Rodchenko and El Lissitzky began to contribute.

In chapters two and three, I examine the formation of a new genre of Soviet photography, the narrative photo-essay (*fotocherk*). *SSSR na stroike* was the primary site of development of this new Soviet genre, which transformed its contents from dull collections of photographs to striking visual narratives. I consider the publication of "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family," the first extended Soviet narrative photo-essay, in the German illustrated magazine *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* in 1931. Shortly after this essay was met with critical acclaim in the Soviet press, *SSSR na stroike* published "The Giant and The Builder," the story of the Magnitogorsk steel plant and one of its builders. In addition to analyzing these essays and their critical reception at the time of publication, I explore the development of the *fotocherk* from both "proletarian" and avant-garde representational practice. This part of my study traces the legacy of both avant-garde and so-called "proletarian" aesthetics in the emerging dictates of Socialist Realism in terms of photography, photomontage and photojournalism.

Chapter four examines the changing representation of the Dnieper Hydroelectric and Industrial Complex, a major Soviet industrialization project that was a frequent subject of the magazine. Diachronic analysis of issues of *SSSR na stroike* devoted to this industrial construction site reveals dramatic changes in representational practice. Through this analysis, the content and design of the magazine were correlated to shifting government policies and programs. This chapter also addresses the publication of

photographs by the Americans Margaret Bourke-White and James Abbe in the issues devoted to the construction of the Dnieper industrial complex. I argue that one possible source of influence on *SSSR na stroike*, and possibly more widely in Stalinist visual culture, was the American mass media.

The fifth and final chapter re-examines Rodchenko's work on an issue of *SSSR na stroike* devoted to the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal (1933, No. 12), a forced labor project administered by the Soviet secret police. This issue has been cited as evidence of Rodchenko's abandonment of his avant-garde position and the duress of the avant-garde under Stalin. This chapter presents evidence to the contrary and argues that Rodchenko's work at the canal's construction site was in accordance with Soviet vanguard principles, that it was willfully undertaken, and that it reveals clear connections between avant-garde practice and Socialist Realism. Finally, I seek to demythologize the story of Rodchenko as avant-garde martyr by examining evidence of his cultivation of the patronage of the Soviet secret police.

Research Sources

This project and the path of its development have been shaped by extensive research in the former Soviet Union. While *SSSR na stroike* is frequently cited in literature on the Soviet avant-garde, there has been little in-depth study of the magazine beyond the careful visual analysis of individual issues. By focusing my research on the discovery of primary source documents related to the magazine, I also sought to go beyond mere content analysis. The opening of the Soviet archives and the lifting of travel restrictions on foreigners that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union enabled me to approach the study of this topic in a manner that would not have been possible just a few years

earlier. The development of the dissertation and the course of my research were very much shaped by the materials “unearthed” in the field. While the archives contain a superabundance of material, finding “exactly” what one is looking for is quite another matter. Furthermore, despite the opening of the archives, research into the history of *SSSR na stroike* remains problematic. The arrest and execution of most of the editorial board and some of its contributors during the purges probably led to the secreting of materials related to the magazine. Despite several years of looking, I have yet to locate the magazine’s archive. These missing records were transformed into an advantage of sorts, as I was compelled to look at the archives of related institutions and organizations. In turn, this enabled me to examine the broader context within which the magazine functioned. Furthermore, the discovery of unexpected materials, such as reviews of the magazine by foreign readers, allowed me insight on totally unanticipated topics.

In addition to mining archival sources, this project made extensive use of readily available published sources that are often overlooked, especially newspapers and popular magazines. As *SSSR na stroike* was just one of a variety of Soviet illustrated magazines, it was important for me to develop a broader comprehension of Soviet periodicals of the time. Many hours were spent browsing magazines and newspapers, literally by the year. In order to facilitate my research, I compiled an issue by issue database of *SSSR na stroike*. I also compared the entire run of the English and Russian editions page by page. Although somewhat tedious, this research yielded several significant discoveries. I also made extensive use of Soviet scholarship, a resource that is often underestimated and ignored by Western cultural historians.

In addition to working in the central archives and libraries, I visited two of the construction sites featured in *SSSR na stroike*. During my trip to the Urals, my first prolonged journey outside of the European Russian capitals of Moscow and St. Petersburg, I was amazed by the cordial reception given to me by local historians, archivists, journalists, photographers, and museum workers. Getting away from the central archives, libraries, and museums opened up an entirely new realm of research, a visual world that remains largely unexplored by Western researchers hesitant to leave the comforts of the capitals. While the same, oft-published images repeatedly crop up in the central archives, I found unique and different images in local repositories during my site visits. In April 1996 I traveled to Magnitogorsk, a remote Soviet steel town that had long been closed to foreigners. It was a thrill to see the rusting hulks of some of the very same blast furnaces whose construction I had been studying. In addition, I had the great fortune to interview Emilia Bakke, who was featured in a photo-essay about Magnitogorsk that appeared in *SSSR na stroike* in 1932. The popular success of that issue, which told the story of her husband's transformation from an illiterate peasant into a model worker, ultimately led to his disappearance in the Terror and decades of misfortune for the surviving family members. Through Emilia, I began to come to terms with the impact that this magazine had on the lives of individuals. In the summer of 1998 I traveled to Karelia and visited the White Sea Canal, where Rodchenko had photographed for many months. Holding up a camera to one of the locks of the canal, I realized that Rodchenko's spectacular looming perspectival shots of this canal had in part been spawned by the very geometric aspect of his subject.

My work on the international dimensions of *SSSR na stroike* was enriched by several months of field research in Germany and consultation of numerous American collections. In Germany, I found that the nature of my topic once again placed challenging obstacles in the path of my research. With the rise of Nazism, many German Communist records and publications were destroyed. I was initially stunned to find that Berlin's libraries were quite poor in holdings related to my period of study. However, I had the good fortune of spending several weeks working in the Institut für Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund, culling material from their plentiful collection of Communist and Leftist newspapers. In Berlin, I also had the opportunity to work in the papers of John Heartfield at the Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste. In the United States, Margaret Bourke-White's papers at Syracuse University provided an exceptional opportunity to examine the work of a foreign photojournalist who extensively documented Soviet socialist construction during the early 1930s. The New York Public Library Slavic Collection also proved to be a rich resource for Soviet materials from the 1930s. The collection of the Library of Congress was also plentiful in resources, particularly those related to my research on trade between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Finally, my exploration of *SSSR na stroike* and the cultural transition of the 1930s is still very much a work in progress. Had I comprehended the difficulties involved with researching this topic six years ago, it is doubtful that I would have embarked upon it. Now that I am in the thick of it, however, my enthusiasm is greater than ever. As my knowledge of the subject grows, my intuition becomes keener. Persistence has been critical to the success of this endeavor, and my tenacity has begun to yield tangible

results. This past summer, I finally gained access to a set of documents related to the editorial board of the magazine. Unfortunately, a natural disaster literally blew the roof off the archive before I was able to complete my examination of them. But such is the nature of this research--another chapter waits to be written.

Note Concerning Transliteration and Translation

With respect to Russian, the Library of Congress transliteration system has generally been used. Names and places that are well known are given in their more familiar English form. For example, the artist Lazar' Markovich Lisitskii is referred to by the more familiar romanized form "El Lissitzky." Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Russian and German are my own.

CHAPTER 1 THE ORIGINS AND AUDIENCE OF *SSSR NA STROIKE*

FROM THE EDITORS

The rapid growth of socialist construction in the Soviet Union is evoking great interest in foreign countries. The State Publishing House of the RSFSR has therefore conceived the idea to publish a special illustrated magazine *The USSR in Construction*, reflecting the colossal construction now taking place in the Soviet Union.

The State Publishing House has chosen the photo as a method to illustrate socialist construction, for the photo speaks much more convincingly in many cases than even the most brilliantly written article.

The USSR in Construction will be published monthly in special English, German, French and Russian Editions.

The editorial board of *The USSR in Construction* hopes that this magazine will meet merited attention on the part of those interested in the progress of socialist construction in the USSR.

USSR in Construction, 1930, no. 1.

It has often been assumed that *SSSR na stroike* was intended primarily for a foreign audience and that its chief function was to cultivate support abroad for the Soviet Union.¹ Published in Russian, English, German, and French editions, the purpose of this magazine was to visually illustrate the enormous changes taking place in the Soviet Union during the period of "socialist construction." With the renewal of Western interest

¹ Victor Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917-1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 166-167. Margarita Tupitsyn, "From Factography to Mythography: The Final Phase of the Soviet Photographic Avant-Garde," *Kultur im Stalinismus: sowjetische Kultur und Kunst der 1930er bis 1950er Jahre*, Gabriele Gorzka, ed. (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1994): 207.

in the Soviet avant-garde in the 1960s, *SSSR na stroike* has gained notoriety due to the involvement in its production of significant Soviet vanguard artists, photographers, and writers, including El Lissitzky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova. The work of these individuals on prominent Soviet propaganda after the purported forced dissolution of the avant-garde project by the Central Committee's Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations in April 1932 could be easily explained by the fact that these images were intended for a foreign audience and were not for domestic consumption.

Visual and archival materials indicate that the question of *SSSR na stroike*'s audience and intended message is not so simple. The complexity of the magazine's audience and how it "spoke" are suggested by several contemporary representations of the magazine: A photograph that purportedly documents the distribution of periodicals, including *SSSR na stroike*, at a Siberian kolkhoz in 1932 (fig. 1); a photograph of George Bernard Shaw examining the English edition, *USSR in Construction*, in November 1933 (fig.2); and copies of *SSSR na stroike* lying at a table, among a variety of other Soviet publications, scattered before the standing figure of Stalin in an oil painting by Isaak Brodskii from 1937 (fig. 3). These three images alone vastly complicate the question of the magazine's audience and what its representations meant to readers. While the definition of audience and reception of most any publication is a delicate affair, this task is further exacerbated by the disappearance of the archives of the magazine. While the prominent association of the writer Maksim Gor'kii with *SSSR na stroike* suggests that these documents were not destroyed, the purge of almost the entire editorial board, including editor-in-chief Georgii Piatakov and Evgeniia Ezhova (wife of Nikolai Ezhov,

head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs--the Soviet secret police), during the Terror most likely led to the secreting of these documents.² As a central defendant in the Trial of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center in 1937, Piatakov was not rehabilitated until 1988.³ Drawing upon available published and archival sources, this chapter will trace the origins of the magazine, demonstrate the shifting nature of its "ideal" audience, and reconsider the nature and significance of avant-garde contributions to this exemplary Stalinist publication.

The Soviet Pavillion at Pressa, The International Exhibition of the Press, 1928

Many of *SSSR na stroike*'s editors and contributors first collaborated in the organization of the Soviet pavilion at Pressa, an international exhibition of publishing and the press that took place in Cologne in 1928. Organized at the initiative of Konrad Adenauer, Lord Mayor of Cologne, Pressa was one of a series of cultural initiatives that sought to elevate the international status of the city.⁴ Most of Pressa's exhibits were German, but a State House containing pavilions of foreign countries was included. In June 1927 the Soviet Union was officially invited to participate in Pressa, and the following month a "Committee for the Organization of the Russian Section at Pressa" was formed,

² Piatakov was editor-in-chief from 1930 until June 1936. Ezhova appeared on the editorial board for issues 1935, no. 6 to 1938, no. 7 and was assistant editor-in-chief from 1937, no. 1 to 1938, no. 7, shortly before her arrest.

³ For the trial, see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 147-167. For Piatakov's rehabilitation, see "O tak nazывaemom 'Paralell'nom Antisovetskom Trotsistskom Tsentre," *Izvestiia Ts.K. KPSS* 9 (September 1989): 30-50.

comprised of a group of prominent figures in Soviet publishing, journalism, and cultural institutions (fig. 4).⁵ The committee included Artemii Khalatov (head of Gosizdat, the State Publishing House of the Soviet Union), Olga Kameneva (head of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations Abroad --*Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi sviazi s zagranitsei*, hereafter VOKS-- as well as wife of left opposition leader Lev Kamenev and sister of Lev Trotskii),⁶ Ivan Gronskii (editor of *Izvestiia*), Semen Uritskii (editor of *Krestianskaia gazeta*, "The Peasant Newspaper"), and Iakov Doletskii (director of TASS). Khalatov took central leadership in planning and was designated Commissar of the Pavilion by the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*, hereafter Sovnarkom). Mikhail Gus, editor of *Krasnaia pechat'* ("Red Press"), a publication for Communist journalists, was integrally involved with the day to day planning and realization of the exhibition. Sovnarkom would ultimately designate Khalatov, the director of Gosizdat and a key figure in the establishment of *SSSR na stroike*, as commissar of the Soviet Pavilion.

⁴ Jeremy Anysley, "Pressa Cologne 1928: Exhibitions and Publication Design in the Weimar Period," *Design Issues* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 58.

⁵ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskii federatsii (GARF), fond 5283 (*Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi sviazi s zagranitsei*), op. 11, d.38, ll. 130, 132. GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35 ll. 1-2. Komitee des Sowjet-Pavillons, *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons auf der Internationalen Presse-Ausstellung Köln 1928* (Cologne: M. Dumont Schauberg, 1928): 106.

⁶ In 1926 Kamenev joined Trotskii to form a united opposition to Stalin. This led to his expulsion from the CPSU(b) in December 1927. After recanting his errors, Kamenev was re-admitted to the party in 1928. In August 1936, Kamenev was prosecuted in the first show trial and was shot. Miraculously, Kameneva was merely forbidden to live in Moscow or Leningrad, but she may eventually have perished in the Gulag. Conquest, *The Great Terror*: 78.

The pavilion's organizers promoted it as a means of establishing an international presence for the Soviet Union and of increasing its credibility as a political state through participation in a major international exhibition. Protocols of exhibition committee meetings shed light on the decision-making process and organization of the pavilion. During this process a shift occurred away from plans for an exhibition which would have traced the historical development of printing and the press in Russia and the Soviet Union to an exhibition which showcased the significance of the press in Soviet society since the October Revolution. Reckoning that the Soviet press was technically inferior to that of other exhibitors, the organizers decided to focus on the ideological meaning of the press and its role in the creation of "the new life" in the Soviet Union.⁷

The Soviet delegation in Berlin included a trade mission, which had extensive experience with Western European trade fairs, and a committee formed in Berlin to assist with the pavilion's organization. The chairman of this committee, I. M. Shneerson, made several innovative suggestions that were incorporated into the pavilion. After learning of the similarity of American and Soviet plans, Shneerson proposed to Khalatov that the pavilion focus on the Soviet decade, instead of an historical overview of the press and publishing in Russia. Shneerson also cautioned that the plans should be formulated with Western viewers in mind and proposed that mechanical display techniques, film, radio,

⁷ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, l. 4. "Podgotovka sovetskogo pavil'ona," *Zhurnalist*, 1928, no. 1 (January): 32-33. Mikhail Gus, "Pechat' SSSR na vystavke v Kel'ne," *Krasnaia pechat'*, 1928, no. 2 (January): 12-16.

and loudspeakers be employed. The Moscow organizers modified their plans in response to Shneerson's suggestions.⁸

On December 28, a Sovnarkom resolution announced the invitation of El Lissitzky and Isaak Rabinovich to provide artistic direction.⁹ Rabinovich had designed the Gosizdat display for the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris.¹⁰ Given the central role of Khalatov in planning for *Pressa*, the selection of an artist who had earlier done work for the publishing house was not surprising. However, for reasons that are not clear, Rabinovich immediately disappeared from exhibition planning, and Lissitzky alone worked as chief artist. The exhibition planning process was largely complete by the time of Lissitzky's designation as chief artist in late December. In an outline of the *Pressa* plans published in *Krasnaia pechat'* in January 1928, Gus described work on the exhibition as coming to the final stage--the preparation of the displays. The basic theme of the pavilion was identified as "the press as a weapon and participant of socialist construction in the USSR," a militant theme that heralded the cultural politics of the first five year plan. Gus noted that a central problem confronting the pavilion's planners was the need to communicate with viewers who did not understand the languages of the Soviet press. In order to surmount this difficulty "It is necessary to find means for the visual communication of the content of our press to the

⁸ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 38, ll.183, 185, 186, 188, 194, 195.

⁹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, l. 25

¹⁰ I. Riazantsev, *Iskusstvo sovetskogo vystavochnogo ansambliia* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1976): 25, 65,

foreign viewer."¹¹ Gus discussed the appointment of Lissitzky as chief artist responsible for the overall plan, noting that Lissitzky's leadership would ensure stylistic unity of the displays and that only raw materials--examples of publications, photographs, documents, statistical facts--would be needed for the pavilion.¹² This outline indicates that the content had been carefully developed in the preceding months, and that the task of the artist would be to develop a compelling and coherent visual format for the presentation of a prescribed body of material. In a memoir published in 1971, Gus identified their respective roles: He was chief editor, while Lissitzky was chief artist.¹³

Shortly after his appointment, Lissitzky's preliminary plan for the pavilion was approved, and he was entrusted with overseeing exhibit preparations.¹⁴ One of the first items that Lissitzky took action upon was the incorporation of film into the exhibition. This led to the construction of a screening room within the pavilion, where films by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevelod Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov and others were shown. Significantly, Lissitzky urged the inclusion of some of Vertov's *Kino Glaz* newsreels in the film program.¹⁵ In February, Gus and Lissitzky made a brief trip to Germany to initiate preliminary work on the pavilion. Reporting the results of their findings in late February, Lissitzky informed the committee that: "At the Exhibition Office I left about 20 models for exhibits, which due to their difficulty may not be executed here. I also left for

¹¹ Gus, "Pechat' SSSR na vystavke v Kel'ne": 12-15

¹² Gus, "Pechat' SSSR na vystavke v Kel'ne": 12-16.

¹³ Mikhail Gus, *Bezumnie svastiki* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1971): 41.

¹⁴ GARF, f 5283, op. 11, d. 35, l. c22.

preparation about sixty sketches for the internal equipment of our pavilion."¹⁶ The inclusion of film into the pavilion and the use of foreign display fabrication indicate the willingness of the organizers to invest in technically innovative displays and to make use of foreign know-how. The transfer of foreign technology was pursued in the creation of a visual propaganda environment.

Back in Moscow Lissitzky directed a team of more than sixty artists, who rapidly designed and assembled exhibits in a workshop in the spacious arcade at GUM, the State Universal Store. Lissitzky supplied the artists with materials purchased in Germany. The artist Elena Semenova recalled that:

It was thanks to Lissitzky that we had the chance of seeing and working with real, imported materials. This was the first time that we laid hands on celluloid or that we used good-quality, colored paper, good-quality paints that didn't alter their colors and gray, factory-dyed pasteboards which could take oil, tempera or whatever.¹⁷

Once again, the pavilion's organizers invested in precious foreign resources to facilitate the production of a persuasive propaganda environment. VOKS assisted in the requisition of Soviet raw materials and the collection of photographs, books, and historical documents from various Soviet institutions for incorporation into the exhibits.¹⁸ Lissitzky

¹⁵ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, ll. 157,168.

¹⁶ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, ll. 48-49.

¹⁷ GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, ll. 48-49. E. Semenova, "From My Reminiscences of Lissitzky." *El Lissitzky* (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1976): 23. I have corrected the English translation by replacing "celluloid" for "plexiglass", a material which did not exist in 1928. Lissitzky refers to the material as celluloid in one of the stenograms, and this material is also mentioned in the catalogue.

¹⁸ Pavel Grokhovskii, the photojournalist, was enlisted to help in the collection of photographic materials. Photographs for use at *Pressa* may have been culled from the

returned to Germany in April to begin work on components of the exhibition which required German technical assistance. The gala opening of the Soviet pavilion took place on May 25th and was met with numerous exclamatory reviews in the international press.

Although Lissitzky was chief artist, his authorship of various components of the pavilion has been much exaggerated.¹⁹ As chief artist, Lissitzky was responsible for the decoration of the façade and design of the interior environment in the raw space of the State House. In residence in Cologne, Lissitzky supervised work on the installation and the assembly of displays that required German technical assistance, and designed publications for distribution at the pavilion. In his work, Lissitzky was obliged to follow the committee's plans and was not given free rein. Protocols from exhibition meetings indicate that artistic work was subject to official approval.²⁰ The catalogue also identifies Lissitzky as designer of three central displays (fig. 5): The Big Star, The Transmissions, and the Photographic Frieze (executed by his assistant Sergei Sen'kin after Lissitzky's design). The catalogue provides a detailed description of "The Big Star". A cumbersome, symbolic illustration of the functioning of the Soviet government that dominated the main room, "The Big Star" was intended to be the primary display. Six spheres--reminiscent of Rodchenko's *Spatial Constructions* of 1921--signified the six Soviet Republics, combined

exhibition "Sovetskoe foto za 10 let", which opened in Moscow on 4 March 1928. Lissitzky was a juror on the selection committee.

¹⁹ The pavilion prospectus and catalogue provide detailed information about individual displays, including artist credits. However, numerous exhibits have subsequently been credited wholly to Lissitzky.

²⁰ The presence of Khalatov's signature at the lower left of Lissitzky's sketch for an unrealized flag-stand suggests that individual designs required approval. Jan Debbaut, ed., *El Lissitzky, 1890-1941: architect, painter, photographer, typographer* (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum): 201, fig. 153.

by the spiraling slogan "Proletarians of all lands unite." The large ring represented the Village and City Soviets, a second below that the Congress of Soviets. Cables running between various sections were meant to "indicate the effects of the resolutions of the Soviet Congress on the entire country." The Big Star was illuminated by floodlights at the base and flickering lights behind the large ring's inscription.²¹ Next to the Star were the Transmissions, six rotating belts that created a "passage of moving walls." At the time of the pavilion's opening, the belts were decorated with Soviet newspapers, some cut out to form letters. The newspapers were later replaced by hand-sketched German versions of Soviet agitational posters.

The photographic frieze spanned a rear wall (fig 6). Recent discussions of Pressa have exaggerated the importance of the frieze, even identifying it as the pavilion's centerpiece.²² Properly, the frieze served as a backdrop. In addition to being partially obstructed by other exhibits and the second floor film screening room, the frieze hung behind a major show-stopper, Vasili Ermilov's endlessly spiraling columns in the Ukrainian section. While the frieze is often characterized as a flat plane, the catalogue entry describes it as follows:

From authentic photo material, which shows the worker and farmer united with their leaders, a large photograph...was montaged together and spread

²¹ "Grosser Stern," *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons*: 25.

²² Buchloh erroneously identifies the frieze as a "photofresco." Buchloh: 104. The source of the term *photofresco* is a text by Sen'kin dated to 1930. Sergei Sen'kin, "An Explanatory Note Pertaining to the Photo-Fresco Work Program." *Von der Malerei zum Design: Russische konstruktivistische Kunst der Zwanziger Jahre* (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1981): 146-152. There has also been confusion of the frieze with the pull-out photomontage of the catalogue.

out upon a transparent net, which hangs before a wall, upon which text runs in color.²³

Images of the installation from different viewpoints reveal that the photographs did not form a flat plane but were cut-out, puncturing the plane with irregular shapes through which fragments of text in German and Russian were visible. The text was a quotation from Lenin: "The education of the masses is the main task of the press in the transition from Capitalism to Communism." The visual component of the display was primary, while the text is literally the secondary underlying matrix. This format reflects the decision of the pavilion's planners to reach the foreign viewer primarily by visual means, supplemented by concise, complimentary texts. The engaged viewer was forced to physically respond to the work, to change positions to read the text submerged behind the cutout photographs (figs. 7, 8).

An anonymous article about the pavilion published in *Zhurnalist* during the planning of *Pressa* explicitly describes the supplementation of compelling visual material with citations and excerpts from Lenin:

The main difficulty of the organization of the Soviet section is that it is necessary first of all to show the content of our press and the special quality of its work as organizer of the masses. It is necessary to shown this to the foreign viewer, who does not know Russian. To show this at an enormous exhibition, where the visitor must take in a colossal quantity of exhibits. Hence, it follows that the means of material design, the method of visual transmission of the content of our exhibits should be the clearest, most prominent, should say much with the help of very few, miserly means of communication...

...We should provide the foreigner a conception of our press chiefly with the help of visual means--maps, maquettes, posters, film stills, etc. Of course, text (in several foreign languages) explaining the exhibits is needed, but it should be the briefest, most comprehensible and convincing. Therefore for the text it will be necessary to use excerpts and

²³ *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillon.:* 26.

citations from Lenin, from those of his works in which he speaks about the press and its role, also from corresponding works by other comrades, documents, resolutions, etc.²⁴

In the frieze, the photographs are literally primary, while the text appears as a secondary stratum underlying the plane of visual images. Earlier in 1927, Lissitzky published "Unser Buch" (Our Book) an essay in which he argued for the primacy of visual images over printed text.²⁵ In this essay, Lissitzky speculated that the photocollography printing process, a photomechanical printing technique, would transform the book:

...the production style for word and illustration is subject to one and the same process--to collotype, to photography. Up to the present there has been no kind of representation as completely comprehensible to all people as photography. So we are faced with a book-form in which representation is primary and the alphabet secondary.²⁶

The photo-frieze is similarly structured. Photographs are literally primary, while the text is secondary behind the plane of photographs. The unusual relation of word and image in the *Pressa* frieze appears to have been a deliberate exploration of the power of photographs versus text to communicate a message. Twice in this essay, Lissitzky notes the rising popularity and significance of illustrated magazines: "The invention of easel-pictures produced great works of art, but their effectiveness has been lost. The cinema and the illustrated weekly magazine have triumphed."²⁷

²⁴ "Podgotovka sovetskogo pavil'ona": 32.

²⁵ El Lissitzky, "Unser Buch (U.D.S.S.R)," *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 1927 (Mainz: Verlag der Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, 1927): 172-178. For an abridged English translation, see Lissitzky, "Our Book," in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life-Letters-Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968): 360-363.

²⁶ Lissitzky, "Our Book": 361.

²⁷ Lissitzky, "Our Book": 363.

Lissitzky's essay was clearly influenced by the ideas propounded by the critics and writers affiliated with the journal *Novyi LEF* ("New Left Front of the Arts"). The artist's description of the obsolescence of easel painting and its replacement by new, technical media is clearly indebted to writings by the critic Osip Brik. In contrast to its predecessor, *LEF*, this journal began publication in 1927 with a smaller, more cohesive group of editors who were more closely unified in their ideas about creative theory and practice. In the first issue, the introductory statement explained that

We have issued it [*Novyi LEF*] because the cultural situation in the realm of art has become a complete swamp over the last few years.

Market demand is becoming for many the measure of the value of cultural phenomena.

Given the weak ability to purchase cultural objects, the measure of demand often compels people of the arts to occupy themselves, willy-nilly, with a simple timesaving conformity to the awful taste of NEP.²⁸

This editorial asserted that *Novyi LEF* would continue its "perpetual struggle for a communist culture." During 1927, the methods of this struggle were increasingly defined as the use of factual materials and journalistic reportorial forms, instead of more traditional literary techniques and genres. This was made clear in an editorial published in late 1927:

To the easel painting, reckoned to fulfill the function of the reflection of reality, *Lef* opposes the photograph--a more precise, quicker, and more objective means of the fixation of fact.

To the easel painting, reckoned to exhale from itself unceasing agitation, *Lef* opposes the poster, which is topical, calculated and adapted for the street, the newspaper and the demonstration--pouncing upon the emotions of the viewer with the sureness of artillery fire.

In literature, to *belles-lettres* with pretensions towards "reflection," *Lef* opposes reportage, literature of fact, breaking from literary artistic

²⁸ "Reader!" Anna Lawton, trans. and ed. *Russian Futurism Through its Manifestoes, 1912-1928* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 249. Originally published as: "Chitatelu," *Novyi LEF*, no. 1 (1927): 1-2.

traditions and entirely departing for the field of publicity, to serve the newspaper and the magazine...

On the other hand, *Lef* continues to cultivate poetry, which it places within a definite agit function, assigns clear tasks in the public sphere and coordinates with other newspaper material.²⁹

During 1927 *Novyi LEF* published a variety of literary and visual works that made use of factual material, such as Tret'iakov's "Den Sy-Khua (Bio-Interview)," whose subject had been his student in the Russian Department of the National University in Beijing in 1924-1925. In the introduction to the bio-interview, Tret'iakov describes Den Sy-Khua as the source of the raw material facts from which he formed the text.³⁰

Halina Stephen has located the origins of the literature of fact in Sergei Tret'iakov's travel notes for a trip to Beijing that were compiled at the suggestion of Osip Brik and were published in the final issue of *LEF* in 1925.³¹ Subtitled "travel film" (*putfilma*), these notes do not take the form of conventional first-person travel narrative. Stephen asserts they resemble the montage juxtapositions of Vertov's film:

The influence of the scenario technique is visible in Tretyakov's laconic style, in the prominence of visual detail, and in the narrative structure of the travel notes, which presents individual scenes without transitions and without connections other than the connections implied by the chronological progress of the trip. Tretyakov surveys the setting and the people using a "movie camera" technique that registers the exotica of the non-Russians. The consciousness of the collective point of view, which Dziga Vertov was attempting to cultivate through his film chronicles, was here accomplished in prose.³²

²⁹ "My ishchem," *Novyi LEF*, 1927, no. 11-12: 1.

³⁰ Sergei Tret'iakov, "Den Sy-Khua (Bio-interv'iu)," *Novyi LEF*, No. 7, 1928: 14-33.

³¹ Halina Stephen, "*LEF*" and the Left Front of the Arts. *Slavistische Beiträge*, volume 142 (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1981):185.

³² Stephen: 186.

As this discussion of Tret'iakov's travel notes suggests, numerous aspects of this "filmic" approach to compiling a text would also be applicable to photographic essays: the scenario form, the prominent registration of visual details, the creation of a narrative by stringing together discrete units, and the significance of montage juxtapositions.

While the term "factography" has occurred frequently in recent discussions of the Soviet artistic avant-garde, it is more appropriate to refer to this practice as "literature of fact" or "the fixation of facts." The term "factography" has been used to suggest the existence of a cohesive, fully articulated theory of visual representation based upon factual documentary materials. However, as used by the *Novyi LEF* group, the term "factography" referred primarily to a type of literary practice and not to visual representation. The use of the term "factography" instead of "literature of fact" in discussions of visual art minimizes the literary origins of this representational practice.³³

In the section entitled "Factography" from the essay "The Literature of Life Building", Nikolai Chuzak identified the following literary forms as types of literature of fact: the sketch (*ocherk*), the scientific-artistic monograph, the newspaper, the factomontage (*faktomontazh*), the newspaper and magazine feulliton, the biography, memoirs, autobiography and the human document, the essay, the diary, the account of a court session, travel description, and transcripts of meetings. He also provided examples of

³³ For example, Buchloh summarizes the subject of his essay "From Faktura to Factography" as "a discussion of only some aspects of the respective paradigms that generated the crucial concern for *faktura* in the first period, and that made *factography* the primary method in the second period of Russian avant-garde practice." Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Fall 1984): 85.

various types of “factography”--all of which are literary or journalistic written works.³⁴

There is no mention whatsoever in this essay of photography or other visual forms of the fixation or dispersion of facts. Furthermore, while Nikolai Chuzak employed the term “factography” as an alternative expression for “literature of fact,” this term was not used by other proponents of literature of fact, such as Tret’iakov and Brik. Indeed, during the 1930s the term is more often encountered in negative contexts, as a means of opprobriation.

While it is tempting to read the Soviet pavilion as falling within the purview of *Novyi LEF*'s endorsement of journalism and the literature of the fact, a very different group of journalists were involved in *Pressa*'s planning. The pavilion was the joint production of a group of activist journalists who, during the mid-1920s, developed many of the reporting techniques which would be central to the First Five-Year Plan: the worker-correspondent movement, the production review, and activist journalism. While much commentary on the pavilion has stressed the centrality of photomontage to its design, close scrutiny of the catalogue, installation photos, and reviews indicates that it is erroneous to view the pavilion primarily as an achievement of photomontage or “factography.”³⁵ Archival records also reveal that the photographers whose work was incorporated in the pavilion were not left photographers, but professional photojournalists

³⁴ Nikolai Chuzhak, “Literatura zhiznestroeniia,” *Novyi LEF*, 1928, no. 11: 15.

³⁵ Tupitsyn describes *Pressa* as giving “Soviet artists an opportunity to demonstrate to Western viewers the quintessence of their achievements in photomontage.” Tupitsyn, “From the Politics of Montage to the Montage of Politics,” *Montage and Modern Life*, Matthew Teitelbaum, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992): 96.

working in the central press.³⁶ The abundance of highly symbolic displays, dioramas, dolls, and hand-drawn images alongside the allegedly factographic photographs, documents and statistics indicates that the pavilion did not adhere to the practice of the fixation and presentation of facts as articulated in *Novyi LEF*. Rather, the pavilion followed the example of activist mass journalism, making use of diverse media and genres not simply to report on but also to intervene in the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union.

While photomontage was employed in the frieze and catalogue, the inclusion of movement, electrical lighting, film, and other devices that activated the entire environment were of greater significance to the pavilion's popular success. Viewers were impressed by the dynamism of the exhibits and the use of light to activate the displays. Many exhibits contained moving components, some powered by electricity. In addition to Lissitzky's transmissions, Ermilov's rotating spirals created the illusion of ceaseless movement towards "Communism" (fig. 9), Grigorii Borisov and Nikolai Prusakov's worker and farmer correspondent displays contained turning drums with materials about the mass journalism movement (fig. 10); and the Red Army exhibit by Aleksandr Naumov and L. Teplitskii consisted of revolving cylinders with a row of soldiers on one

³⁶ Archival records from the planning of the Soviet pavilion include extensive lists of photographers from whom work was requested, including: P. Otsup, the Bulla brothers, V.I. Savel'ev, Shaikhet, Fridliand, Chemko, Karmen, Samsonov, Grokhovskii, Vladimirtsev, Tules, and Boris Ignatovich. Sources for photographs include Russ-Foto, Press-Klishe, Museum of the Revolution, Tsentroarkhiv, and the Museum of the Red Army. GARF, f .5283, op. 11, d. 38, ll. 59-61. Pavel Grokhovskii of the Moscow Association of Photo-Reporters served as a photography consultant, while Semen Evgenov (ODSK and *Sovetskoe foto*) and Mezhericher (Press-Klishe Photo Agency) were on exhibition sub-committees. GARF, f. 5283, op. 11, d. 35, l. 21.

side, and the same men out of military service on the other (fig. 11).³⁷ Viewers could manipulate other exhibits. The TASS display featured a world map with buttons that illuminated various news events and demonstrated the flow of information around the globe (fig. 12).³⁸ Electrical illumination was an important component of individual exhibits and the pavilion as a whole. During the evening, the letters "USSR" burned on the front facade, while multi-colored exhibit lights shined and flashed through the pavilion's large glass windows. In a review of *Pressa* that appeared in the newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt*, the Soviet pavilion's dynamism was contrasted to the staidness of the English exhibit:

What a contrast between the pavilions of England and Soviet Russia. Everything that divides them finds expression here. It strikes the eye especially clearly, as both countries are found under the same roof. England is the most pompous, pious, self-assured in the representation of its social order. Soviet Russia acts upon us with mechanical apparatuses, moving belts, fantastic Cubist zigzags, makes one move ahead with nervous shocks, which are represented boldly, boastfully, and in bright colors.³⁹

A photographic self-portrait executed in 1928 suggests that Lissitzky himself considered the activation of the pavilion's dynamic visual environment a major achievement. The word "dvizheniia" (movement) is prominent in the dense web of images of the transmissions and Big Star (fig. 13).

³⁷ Semenova "From my reminiscences": 23. *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons*: 49.

³⁸ Egon Erwin Kisch, "Der Russische Pavillon auf der *Pressa*," *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Volume IX (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1983): 125.

³⁹ *Berliner Tageblatt*, 26 May 1928. Reprinted in *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons*: 107. This excerpt is also cited in Khalatov's report to Sovnarkom. GARF, f. 5283, op. 6, d. 50, l. 38.

The Soviet organizers were very concerned about the reception of the pavilion by foreign visitors. International reviews and visitor book entries were assiduously collected and analyzed by the organizers. The pavilion catalogue included five pages of early positive international newspaper coverage of the pavilion in German, English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Polish.⁴⁰ Visitor's comments and foreign press coverage, including negative and hostile responses, were also extensively critiqued in Khalatov's report to Sovnarkom.⁴¹ In the Sovnarkom report it is alleged that roughly 3.5 million visitors passed through the pavilion, a highly improbable figure which would require a daily attendance of about 30,000.⁴² While the visitors to the pavilion were a diverse group, Khalatov was especially interested in the written comments not of workers, but of members of the foreign intelligentsia.⁴³ The Soviet organizers gathered more than 400 press clippings about the pavilion. Khalatov commented as follows on the numerous reviews:

Above all it must be said that not a single bourgeois paper that wrote about the exhibition found it possible to be silent about us. And furthermore: while several newspapers cursed us and many sought to sow mistrust towards the pavilion, they all noted the superiority of our pavilion before the pavilions of other countries.⁴⁴

In the Sovnarkom report many reviewers, even those that were extremely hostile to the Soviet Union, were highly impressed by the dynamic visual environment of the Soviet

⁴⁰ "Zeitungs-Besprechungen," *Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons*: 107-111.

⁴¹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6, d. 50, ll. 33-42.

⁴² GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 27.

⁴³ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 36.

pavilion. Khalatov quoted at length a particularly negative review which appeared in a conservative Munich Catholic newspaper, *Allgemeine Rundschau*, under the headline "The Anti-Christ at Pressa." This review also dwelt extensively on the dynamic exhibition environment:

In these obtrusively bright halls everything is in motion. The enormous bands run ceaselessly from above to below. The endless spirals move around themselves. Sharp red, green, and blue electric light bulbs flash out like will-o'-the-wisps. Everywhere is feverish impassioned life--without soul. The grinding machine is a sparkling, deafening mirage of the culture of the world, but behind it stands hell. Yes, shamelessly hell is exhibited in this building with its means, its methods, and its successes in the little, barely visible corner called "the atheist corner." If there is some sort of soul in the Soviet section, then perhaps it is only in this part; namely it is the cold hand of the devil which in the final reckoning brings this machine into motion.⁴⁵

One lesson, which the future editors of *SSSR na stroike* seem to have learned from such hostile responses, was to avoid highlighting controversial ideological differences, such as the state promotion of atheism, in the international arena. On a lighter side, many of the reviewers praised the design of the Soviet pavilion. While other pavilions had access to the same display technology, the Soviets were complimented for having best mastered pavilion design:

With regard to the exhibition technology, here the Soviet pavilion is without doubt in first place. Its organizer was, of course, a Russian Piscator. Everything is in motion. Wheels and spheres move, spirals strive to the ceiling, statistical tables flash from above and below, to right and to left, here, there and everywhere. In any case, the Russians best of all have

⁴⁴ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 37.

⁴⁵ "Der Anti-Christ auf der Pressa," *Allgemeine Rundschau* 25, no. 25 (23 June 1928): 431. Cited in Khalatov's report to Sovnarkom. GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 40.

mastered the spirit of the time. After it the other pavilions seem old-fashioned.⁴⁶

At the conclusion of his analysis of foreign press coverage, Khalatov states that his analysis of the foreign coverage deliberately omitted the worker press: "We intentionally did not cite the workers' press which is close to us, because if we consider the bourgeois reviews cited above, the feeling of goodwill which the communist worker press regarded us will be quite clear."⁴⁷

While the entanglement of art and politics has been central to discussions of *Pressa*, a thorough analysis of the political context is largely lacking. *Pressa* coincided with the Shakhty Affair, a show trial of bourgeois technical specialists that ushered in Stalin's forced industrialization program and the onset of the cultural revolution.⁴⁸ In March 1928 fifty Soviet and five German technical specialists were arrested in the Shakhty district of Donbass, Ukraine. Accused of industrial sabotage, the defendants went on trial in Moscow in May, one week before the gala opening of the Soviet pavilion. During *Pressa*, a German engineer was sentenced to a year in prison but was released shortly thereafter.⁴⁹ Despite the exoneration of the German defendants, the incident

⁴⁶ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 41. The source cited in the report is the newspaper *Die Breslauer neuste Nachrichten*.

⁴⁷ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6., d. 50, l. 42.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the Shakhty Affair, see Kendall Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978): 69-94.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the Shakhty Affair and German-Soviet relations see: Timothy E. O'Connor, "Culture and Diplomacy in the 1928 Soviet Shakhty Affair: A.V. Lunacharskii on the NEP in Culture and G.V. Chicherin on German-Soviet Relations," *European Studies Journal* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 33-49.

sharply undermined German-Soviet relations. In the extensive report submitted to Sovnarkom Khalatov mentioned the affair:

The Cologne Exhibition of the Press coincided with the Shakty trial, which, as is known, was used by anti-Soviet minded circles of Germany in the aims of undermining our relations with the latter. And it must be said that our appearance at Cologne was a factor which held this hostile agitation in check to a certain degree.⁵⁰

Khalatov claimed that the Soviet pavilion helped to counteract negative publicity in Germany during the trial. The implications of the Soviet pavilion's utilization of German technology under these circumstances are significant. Furthermore, the activist journalism techniques showcased in the pavilion would play a significant role in collectivization and the class war, and Lissitzky appears to have eagerly embraced this role of the press in his art. In a multiple exposure photograph from 1928, Lissitzky superimposed a bust of Lenin with a *Pressa* display concerning the role of the press in the collectivization of agriculture and the transformation of the countryside (fig. 14). While the content of the pavilion was dictated to the artists by the exhibition committee, this photographic experiment with visual material drawn from one of the more topical examples of the activist press is indicative of Lissitzky's aspirations to participate in the transformation of the Soviet Union.

Pressa was also directly linked to a major political event of an explicitly cultural nature that would ultimately lead to the publication of *SSSR na stroike*. The official opening of the Soviet pavilion coincided with the return of writer Maksim Gor'kii to the Soviet Union. Returning from voluntary exile, Gor'kii stopped en route in Cologne to visit the pavilion and to rendezvous with his old acquaintance Khalatov, who

accompanied him back to the Soviet Union (fig. 15). Gor'kii, who had been abroad since 1921, was overwhelmed by the exhibition. He told a Soviet reporter in Germany that "The originality and distinctiveness of the Soviet pavilion plunged me into amazement."⁵¹ In the newspaper *Izvestiia*, where coverage of his return was intermingled with reviews of *Pressa*, Gor'kii's response to the pavilion appeared:

In the Soviet pavilion are excellently and originally shown not only the results of the colossal labor of our press, but also the very process of labor in motion.

The exhibits in all other pavilions are diagrams, books and the like, presented in a static condition. Much is executed very prettily, elegantly, all more or less familiarly, in all is the heavy stamp of traditionalism, of inertia.

It is as if this motley mass of exquisitely executed paper says, "This is upon wherethe press of the European governments HAS STOPPED."

The Soviet pavilion says, "Here is how and where the press of the worker-peasant Soviet Union is GOING."⁵²

Gor'kii was clearly struck by the dynamism of the pavilion, which he interpreted as showing the Soviet Union in motion forward, into the future. Gor'kii's return marked the start of a new period in Soviet culture that would ultimately lead to the declaration of Socialist Realism as the official Soviet creative doctrine in 1934. One shared aesthetic feature of the *Pressa* pavilion and Socialist Realism was the fabrication of a forward-looking, positive image of the Soviet Union.

⁵⁰ GARF, f. 5283, op. 6, d. 50, l. 26.

⁵¹ L. Khait, "Maksim Gor'kii o sovetskom pavil'one na Kel'nskoi vystavke," *Izvestiia*, 27 May 1928.

⁵² *Izvestiia*, 1 June 1928. This text was also appeared in the following spread about *Pressa*: "Kel'nsksaia vystavka pechaty," *Zhurnalist*, 1928, no. 5-6 (May-June): 20.

In its coverage of Gor'kii's return, the Communist Party paper *Pravda* included an article that related a conversation in his train compartment en route to Moscow (fig. 16). After reporting the writer's positive response to the pavilion, discussion of Soviet newspapers is recorded. Gor'kii condemned the prevalence of negative self-criticism in the Soviet press:

They provide food for the gutter press of the West. Little is said about achievements. Comrade Khalatov put forth an excellent idea about the publication of a magazine *Nashi dostizheniia* ["Our Achievements"]. Yes, we need such a magazine--and not for the West. No, for us, for internal consumption. We do not see these achievements, because we are immersed in them, but they need to be seen, it's necessary.⁵³

The positive image presented by the Soviet pavilion was a formative factor in the foundation of *Nashi dostizheniia* (*Our Achievements*, Moscow, 1929-1937), a magazine devoted to conveying the achievements of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ Drawing upon the example of the Pressa pavilion, this magazine would stress the positive, in place of the negative criticism that was endemic to the Soviet Press. *SSSR na stroike* was initially conceived as an illustrated supplement to *Nashi dostizheniia*, and many of the organizers and artists who collaborated on the Pressa pavilion were later affiliated with *SSSR na stroike*. Gor'kii, Khalatov, Uritskii and Il'ia Ionov, official director of the Pavilion in Cologne, were all on the editorial board.

⁵³ Os'mov, "The Path to Moscow," *Pravda*, 29 May 1928.

⁵⁴ For stenograms and notes related to the initial foundation of *Nashi dostizheniia*, see "Stenogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu o zhurnale 'Nashi dostizheniia'," 9 June 1928, and Gor'kii and Khalatov, "Zapiska o zhurnale 'Nashi dostizheniia'," 5 July 1928, *M. Gork'ii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 2, *Arkhiv A.M. Gor'kogo*, tome 10 (Moscow: Nauk 1964): 184-198.

From *Nashi dostizheniia* to *SSSR na stroike*

Founded by Gor'kii during his visit to the Soviet Union in 1928, the aim of *Nashi dostizheniia* was to present to Soviet workers and farmers the successes and achievements of their work in all areas of construction throughout the Soviet Union. The programmatic editorial written by Gor'kii for the first issue, "About the Little People and Their Great Work," begins with an analogy to coral polyps, tiny blind creatures that together build from their bodies reefs, fortresses which are able to smash iron ships.⁵⁵

Outlining the magazine's goals and methods, Gor'kii declared:

The magazine *Nashi dostizheniia* will show the growth and successes of our labor energy, our achievements at all areas of labor, which have created treasures, achievements in the construction of a new state and in our struggle against all that we inherited from the petty bourgeoisie [*Meshchanstvo*], against all that with which it contaminated us. In the magazine will be printed essays [*ocherki*] about our grandiose undertakings in all areas of construction, science, culture, everyday life, art.

But the task of the magazine is not only about this. It should develop its pages like a cinematic film which will show our minor everyday work: the successful display of the personal initiative of individuals, our successes in the matter of invention, if they alleviate the conditions of labor or increase production, our successful attempts to change the old everyday life for the better--in general, all "minor" work at factories and in the fields which, however slightly, renews life.⁵⁶

By popularizing diverse achievements of socialist construction among a mass audience, *Nashi dostizheniia* sought to stimulate the formation of a socialist consciousness among Soviet workers and peasants, to enable them to see their work, however minor it might seem, as part of a larger project that would build a socialist state. Following the analogy

⁵⁵ Maksim Gor'kii, "O 'malen'kikh' liudiakh i velikoi ikh rabote," *Nashi dostizheniia* 1929, no. 1: 5.

⁵⁶ Gor'kii, "O 'malen'kikh' liudiakh": 9.

of the coral polyps, *Nashi dostizheniia* sought to provide insight to combat the potential blindness of the Soviet masses to the significance of their work. The factual essay (*ocherk*) was designated as the primary vehicle for accomplishing this and documentary film that records the successes of everyday life is set forth as a model; both the *ocherk* and documentary film would also be central to *SSSR na stroike*.

In the introductory editorial Gor'kii stated that self-criticism of socialist construction would not be addressed in the magazine. Instead, *Nashi dostizheniia* chose to focus exclusively on the positive:

This magazine is needed to sharply separate our good from our bad. The good exists, there's a lot of it, but there is more of the bad. And, since there is more of the bad, the good is not sufficiently and clearly visible.

That's why it's necessary to separate the good in a special place, where people, even those who do not adequately well understand the enormous significance of our labor and the greatness of our aims, will see what we have already achieved and how we achieve successes in the matter of the building of the new life.

We will learn from this, the good. Only upon this may we build our new morality, those rules of conduct which will raise and interpret our labor energy even more and will compel us to deeply sense the joy of creative life.⁵⁷

Gor'kii's stance stemmed from his estimation of the caustic criticism prevalent in the Soviet press as a counter-productive waste of energy.⁵⁸ Self-criticism led to intensely negative coverage of the Soviet Union in the foreign press, which made use of the highly critical coverage in such papers as *Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn'* ("Economic Life") to discredit the Soviet industrialization drive. Gor'kii conducted a campaign against self-

⁵⁷ Gor'kii, "O 'malen'kikh' liudiakh ": 10.

criticism and even wrote Stalin about his concerns regarding it.⁵⁹ The rejection of self-criticism anticipated Socialist Realism's emphasis on the positive representation of socialist reality, even at the risk of distorting or ignoring existing social conditions. One critical connection between the two magazines was their mutual aim of highlighting the economic and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union in a widely accessible, highly positive, affirmative manner--*Nashi dostizheniia* by means of words and *SSSR na stroike* by means of visual images.

A proposal for a photographic supplement was discussed at a meeting of the secretariat of *Nashi dostizheniia* on 12 February 1929. Gor'kii, who was in Sorrento, Italy, at the time, reacted negatively upon learning of the proposed plans and demanded clarification from the editors:

[Regarding] The resolution about the publication of an illustrated bi-weekly under the aegis of *Nashi dostizheniia* and the incomprehensible resolution "to obtain the transfer of the editing of this magazine from *Ogonek* to *Nashi dostizheniia*." Something here is also not quite clear: it is considered advisable to publish the magazine, that means: it is not yet being published, but at the same time "the transfer of the editing of this magazine is being obtained" -- does that mean that it is already being published?⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For Gor'kii's stance on self-criticism in relation to *Nashi dostizheniia*, see E.I. Cherniak, 'M. Gor'kii i zhurnal *Nashi dostizheniia*,' *Trudy Moskovskogo gosudarstennogo istoriko-arkhivnogo instituta* 18 (1963): 295-312.

⁵⁹ Gor'kii to Stalin, 27 November 1929, "A.M. Gorky: Selected Correspondence," *Political Archives of the Soviet Union* 1, no. 2 (1990): 177-180. In 1930 an article by the president of Amtorg was published in an attempt to counteract such foreign misunderstandings of Soviet self-criticism. Peter Bogdanov, "Self-Criticism and the Soviet Press," *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 5, no. 10 (15 May 1930): 199-201.

⁶⁰ Gor'kii to the Secretariat of *Nashi dostizheniia*, end of February 1929, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 2: 122.

Gor'kii's query indicates that the concept for the new magazine may have initially been developed by the *Ogonek* joint-stock publishing company under the aegis of chairman and editor-in-chief Mikhail Kol'tsov, an innovative journalist and tireless promoter of Soviet photography. The pioneering Soviet illustrated magazine *Ogonek* began publication in April 1923 with the motto "No material without a photo or drawing." By 1929, *Ogonek* was appearing in an edition of almost half a million.⁶¹ *Ogonek's* founder was Kol'tsov, who began his journalism career making documentary films during the Russian Civil War and first encouraged Dziga Vertov to work in film.⁶² An innovative and visionary journalist, Kol'tsov played a central role in the development of Soviet photography and the popular illustrated press. Through *Ogonek*, Kol'tsov laid the groundwork for modern photojournalism in the Soviet Union. In addition to establishing national and international mechanisms for the production, distribution, and preservation of photographic material, *Ogonek* actively promoted the further development of Soviet photography and photojournalism through such measures as the development of the specialized photographic magazine *Sovetskoe foto*, which began publication in 1926.

The initial conception of the magazine within *Ogonek* may account for the contributions of many of its staff members to *SSSR na stroike* as editors, office managers, translators, and photographers, often working simultaneously for both publishing

⁶¹ Belaia and Skorokhodov: 447.

⁶² Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 40.

organizations.⁶³ While *SSSR na stroike* may initially have been conceived of at *Ogonek*, Kol'tsov appears to have turned to *Nashi dostizheniia* due to a shortage of resources and doubts that his publishing house could produce such a magazine with sufficient technical quality.⁶⁴ According to a report submitted to the Economic Council of the Russian Federation early in 1929, the overwhelming success of *Ogonek's* numerous popular publications had so over-burdened its printing shops that two-thirds of its publishing work was farmed out to other presses in 1928. This situation was further aggravated by a shortage of paper in 1929.⁶⁵ By attaching the proposed magazine to *Nashi dostizheniia*, a publication produced by Gosizdat (the State Publishing House of the Soviet Union) under the editorial guidance of Gor'kii, Russian's most prestigious writer, these difficulties were more easily overcome.

However, Gor'kii continued to react negatively to the proposal for an illustrated supplement. On March 3rd he wrote to Artemii Khalatov, head of Gosizdat and an editor of *Nashi dostizheniia*, in complaint:

I am the initiator of the publication of the magazine *Nashi dostizheniia* and its chief editor. This means, that I take the primary responsibility for all that takes place under the mark of the magazine. The 13th protocol of the meeting of the secretariat informed me of the undertaking of the

⁶³ Individuals affiliated with both *Ogonek* and *SSSR na stroike* include: editors Kol'tsov and Semen Uritskii; art director V.P. Mikulin; photographers Semen Fridliand, Elizaveta Mikulina, and Arkadii Shaikhet; translator and photographer Vladimir Chumak; translator Padriac Breslin; and artist Nikolai Troshin.

⁶⁴ The majority of an *Ogonek* board meeting on 15 July 1929 was devoted to discussion of the substandard quality of printing and production of publications. Efim Zozulia reported on the bad poor quality of publications: "*Ogonek* is filthily printed. The reproduction of photographs is disgraceful, the retouching is scandalous." GARF, fond A-299 (Aktsionernoe izdatel'skoe obshchestvo "Ogonek"), op. 1, d. 7, l. 14.

⁶⁵ GARF, fond A-2306 (Ministerstvo prosveshcheniia RSFSR), o. 69, d. 2088, l. 14.

publication of an illustrated bi-weekly *Nashi dostizheniia* under a different editorial board. The motives, by which it was deemed necessary to publish such a magazine, are not known to me and neither are the members of the editorial board. I highly fear that this magazine will not maintain that modest tone which we all considered necessary for *Nashi dostizheniia*. "Little pictures,"⁶⁶ in general, are not convincing. To be perfectly frank, this undertaking makes no sense to me and is not to my liking.⁶⁷

Gor'kii's reaction was pre-mature. Shortly after writing this note, he received the protocol for a meeting of the editorial board of *Nashi dostizheniia* that contained further details about the proposed publication of an illustrated bi-weekly supplement. By March 5th Gor'kii had changed his mind, although he still had reservations about the overly hasty planning of the new publication.⁶⁸

Gor'kii visited the Soviet Union from May to October 1929, during which time plans for the new publication continued to develop and work began on a mock-up for the first issue. On 16 June 1929, *Izvestiia* published Gor'kii's speech at a special meeting of *Nashi dostizheniia*. After reviewing the aims, audience, and initial work of *Nashi dostizheniia*, Gor'kii discussed future plans and announced the publication of an illustrated supplement:

In agreement with comrade Piatakov, it has been decided to enclose in each issue of the journal the illustrated magazine *Na stroike*, which will be printed on good paper and will represent construction in the form of photographs and drawings. This is intended chiefly for abroad; there it is

⁶⁶ Gor'kii uses the diminutive "kartinki," an indication of derision and irony.

⁶⁷ Gor'kii to A.B. Khalatov, 3 March 1929, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 154.

⁶⁸ Numerous discussions of *SSSR na stroike* credit Gor'kii for the magazine's initial conception and fail to mention the writer's initial opposition to its publication. If Kol'tsov was the initiator, this may have been willfully ignored after his arrest and execution during the Terror.

needed to know no less than here, because there are readers who sympathize with us there.⁶⁹

In this same speech, Gor'kii stressed the mass nature of the audience of *Nashi dostizheniia* and its pedagogical aims, the education of the working masses of the Soviet Union. This audience was quite different from the proposed supplement's intended audience, foreign readers sympathetic to the Soviet Union. Initially conceived of as a supplement to *Nashi dostizheniia*, a magazine with the aim of educating Soviet peasants and workers, *SSSR na stroike* was intended for distribution abroad. The incompatibility of these two audiences and aims probably became evident during the planning of the new magazine, as *SSSR na stroike* appeared at the end of the year as an independent publication. This announcement is also notable in its reference to Piatakov, who was Chairman of the State Bank of the USSR (*Gosudarstvennyi bank*, hereafter Gosbank) at that time. While the type of sympathies of the foreigners is not specified, Piatakov's involvement in the matter indicates that financial considerations were behind the initial motivation for the foreign distribution of *SSSR na stroike*.

On 7 October 1929 *Literaturnaia gazeta* announced Gosizdat's plans for "an illustrated magazine of a new type" and described the new publication as a supplement to *Nashi dostizheniia*: "That which *Nashi dostizheniia* tells its readers in living literary form, *SSSR na stroike* should transmit by means of illustrations, snapshots, drawings by artists,

⁶⁹ "Reorganizatsiia zhurnala *Nashi dostizheniia*: M. Gor'kii o zadachakh zhurnala," *Izvestiia*, 16 June 1929.

prints, and so forth."⁷⁰ This description indicates that the visual composition of the proposed publication was still in flux. While drawings, prints, and illustrations would occasionally appear, *SSSR na stroike* was predominantly photographic from its initial appearance. By the end of the year, however, it was resolved that the magazine would be primarily photographic. An advertising poster for the new publication makes clear the composition of the magazine: photographs of Soviet industrialization literally spill out of the pages (fig. 17). This announcement in *Literaturnaia gazeta* also notes that the magazine was to be printed in a single edition with captions in four languages, and not in four different language editions. Despite the appearance of announcements about the new magazine, bureaucratic measures had to be taken to ensure its publication. On October 17, Khalatov wrote Gor'kii, requesting his help in overcoming obstacles placed in the way of its approval for publication by Platon M. Kerzhentsev, the editor-in-chief of *Kniga i revoliutsiia* and Deputy Head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee.⁷¹

⁷⁰ "SSSR na stroike (Illustrirovannyi zhurnal novogo tipa)," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7 October 1929. Vladimir D. Pel't, *M. Gor'kii-Zhurnal'ist (1928-1936)*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1968): 221-222.

⁷¹ Khalatov to Gor'kii, 17 October 1929: 173-174. An old Party official, Kerzhentsev (1881-1940) was known for his control over Soviet Cinema and his persecution of major filmmakers, including Pudovkin and Eisenstein. Jeanne Vronskaya and Vladimir Chugaev, *Biographical Dictionary of the Soviet Union* (London: Bowker-Saur, 1992): 209.

Prior to his return to Italy, Gor'kii examined the mock-up for the first issue and made a set of critical comments.⁷² In his critical notes Gor'kii recollected that during planning it was resolved to present photographic material "so that before the reader arises a more or less entire picture of construction" on individual themes related to socialist construction. Gor'kii faulted the plan of the first issue for failing to do this: "In it the government's work is given an unorganized, fragmented appearance which cannot be adequately convincing to the observer-reader." He also questioned the representation of industrial processes and Soviet workers:

... in the plan of the first issue appear photographs of several *processes* of labor: "the assembly of engine cylinders", "the testing of a machine tool", "the assembly of turbines", and so on. I do not think that we have introduced anything new into the work processes that would be able to amaze foreigners. It is more likely that precisely these processes will display "the old way", the still not gotten rid of negligent attitudes of workers towards material and the inadequately intelligent attitude towards work. It is entirely possible, that in the photographs foreigners will see workers, who stand and smoke, not taking part in the work of the comrades -- intolerable behavior from the point of view of the "masters" of Europe and America. There is no sense whatsoever in presenting photographs of workers who behave like spectators of the work of comrades.⁷³

Gor'kii was most concerned with the image of the Soviet Union presented to a foreign public. Gor'kii's comments point to one of the central representational problems confronting the magazine: how to represent Soviet industrialization to Western European and American audience in a manner that highlighted the ideological difference of the

⁷² *Literaturnaia gazeta* announced that a trial issue of the magazine was to be printed at the end of October 1929. I have not yet found any evidence of a trial issue. "SSSR na stroike," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7 October 1929.

⁷³ "Zamechaniia k planu 1-go No. *Stroiki*, 1929," *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1, 294.

Soviet system from capitalism while minimizing the backwardness of Soviet technology and the poor work culture prevalent in Soviet industry. Gor'kii's reference to the "masters' of Europe and America" suggests that the targeted audience included Western industrialists and capitalists.

The first issue of *SSSR na stroike* was published in December 1929 (figs. 18, 19). Gosizdat organized the efficient production of *SSSR na stroike* in various languages by using the same plates to print the photographic material for all the editions; this visual ground was then over-printed with text in varying languages to produce the four different editions. On the whole, there was no significant difference in the content of the Russian and foreign language editions, excepting the absence of the slogan "Workers of the World Unite!" from the title pages of the foreign editions. The reason for the omission of Karl Marx's revolutionary slogan was twofold: to minimize restrictions on the foreign distribution of the magazine due to censorship as revolutionary propaganda and to avoid the alienation of non-Communist readers. The cover graphics were also comparable for the Russian and foreign language editions, and the basic cover design by artist Ol'ga Deineka would remain standard until 1931, No. 12, when the first thematic illustrated cover appeared. Even after this, the initial basic cover was often employed.⁷⁴ The typography of the first issue was also quite similar in the various language editions. The type was executed in all capitals, with no hyphenation, even where the breaking of words between lines might usually require it. This simplified modernist approach doubtlessly

⁷⁴ Ol'ga Konstantinova Deineka (1897-1970) is credited for the cover page in the first two issues. Deineka was a painter and graphic artist, who assisted Kupreianov and Favorsky at the Vkhutemas from 1919-1923 and designed children's books during the

made the task of typesetting in foreign languages less burdensome for the Russian printers.

While the basic form and content of the various editions were almost always comparable, the Russian and foreign versions of the very first issue featured quite different editorial introductions. The English, French, and German language editions of the first issue were prefaced by brief introductions which are roughly comparable (see the introduction to the English edition, above). The aim set forth in the editorial statement is decidedly neutral: the documentary representation of the "colossal construction now taking place in the Soviet Union" by means of photography. While socialist construction could connote radical political and social transformation, the content of the first issue allows a more limited interpretation of it as industrialization.

In contrast, the Russian editorial statement, allegedly written by Gor'kii, is politicized and outlines in detail the goals and methods of the new magazine against the context of the economic reconstruction of the Soviet Union (for full translation, see appendix A).⁷⁵ The Russian editorial is prefaced by a quotation from Stalin: "We go at full steam along the path of industrialization towards socialism, abandoning behind our age-old Russkie backwardness."⁷⁶ This citation initiates a central theme of the introduction: the magazine's representation of the transformation of the backwards

1920s. Milner, *Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Artists*: 117-118. Deineka was the wife of Nikolai Troshin, the most prolific designer of *SSSR na stroike*.

⁷⁵ For a draft of the statement published in 1951, see Gor'kii, *Povesti, vospominaniia, publitsistika, stat'i o literature*, tome 3 of *Arkhiv A.M. Gor'kogo* (Moscow 1951): 187-188, 285.

⁷⁶ The substandard term "rasseiskaia" is used here. This choice of word suggests pseudo-national pride. I have rendered it as "Russkie" to capture the ironic quality of the term.

Russian empire into an industrialized Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The statement begins by describing the destruction of the economy during the "imperialist slaughter" of the First World and Russian Civil Wars, and the restoration of the economy under the leadership of the Communist Party. Claiming that the Soviet Union now stands "on the eve of a technical and cultural revolution," the lack of knowledge about these events is lamented:

But this grand labor is unknown in all its scope to our masses of workers and peasants. It is also unknown to the proletariat of Europe and that layer of the technical and radical intelligentsia which secretly and overtly is sympathetic to us, the builders of a new form of state life.⁷⁷

While the particular problem that the magazine confronted was almost identical to that of *Nashi dostizheniia*, the scope of its ambitions was far broader. Three distinct audiences are mentioned in this passage: Soviet workers and peasants, the European proletariat, and non-Soviet intelligentsia. Noting that statistics, diagrams, and verbal descriptions are often not sufficiently convincing and are subject to distortion in the hostile foreign press, photography is presented as a more objective of representation method, which overcomes these shortcomings:

In order to rob our enemies inside and outside the Soviet Union of the ability to distort and discredit the display of words and numbers, we decided to turn to drawing with light [*svetopis*], to the work of the sun -- to photography. You do not accuse the sun of distortions, the sun illuminates what exists as it exists.

We should bring photography and cinema to the service of our construction. Photography and cinema are fully able to graphically and concisely present the enormous scale of construction work being carried out by the proletariat in the land of the Soviets. Such films as *Turksib*, *The Murmansk Road* and others, in spite of their number of shortcomings, brilliantly solve the task. It is necessary that cinema be closely occupied with the artistic representation of our construction. But photography

⁷⁷ *SSSR na stroike*, 1930, no. 1: 3.

should also be devoted to the service of construction not randomly, without system, but systematically and constantly. Photographic representations of our construction -- dynamic representation at that -- should be accessible to all interested in our construction. The magazine *USSR in Construction* puts before itself precisely the task of the systematic representation of the dynamics of our construction by means of drawing with light [*svetopis*].

The term *svetopis*' is comparable to the English "heliography", an archaic term for photography that literally means "sun drawing." The use of this archaic term evokes the early years of photography, when it was accepted as an utterly objective, unmediated form of representation of external reality, a mirror of nature. The statement argues for the systematic application of photography towards the representation of industrial construction and invokes the precedent of films that documented major construction projects of the late twenties, such as Viktor Turin's *Turksib* (1929), a documentary about the Turkistan-Siberia Railroad that was widely screened and publicized both in the Soviet Union and abroad.⁷⁸ The editorial advocated the emulation of films like *Turksib*, not simply to document the progress of construction, but to do so in a dynamic manner. The statement concludes modestly noting the deficiencies of the first issue, especially its lack of dynamism. These shortcomings are credited to the lack of a systematic approach to the task of photographic representation, a problem that the magazine seeks to resolve.

Gor'kii's negative estimation of the first issue was also evident in his correspondence. Already back in Italy at the time of publication, Gor'kii recorded his

⁷⁸ The film attracted much attention and was extensively reviewed in the German press around the time of *SSSR na stroike*'s initial publication. Early in 1930, Turin appeared at film screenings in Berlin, Hamburg, London, and Vienna, and *Turksib* was also distributed to Denmark, Belgium, Japan, Turkey, Finland, Switzerland, United States, and Italy. GARF, fond A-144 (Komitet sodeistviia stroitel'stvu Turkestan-Sibirskoi

comments on the first issue and forwarded them to Moscow. Gor'kii again criticized the fragmentation and lack of cohesive organization of the photographic material and singled out several photographs as irrelevant. He also faulted the accompanying written text:

The texts need to be composed with complete accuracy. Such modifiers as "almost," "approximately," "equal to or about" and so on I find impermissible, because they may give the impression of ignorance about what is discussed. One should not speak about that which is hypothetical but only about that which has been accomplished.⁷⁹

Gor'kii wrote negatively of the magazine in a letter to Khalatov: "I can't say anything positive about the magazine *Na stroike*. Having worked on it for several months, having spent heaps of money, the people created something very insipid and almost deformed."⁸⁰ On 5 January 1930, a distressed Khalatov responded to Gor'kii's criticism. Admitting that there were many mistakes in the first issue, Khalatov viewed the bringing into being of the new magazine as an achievement and looked positively towards the future: "Now the matter is not how to lay out the magazine, but that such a magazine has now appeared."⁸¹

The Audience of *SSSR na stroike*

Once *SSSR na stroike* began publication, the editors then set about developing its readership and monitoring responses to it. While documentation regarding domestic readership remains scanty, archival records concerning the distribution of the magazine

zheleznoi dorogi pri Sovete narodnykh komissarov RSFSR), op. 1, d. 170, ll. 26-30; GARF, f. 5283, op. 1, d. 143, ll. 18-21.

⁷⁹ Gor'kii, "Zamechaniia po zhurnaly 'Stroika'," 1929, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 296.

⁸⁰ Gor'kii to Khalatov, end of November to 16 December 1929, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 178.

abroad provide insight on the development of a foreign readership. The audience initially targeted in the foreign distribution of *SSSR na stroike* may be divided into a number of distinct groups: foreign business and trade communities, representatives of foreign governments, intellectuals sympathetic to the Soviet Union, and foreign workers. Clearly, these diverse audiences had radically varying interests and expectations in relation to the Soviet Union. Given its emphasis on a maximum of visual material and a minimum of text, *SSSR na stroike* could provide different messages to different readers. For example, an issue on electrification might be read as an opportunity for the sale of technical equipment and expertise by an American businessman, as evidence of the transformation of the backwards Russia into a progressive modern society by an intellectual, or as proof of the ongoing realization of Lenin's revolutionary plans in the Soviet Union by a communist worker.

The publication of the magazine in a number of distinct editions reveals the publishers conceived of their readership as a differentiated audience. The first issue of both Russian and foreign editions of *SSSR na stroike* appeared in two separate printings that were several months apart.⁸² The printing of the first Russian issue in two batches was necessitated by the technical difficulties presented by the initial production of a high quality illustrated magazine in a large print run. By May 1930, the demand for *SSSR na stroike* surpassed Gosizdat's ability to print it, and subscriptions to the magazine were

⁸¹ Khalatov to Gor'kii, 5 January 1930, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 186.

⁸² The second printing is indicated as such in the credits of both the English and Russian editions. The first Russian printing lists a print run of 26,000, while the second lists 64,500 copies.

closed at 50,000.⁸³ While the two Russian printings varied only slightly from each other, the two foreign language printings differed substantially. The first foreign language printing features thicker high quality paper and a light-weight slick matte cover, while the second printing is on thinner, pulpier paper and feature a thicker, coarser cover. In the first two years of publication, the foreign language editions were published in luxury and economy versions, which were intended for different audiences.⁸⁴ The deluxe edition was distributed primarily to select foreign business concerns, publications, and Soviet representations, while the economy edition was published for foreign workers and intellectuals. The mastheads of both versions list the annual subscription price as five dollars (10 rubles), yet archival documents indicate that the luxury edition actually cost three times that amount to produce.⁸⁵

Gosbank, The State Bank of the USSR, played a critical role in the initial introduction and distribution of the new magazine abroad. Georgii Piatakov, chairman of Gosbank, was also the editor-in-chief of the publication, and a special "Board on the Question of SSSR *na stroike*" was established within the bank. Gosbank purchased the entire initial print run of the foreign luxury editions for the first several issues of the

⁸³ Khalatov to Gor'kii, 16 May 1930, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 198. During 1930 the combined print-run of all editions was roughly 60,000 copies per issue. The size of the print-run is printed in each Russian issue and in the foreign editions from 1931, no. 12 to 1934, no. 11.

⁸⁴ In 1930 magazine orders from VOKS to the periodical sector of Gosizdat specified which edition. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, ll. 43, 51, 70, 86. By 1932 VOKS invoices no longer distinguished luxury and economy editions; this suggests that the luxury foreign versions were only published for a year or two. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 105, ll. 49-56.

⁸⁵ Khalatov to N. Petrov, Chairman, VOKS, 4 or 7 May 1930. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 93.

magazine. Furthermore, 3,500 subscriptions to the luxury edition were purchased in 1930 by Gosbank and the People's Commissariat of Trade (*Narodnyi komissariat trgovli*, hereafter Narkomtorg) for distribution to their delegations abroad and to foreign firms.⁸⁶ Responsible for all financial transactions related to Soviet foreign trade, Gosbank played a crucial function in all foreign business deals. Gosbank and Narkomtorg's role in the initial distribution of the foreign language editions indicates that the magazine's origins were closely connected to the financial and trade interests of the Soviet Union. With the start of the industrialization drive of the first five-year plan, the Soviet Union began to import foreign equipment and technical expertise on an unprecedented scale. Technical assistance was sought from the United States, France, Germany, and Great Britain and numerous foreign specialists and skilled technical workers were hired to work in the Soviet Union. This investment in foreign technology and personnel required massive payments in hard currency, which created a potentially crippling trade deficit for the Soviet Union. In order to pay for industrialization, the Soviet Union sought to increase its export of both finished products and natural resources, including agricultural products, anthracite coal, asbestos, furs, lumber products, manganese ore, oil, and phosphate fertilizer--the very natural resources and products which were regularly featured in *SSSR na stroike*.⁸⁷

While the Soviet Union enjoyed a relatively fair balance of trade with most of its trading partners, the United States was an exception. An extensive analysis of Soviet-

⁸⁶ Khalatov to Petrov, May 1930. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 93.

American trade published by Amtorg in 1930 asserted that Soviet purchases from the United States made up five-sixths of the total trade between the country during the fiscal year ending September 30, 1930.⁸⁸ Soviet attempts to achieve a more favorable balance of trade were thwarted by the United States' refusal to recognize the Soviet Union. Severe restrictions on the extension of credit to the USSR were placed on both American banks and the sellers of commodities for shipment to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, both the importation of Soviet gold and the deposit of Soviet gold in the United States were prohibited. This made it more difficult for the Soviet Union to purchase goods and services from the United States. During 1930 trade with the United States was further aggravated by accusations of dumping, of the use of forced labor in the Soviet lumber industry, and that Amtorg was a front for the Comintern.⁸⁹

The development of state-organized tourism in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s was also a factor in the development of the magazine. During the late 1920s, tourism was aggressively promoted simultaneously as a source of hard currency and a means of propaganda for economic and political recognition of the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ Tourism was also directly connected with foreign trade negotiations; numerous contracts

⁸⁷ For statistics and a contemporary discussion of Soviet exports and imports, see *Economic Handbook of the Soviet Union* (New York, American-Russian Chamber of Commerce: 1931).

⁸⁸ "Soviet Products on the American Market: An Analysis of Soviet-American Trade," *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 5, no.22-23: 448.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of these allegations and their effect on Soviet-American Trade, see Katherine A.S. Siegel, *Loans and Legitimacy: The Evolution of Soviet-American Relations, 1919-1933* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996): 133-138.

were negotiated in connection with the Russian-American Chamber of Congress tour during the summer of 1929. To facilitate and regulate tourism, Intourist was established in 1929. Increased tourism led to the development of internal tourism routes, such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and the development of specialty tourism publications, such as the English language magazine *Soviet Travel* (Moscow, 1932-1934).

Gosbank actively promoted and monitored the reception of this magazine abroad by collecting the comments of foreign readers.⁹¹ In May 1930 an extensive list of comments on the new magazine by a variety of foreign individuals and institutions was forwarded to Fedor N. Petrov, the chairman of VOKS.⁹² These responses provide insight on the nature of the foreign audience which *SSSR na stroike* initially sought to cultivate. The list is broken down into the following categories: 1. Banks; 2. Industrial joint stock organizations and companies; 3. Members of British Parliament; 4. Magazines and newspapers; 5. Politicians, literary figures, and public figures; 6. Workers and Soviet delegations abroad. The list's composition provides further proof that the cultivation of Soviet trade and financial interests were a top priority for the editors of the magazines; roughly two-thirds of the 110 responses were from European and American banks and businesses, while responses from foreign workers and Soviet delegations abroad appear only as an addendum at the end of the document.

⁹⁰"American Tourist Travel to U.S.S.R. Developing," *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 4, no. 12-13 (July 1, 1929): 237-238.

⁹¹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 12, d. 318, l. 84.

⁹² GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, ll. 93-102.

Several of the American and German banks which provided feedback on the new magazine had been involved in financial deals with the Soviet Union during the 1920s. For example, Chase National Bank and the Equitable Trust Company were leaders in circumventing restrictive American finance laws and providing credit to the Soviet Union. In 1928 Chase, the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago, and the Bank of Italy in San Francisco were partners in a failed attempt to float a Soviet bond issue in the United States.⁹³ The reviews include evaluations from all of these financial institutions. Many respondents were members of the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, an organization that was initially established in 1916 but became inactive after the Revolution and was reestablished in 1926 by a group of American businessmen interested in developing trade with the Soviet Union.⁹⁴ Reviews of the magazine were sent by the following Chamber of Commerce members: Chase National Bank, General Electric, Bertron Griscom & Co., Westinghouse Electric International Company, International General Electric, Underwood Typewriter Company, and the Equitable Trust Company. All of these companies were involved in financing, provisioning, and advising the Soviet Union in the industrialization drive of the first five-year plan and most were represented in a Chamber of Commerce delegation of American businessmen that traveled in the Soviet Union during the Summer of 1929.⁹⁵ While most of the business reviews are

⁹³ Antony C. Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development, 1917-1930* (Stanford: The Hoover Institution, 1968): 277, 290.

⁹⁴ James K. Libbey, "The American-Russian Chamber of Commerce," *Diplomatic History* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 233, 238.

⁹⁵ "Personnel of Business Men's Delegation to U.S.S.R.," *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 4, no. 12-13 (1 July 1929): 236.

anonymous, a number of prominent business leaders are featured in the document, including J.P. Morgan and Edsel Ford, chairman of the Ford Motor Company, with whom the Soviet Union had signed a \$30 million contract for the purchase of automobiles and technical assistance for the construction of an automobile factory in Nizhni-Novgorod in May 1929.⁹⁶ The list also includes a review from Percival Farquhar, a financier and member of the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, who provided consultation on the development of the Russian metallurgical industry for both the Tsarist and Soviet governments.⁹⁷

The content of the majority of the reviews is not especially noteworthy. Most are brief and filled with the pleasantries expected of hopeful business partners. Edsel Ford's is typical: "I was very interested by the photographs and information contained in your magazine. I will be glad if you will continue to send me the magazine, which provides us the possibility to be up to date on the progress of your construction program."⁹⁸ Ford's request for a subscription is also characteristic; many writers expressed interest in receiving future issues, while others indicated their intentions to subscribe to the magazine. The repetitive, formulaic quality of the reviews indicates that they were solicited by means of form letters, which accompanied complimentary issues of the magazine. Three reviewers stated that they would display copies of the magazine in their waiting room. One response suggests that this was done in answer to a request: "I will be

⁹⁶ Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development*: 246-249.

⁹⁷ "Percival Farquhar," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 45 (New York: James T. White & Company, 1962): 303-304.

⁹⁸ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 98.

glad to exhibit one copy of this magazine in the waiting room, so that other people may have the possibility to form an impression of Russia for themselves."⁹⁹ Notably, in May 1930 Gor'kii reported to Khalatov that an acquaintance had seen three issues of the magazine in the waiting room of a Parisian bank.¹⁰⁰

Concrete criticism and commentary also appeared in the reviews. Walter Loeb, a British respondent, was generally complementary but reserved criticism for the translation and suggested that individuals with greater mastery of English edit the text.¹⁰¹ Translations were awkward in the early issues and were a source of concern for the magazine, which actively sought to improve the quality of translation. The Director of the Reichsbank Fuchs in Berlin suggested that diagrams be included, "since they testify to progress in the most visual way."¹⁰² Reflecting upon his own experience of visiting the Soviet Union, the reviewer for the International General Electric Company of New York suggested that the magazine expand their coverage beyond the documentation of industrial development:

I would advise, however, that in future issues, in addition to industrial development, that you would also show what has been done by you in the area of sanitation, public health, etc. I personally saw many good things in this direction, and I am convinced that people who have not been in the USSR know very little about this.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Gor'kii to Khalatov, 22 May 1930, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1, 200.

¹⁰¹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 95.

¹⁰² GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 95.

¹⁰³ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 97.

Beginning with issue number 7-8 for 1930 such subjects began to be regularly included in *SSSR na stroike*--and it was precisely these themes that were best suited to distinguish Soviet conditions from Capitalist conditions during the throes of the Depression.

The reviews reveal that another significant foreign audience targeted by the new magazine was foreign politicians. A member of the Soviet delegation to Great Britain, the Press Attache I. Joel'son, enthusiastically reported:

The magazine *SSSR na stroike* has created a big furor here. For example, when they showed Thomas a copy of this magazine, he was so delighted that he asked for it to be distributed to all the members of the Cabinet. The magazine was also being passed around among members of Parliament. "Among us," say the English, "it provokes astonishment and interest that this or that factory, this or that building constructed in the USSR under Soviet power is there, where earlier there was an empty space."¹⁰⁴

Responses from foreign politicians were predominantly limited to members of the British Parliament. In 1921 England was the first major power to conclude a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and became the first to establish full diplomatic relations in 1924.¹⁰⁵ In May 1927 Great Britain broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union; this act led to a sharp decline in Soviet purchases. Towards the end of 1929 diplomatic relations were re-established under a new Labour government and trade between the two countries was correspondingly stimulated. Among the reviewers of *SSSR na stroike* were the secretary of David Lloyd George and E.F. Wise, both of whom advocated the

¹⁰⁴ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 100.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Williams, *Trading with the Bolsheviks : the politics of East-West trade, 1920-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, c. 1992): 55.

resumption of diplomatic relations during parliamentary debates in 1929.¹⁰⁶ Lloyd George served as the prime minister of Great Britain from 1916 to 1922, during which time Great Britain established a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and was the leader of the British Liberal Party in 1930. Prior to his election to Parliament in 1929, E.F. Wise had served as an economic advisor on foreign trade to CENTROSOYUZ, the Russian co-operative organization, from 1923 to 1929.¹⁰⁷ As a Labour member of Parliament, E.F. Wise contributed to the development of Soviet-British trade through such activities as speaking at a luncheon organized in 1929 by the *British-Russian Gazette and Trade Outlook* which was attended by representatives of British firms interested in doing business with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁸ Wise provided the following comment about the new magazine: "I congratulate you on the first issue of *SSSR na stroike*. One of its merits is its absolutely objective character. It goes without saying that I will do everything so that it will be seen by the greatest number of people."¹⁰⁹ Aside from further demonstrating his commitment to the promotion of trade with the Soviet Union in Great Britain, Wise's comment suggests the importance of the magazine's ability to create and project an aura of objectivity. Soviet propaganda, especially that of the Communist International, was considered a violation of the sovereignty of British

¹⁰⁶ "Parliamentary Debate on Relations with Russia: Points from Speeches," *British-Russian Gazette and Trade Outlook* 6, no. 2 (November 1929): 26-28.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Stenton and Stephen Lees, *Who's Who of British Parliament*, vol. 3 (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979): 388.

¹⁰⁸ "The Second British-Russian Gazette Luncheon," *British-Russian Gazette and Trade Outlook* 6, no. 2 (November 1929): 31.

¹⁰⁹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 98.

domestic affairs, and propaganda was one of the issues which led to the rupture in relations in 1927. By means of the purported objectivity of photography, the editors of *SSSR na stroike* could claim that the magazine documented “the truth.” The practical need of the Soviet Union to develop better trade relations with the United States and Great Britain may have encouraged the adoption of a more “neutral” tone for this publication.

Responses to the magazine by foreign publications were overwhelmingly positive and full of congratulations regarding its superlative technical quality. Notably, these reviews by were also dominated by foreign business and trade publications, including *Banker's Magazine*, *Bradstreet's*, *The British Trade Journal*, *Corn Trade News*, *Mining World*, and *Science et Industrie*.¹¹⁰ A few socially and politically progressive publications also responded, including *The Nation* and *La Vie Ouvrière*, a French worker magazine. Photographs from *SSSR na stroike* were often reproduced in pro-Soviet publications abroad. *The Economic Review of the Soviet Union*, a publication of the Amtorg trading company in New York, reproduced photographs of oil fields and an electrified railway station in Baku from *SSSR na stroike* on the covers of several issues.¹¹¹ Similarly, the *British-Russian Gazette and Trade Outlook* reproduced a group of photographs from *SSSR na stroike*.¹¹² Both of these publications printed notices about the new magazine in February 1930, and advertisements for *USSR in Construction* appeared in *The Economic*

¹¹⁰ GARF f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 99.

¹¹¹ *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 5, nos. 9 (1 May 1930) and 11 (1 June 1930).

¹¹² *British-Russian Gazette and Trade Outlook* 7, no. .7 (April 1931): 178.

Review later in 1930.¹¹³ In March 1931, VOKS sent two articles to A. Prins, their representative in Holland, for publication in a Dutch magazine. Photographs were included for an article on woodcutting, while Prins was referred to an issue of *UdSSR im Bau* for photographic material related to collective farms.¹¹⁴

The investment of resources in the production of an expensive deluxe edition and the solicitation of reviews of *SSSR na stroike* from the international business community indicate that this foreign audience was of primary concern to the magazine's editors. However, the publication of a less expensive edition indicated a desire to reach a less elitist foreign audience. Artemii Khalatov, head of Gosizdat and an editor of *SSSR na stroike*, explained the rationale behind the two foreign editions in a letter that accompanied the list of reviews sent to VOKS:

... Narkomtorg and Gosbank SSSR have made a subscription for their delegations abroad and for foreign firms, altogether 3,500 annual sets of the expensive edition (for 30 rubles apiece) in French, German, and English.

Further, considering the necessity of the satisfaction of inquiries about this magazine on the side of individual subscribers, in particular foreign laborers, Gosizdat is publishing an inexpensive edition of *SSSR na stroike* in those languages for the price of 10 rubles (5 dollars) for a yearly set.

The wide distribution of this magazine abroad is possible, however, only with the active participation of such social organizations as the Society for Cultural Ties with the USSR, etc.

I ask you to consider this question and render the appropriate assistance.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ "Illustrated Soviet Magazine Shows Industrial Construction," *Economic Review of the Soviet Union* 5, no. 3-4 (15 February 1930): 70. "U.S.S.R. in Construction," *British-Russian Gazette & Trade Outlook* 6, no. 5 (February 1930): 88.

¹¹⁴ H. Schumann, VOKS, to A. Prins, 26 March 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 91, l. 117.

¹¹⁵ Khalatov to Petrov, 4 or 7 May 1930. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 93.

Khalatov identified foreign firms and Soviet trade and banking delegations abroad as the foreign audiences of primary significance to Gosbank and Narkomtorg. While Khalatov cited the need to publish a less expensive edition for individuals and foreign workers, the lag in production of the less expensive edition of the first issue (already three months delayed at the end of March 1930) indicates that publication of an affordable edition for foreign workers and sympathetic intellectuals was not a top priority.¹¹⁶ Khalatov appealed to VOKS and other organizations to assist in the distribution of the magazine abroad. VOKS' mission was the cultivation of favorable relations with foreign cultured elites (artists, academics, educators, writers, cultural organizations, and sympathetic intellectuals). While regular subscribers from abroad could order the magazine through representatives of *Mezhdunarodnaia kniga*, VOKS also distributed issues of the magazine, purchasing copies in bulk from the Periodicals Sector of Gosizdat.¹¹⁷ The geographic range of distribution by VOKS was extensive; aside from the industrialized English, French, and German speaking nations, copies of the magazine were literally sent around the world, to countries ranging from Portugal to Afghanistan.¹¹⁸ VOKS also included copies of the magazine in exhibitions that it circulated abroad, such as a Soviet photography exhibition that toured England during 1930.¹¹⁹ Due to financial constraints,

¹¹⁶ GARF, f. 5283, op. 12, d. 318, l. 84.

¹¹⁷ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, ll. 27, 31.

¹¹⁸ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 44, 54, 55.

¹¹⁹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 12, d. 318, l. 8.

VOKS was not able to send an unlimited number of magazines to its representatives abroad; hence, its distribution was selective.¹²⁰

In 1930 and 1931, the American and British Sectors of VOKS distributed complimentary copies of *USSR in Construction* to and solicited responses from a variety of educators, social workers, members of British Parliament, and representatives of progressive cultural organizations. VOKS sent the following query out to recipients of *USSR in Construction* in September 1931:

For some time we have been sending you an illustrated journal. As we have received no confirmation from you, we should be interested to know if it has been reaching you safely. We should also be glad to hear your opinion on the journal and whether you would be interested to receive it in the future.¹²¹

This letter was sent to individuals throughout the British Commonwealth. Professor Archibald Vivian Hill of the Physiology Department of the University of London replied to VOKS:

Yes, I have been receiving the illustrated journal *USSR in Construction*, which you have been kind enough to send me. The photographs and their reproductions are excellent and I should be very glad to receive further copies as issued.

I have received also various papers containing political propaganda, speeches by George Bernard Shaw, etc. These do not interest me, so please do not trouble to send them in the future.¹²²

Hill welcomed the receipt of the magazine, while distinguishing it from the Soviet political propaganda that he rejected. Hill perceived the photographs to be less

¹²⁰ In October 1930 the Central European Sector of VOKS in Moscow informed their representative in Vienna that they were unable to send more than one complimentary copy of the magazine to representatives. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 49.

¹²¹ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 83.

ideologically tainted and more palatable to his taste than the overtly political texts that were also sent to him. In contrast, George Strauss, a Labour Party member of British Parliament, sent an entirely affirmative response:

I can assure you that I am extremely interested in this publication, which I consider is rendering an invaluable service to Russia and those abroad who are sympathetic to her ideals or admire her activities. I very much hope that you will continue to send me future copies.¹²³

Strauss himself was sympathetic to Russia. A few months earlier in September 1931, he and two other members of Parliament had visited Russia and traveled to various industrial and agricultural sites. Upon their return to England, they published a highly positive pamphlet about their perceptions of the transformation underway in the Soviet Union.¹²⁴ George A. Cornish, a professor of Geography at the Ontario College of Education of the University of Toronto, also replied affirmatively and informed VOKS that he had made both film and lantern slides from *USSR in Construction*. The film slides were intended "to be widely used in the schools of Canada," while the lantern slides were for his own lectures on Russia.¹²⁵

American recipients of complimentary subscriptions from VOKS included several university professors who had recently visited the Soviet Union, such as Susan Kingsbury, a professor of social economy at Bryn Mawr College who wrote a study on

¹²² A. V. Hill to VOKS, 7 October 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 78.

¹²³ George Strauss to VOKS, 16 December 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 70.

¹²⁴ Aneurin Bevan, E.J. Strachey, and George Strauss, *What We Saw in Russia* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1931).

¹²⁵ George A. Cornish to VOKS, 17 October 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 73.

Soviet women factory workers,¹²⁶ the philosopher John Dewey,¹²⁷ and George S. Counts, an education theorist and the Associate Director of the International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University.¹²⁸ Some recipients had recently visited the Soviet Union, where they had been in contact with VOKS. In October 1931, Lena Madessin Phillips wrote and thanked VOKS for her complimentary subscription to *USSR in Construction*.¹²⁹ En route to a conference in Switzerland where she would establish the International Federation of Business and Professional Women in August 1930, Philips led a group of American women on a tour of Northern Europe that included an eight day visit to Russia. While in Moscow, the delegation met women members of the Communist party at a tea arranged by VOKS.¹³⁰ Clarence Pickett, Executive Secretary of the

¹²⁶ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, ll. 30, 32. Susan Kingsbury, *Factory, Family and Women in the Soviet Union* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1935).

¹²⁷ Dewey visited the Soviet Union with a group of American educators in 1928 and published a favorable account of his experiences. "Dewey, John," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 40 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1955): 1-2.

¹²⁸ George S. Counts to B. Minlos, VOKS, 22 December 1930, GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 107. Counts visited Russian in 1927 and 1929 and wrote extensively on the Soviet Union. "Counts, George Sylvester," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. F (New York: James T. White & Co., 1942): 190.

¹²⁹ Lena Madessin Phillips to Helen Schlossberg, VOKS, 21 October 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 72.

¹³⁰ Lisa Sergio, *A Measure Filled: the Life of Lena Madessin Phillips drawn from her autobiography* (New York-Washington: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1972): 5, 91-92.

American Friends Service Committee, wrote VOKS to acknowledge the receipt of *USSR in Construction*; Pickett had also briefly visited the USSR in 1930.¹³¹

The magazine was also distributed to foreign institutions, cultural organizations, and libraries. Among the responses collected by Gosbank were reviews from the library of the League of Nations (Geneva), the Biblioteque Nationale (Paris), Duke University, and the Austrian Trade Museum. Complimentary subscriptions also appear to have been provided to numerous American university libraries, such as the University of Michigan. VOKS also assisted in the distribution of the magazine to foreign cultural organizations. The head of the Anglo-American Sector of VOKS wrote the editorial offices of *SSSR na stroike* in July 1930 to request that a complete set of the journal be sent to H. Chapman, secretary of the London-based International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, who had offered to print an announcement and review of the magazine in the *Bulletin of the Federation*.¹³²

SSSR na stroike was also distributed to foreign workers and Soviet activists. The extensive list of reviews compiled by Gosbank includes the responses of several workers and labor activists from France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. These comments are set off by the heading "Notes from letters received by the International Committee of Miners"; this suggests that copies of the magazine were distributed by Soviet agencies involved with the international workers' movement. The response of the editorial board of a Canadian workers' magazine was exceptionally vivid:

¹³¹ Clarence Pickett to Helen Schlossberg, VOKS, 15 October 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 79. Clarence Pickett, *For More Than Bread* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953).

¹³² GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, ll. .80-81

We have illustrated magazines here, but nothing like that. There is *The Graphic*—it is a large magazine. But it's not the same thing. I want to point out here the photographs. Wonderful, extraordinary, thrilling pictures of labor. Try to imagine for yourself such a photographer in our industry! Englishmen aren't able to do this...Bent over this magazine, you daydream. Some day, yes, some day our workers will do as the Russians. Only then can we build in the same way.¹³³

Clearly, this reader had a very different reaction to the magazine than Edsel Ford. Rather than responding to the USSR as a potential market, the editor envisions a Soviet Canada through the images presented in the magazine. However, few workers had the opportunity to daydream over the images in *SSSR na stroike*. The French workers' magazine *La Vie Ouvrière* indicated reservations about its accessibility: "... we allow ourselves to express the wish that your magazine will be more accessible to the worker."¹³⁴ This statement is ambiguous; was the problem of access related to the magazine's content or simple physical availability? Probably both. The extremely expensive magazine was not readily accessible to foreign workers, let alone to ordinary individuals and institutions. In August 1931 the secretary of the Plenipotentiary representative of the Soviet Union in Poland informed the press office of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs that the present economic crisis had made the subscription to the magazine by local institutions and individuals highly problematic.¹³⁵ The high price did not exclude workers from its audience, but it did affect their form of reading, as indicated in the review by the worker from Czechoslovakia: "The magazine

¹³³ GARF f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 102.

¹³⁴ GARF f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 99.

SSSR na stroike made me especially glad. It is passed from hand to hand. Our comrades and unorganized workers study it with eager interest."¹³⁶

In December 1930 Lopez Cardozo, a member of the Dutch Communist Party, sent the editors of *SSSR na stroike* his reactions to the magazine. Claiming to have shown the magazine to roughly 3,000 workers of a metalworking factory in Utrecht, Cardozo concluded that for foreigners and barely conscious workers, it was necessary to depict not only machines, buildings, factories, and plants, but also to show Soviet workers themselves and all aspects of their lives. Cardozo asserted that this would reveal the characteristic difference between the lives of the workers of the capitalist and Soviet countries. Noting that the capitalist worker is a slave to the much hated machine, he urged the editors to show happy Soviet workers using machines. Cardozo concluded his letter:

If you answer me: Our magazine is intended primarily for the Russian worker, then my observations are superfluous. In such a case, I ask you if it would be possible from time to time to print an issue composed primarily for the foreign worker -- the little conscious and still not conscious--about the wonder of Communist life on the path toward realization in the USSR.¹³⁷

Cardozo would surely have been mortified to discover that the foreign edition of magazine was intended primarily for industrialists and only secondarily for workers. Nevertheless, the magazine did increasingly conform to Cardozo's suggestion to show

¹³⁵ M. Iushkevich (1st Secretary of the Plenipotentiary of the USSR and Representative of VOKS in Poland) to Podol'skii (Otdel Pechati NKID), 3 August 1931. GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 106, l. 82.

¹³⁶ GARF, f. 5283, op. 2, d. 63, l. 102.

workers' lives in such issues as "The Giant and The Builder" (1932, no. 1), which presented simultaneously the story of the construction of the Magnitogorsk steel plant and the transformation of the illiterate peasant Viktor Kalmykov into an educated worker and Party member. In 1932 photographs of Kalmykov taken from *SSSR na stroike* were reproduced on covers of *R.I.L.U. Magazine*, a publication of the Red International Labor Union, and *Feiten*, a Dutch worker photography magazine.¹³⁸

While the cultivation of a foreign audience was clearly a top priority of *SSSR na stroike*'s editors at the time of its initial publication, the development of a domestic audience was of no less importance. From the very first year of publication, issues of *SSSR na stroike* were published in conjunction with Party Congresses and other events of special significance to an elite Soviet audience. This began with the publication of an issue (1930, no. 5-6) in conjunction with the Sixteenth Party Congress and the inclusion of a greeting to the Congress on the cover of the Russian edition.¹³⁹ The greeting to the delegates was not a mere whim; in May 1930 Khalatov wrote Gor'kii about plans to publish this issue of *SSSR na stroike* and an issue of *Nashi dostizheniia* in time for the Party Congress. "The Giant and The Builder" (1932, no. 1) was published to coincide with the setting into production of the first blast furnaces at Magnitogorsk and was

¹³⁷ Lopez Cardozo to Editors of *SSSR na stroike*, 4 December 1930. GARF, f. 5283, op. 5, d. 239, l. 28.

¹³⁸ *R.I.L.U. Magazine* 2, nos. 7 and 8 (1932): covers. *Feiten* 5 (1932). The cover of *Feiten* is reproduced in: Flip Bool and Jeroen de Vries, *De arbeiderfotografen: camera en crisis in de jaren '30* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1982): fig. 135.

¹³⁹ The text reads "XVI-mu parts'ezdu, vozhdii proletariata -- privet!" *SSSR na stroike*, 1930, no. 5-6.

distributed at the 17th Party Conference, devoted to industrial development.¹⁴⁰ “Four Bolshevik Victories” (1934, no. 2) was published in conjunction with the 17th Party Congress.¹⁴¹

During the first years of publication, foreign specialists and technology were often featured in *SSSR na stroike* as an integral part of the construction of socialism. However, once heavy investment in foreign technology began to sharply decline and Soviet industry became increasingly self-reliant, the content of the magazine palpably changed. By 1934, foreign technology and specialists were almost absent from the pages of the magazine. When foreigners did appear, they were usually represented as visitors who marveled at Soviet achievements or testified to the progress of socialist construction. Analysis of the number of copies printed for the English and Russian versions suggests that the production of the magazine for foreign consumption was of decreasing significance by 1934. Print run figures appear in all Russian issues and were included in the English edition from December 1931 to November 1934 (see appendix B). These figures indicate that the production of the magazine for foreign distribution steadily declined. Political developments during 1933 surely had an impact on the distribution of the foreign editions. Hitler’s rise to power and the aftermath of the Reichstag Fire doubtlessly had disastrous consequences on the distribution of *UdSSR im Bau* in Germany, while the United States’ recognition of the Soviet Union in November 1933 probably diminished the importance of *USSR in Construction*. Another indicator of the

¹⁴⁰ Khalatov to Gor’kii, 3 February 1932 *M. Gor’kii i sovetskaia pechat*, book 1: 262.

¹⁴¹ “Khudozhestvennaia dokumentatsiia chetyrekh pobed,” *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 4 February 1934.

decline of foreign circulation is the scarcity of later issues of *USSR in Construction* in American library collections. Despite this apparent decline in foreign circulation, the Russian print-run figures remained strong (appendix C). Circulation figures reached a low point in 1936, the year of Piatakov's arrest, but quickly returned to robust levels for the remainder of the decade.

Who was reading *SSSR na stroike* in the Soviet Union? Advertisements in Russian were included in a number of domestic issues of *SSSR na stroike* during 1934. An advertisement for Newton Chambers and Company, an English firm, is tipped into the back of the first issue for 1934 (fig. 20). The theme of this issue was the Bobriki Chemical Complex, a construction project for which Newton Chambers had provided equipment and technical expertise. This advertisement is aimed at the Soviet industrial elite who would be responsible for building and equipping new factory complexes. A few months later an advertisement for gramophone records and record players was published which featured RCA Victor products available for purchase at Torgsin, a hard currency store that sold imported goods. The records advertised included jazz, tango, classical music, and recordings by the musical movie stars Pola Negri and Lily Pons.¹⁴² It is doubtful that the ordinary Russian worker had access to such imported luxuries. *SSSR na stroike* was one of the most expensive Soviet periodicals published during this period.¹⁴³

¹⁴² *SSSR na stroike*, 1934, no. 6. This advertisement is tipped into a copy of this issue in the collection of the Russian State History Library, Moscow.

¹⁴³ During the course of the decade, Russian annual subscription prices steadily increased from ten to 42 rubles, while the English edition dropped from five dollars to three dollars. See appendix D for statistics on the subscription costs.

A lavishly printed publication, *SSSR na stroike* may itself have served as a prized consumer item for the new Stalinist elite.

The most convincing proof of a conscious attempt to cater to an elite Soviet audience was the appearance of special luxury Russian versions of certain issues of the magazine. Printed only in Russian, some of these deluxe variants were far more elaborate than the expensive foreign editions published in 1930 and 1931. The first issue to appear in different Russian variants was “Four Bolshevik Victories” (1934, no. 2), published in conjunction with the 17th Party Congress. Special copies of this issue were wrapped in fabric from the Stratostrat “SSSR,” a Soviet high altitude exploration balloon, and contained a gramophone record of speeches by the four commanders of the Soviet expeditions that it highlighted.¹⁴⁴ During 1935 numerous issues were published with distinct variants. The deluxe variant of the January issue, devoted to the Maksim Gor’kii Agitational Air Squadron, features a silvery aluminum cover with an image of an airplane but no other text (the cover usually included the name of the magazine). The final issue for 1935, “Fearless Soviet Parachutists,” features elaborate paper folds in both the regular and deluxe versions. The deluxe version utilizes better materials, includes details such as a metallic aluminum cutout airplane, features even more paper folding and has a parachute which literally unfurls before the reader like a children’s pop-up book (fig. 21). The design differences between the two versions necessitated different layouts for various parts of the magazine, rendering the two versions as essentially distinct

¹⁴⁴ “Khudozhestvennaia dokumentatsiia chetyrekh pobed,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 4 February 1934. Sergei Tret’iakov, “Kak my delali ‘Chetyre pobedy’,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 6 February 1934. This issue was the result of collaboration between Tretiakov, Lissitzky, Sofia Lissitzky-Küppers, and the cameraman Eduard Tisse.

publications. In addition to these elaborate variants, a special album was produced which bound together all of the issues for 1935 in an elaborate navy blue leather binding with red embossed lettering. Nicknamed the “Voroshilov” edition, this volume was purportedly produced in a limited edition for distribution to members of the Politburo and Central Committee.¹⁴⁵ Another notable luxury version that appeared in 1936 was devoted to Soviet Georgia. This deluxe variant is printed on higher quality paper and gold leaf detail appears on a number of exceptionally richly printed pages. This issue received laudatory reviews in both *Pravda* and *Za industrializatsiia*, the newspaper of the Commissariat of Heavy Industry.¹⁴⁶

Around 1933 the editors’ interest in reaching the foreign business and political community was eclipsed by efforts to cater to the Soviet political and managerial elite. Correlation of this shift with the chronology of the work of prominent avant-garde artists on the magazine reveals that these individuals began to contribute to *SSSR na stroike* around the time that the Soviet elite emerged as the paramount ideal audience. Appendix E lists the issues designed by two teams of artists, El Lissitzky/Sophia Lissitzky-Küppers and Aleksandr Rodchenko/Varvara Stepanova. Circulation figures for the English edition were already dropping when Lissitzky executed his first issue of *SSSR na stroike* (1932, no. 10). This indicates that the primary audience for this vanguard work was probably the Soviet leadership. Writing to Gor’kii in April 1933, Khalatov reported on the proceedings

¹⁴⁵ David King, who has a copy of the “Voroshilov edition” in his collection, provided me with details about it in telephone conversations in July and August 1997.

¹⁴⁶ “Sovetskaia Gruziiia v fotografiiaakh,” *Pravda*, 10 July 1936. “Schastliivaia Sovetskaia Gruziiia!” *Za industrializatsiia*, 3 July 1936. Neither review mentions El Lissitzky.

of an editorial board meeting attended by Piatakov (a member of the Central Committee), Kalmanovich (a candidate member of the Central Committee), and other editors:

We critically evaluated our work during 1932 and the start of the current year, and also reviewed the plan of upcoming issues ... We painstakingly discussed the issues of the magazine devoted to Dneprostoi [1932, no. 10] and the Red Army [1933, no. 2], the design of which broadly used the method of photomontage. According to the general opinion of the editorial board their design is, without argument, successful, but we declared it necessary not to over use photomontage, in order that the magazine not lose its simplicity and naturalness.¹⁴⁷

The issues discussed were the first two designs that El Lissitzky executed for *SSSR na stroike*. While wary of the potential disruption of a sense of neutral objectivity by the overuse of avant-garde representational strategies, the editors found Lissitzky's photomontage designs to be highly successful. In essence, the application of innovative design methods to the production of *SSSR na stroike* was endorsed by the editors, while caution was urged so that the sense of objectivity conveyed by photography would not be disrupted by abrupt montage juxtapositions. In the next few years, both teams of artists executed prominent luxury editions intended for the Soviet leadership. Lissitzky and Lissitzky-Küppers designed "Four Bolshevik Victories" (1934, no. 2) and "The 15th Anniversary of Soviet Georgia" (1936, no. 4-5), while Rodchenko and Stepanova authored the elaborate issue "Fearless Soviet Parachutists" (1935, no. 12). The work of these Soviet avant-garde artists on the magazine largely conformed to the dictates set forth by at the editorial board meeting in 1933; montage techniques were tempered to promote a sense of "simplicity and naturalness."

¹⁴⁷ Khalatov to Gor'kii, 2 April 1933, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 282.

In conclusion, the visual representations of magazine consumers introduced at the start of this paper should be reconsidered (figs. 1, 2, 3). While George Bernard Shaw very likely did receive complimentary copies of *USSR in Construction*,¹⁴⁸ it seems highly improbable that *SSSR na stroike* was regularly distributed at collective farms. Both of these photographs are from the collection of the International Historical Press Photo Collection in Stockholm and are part of comprehensive archive of Soviet press photographs that were distributed internationally during the 1930s.¹⁴⁹ They are publicity photographs that sought to cultivate favorable attitudes towards the Soviet Union. Cheap photographs churned out in large numbers, they are fundamentally different from state portraits in oil on canvas. In Isaak Brodskii's portrait of Stalin, *SSSR na stroike* is displayed prominently on a desk before the leader/reader; other periodicals scattered on the desk include a copy of a foreign language edition of the magazine, as well as copies of *Izvestiia*, *Pravda*, *Prozhektor*, and *Na stroike MTS i sovkhovov*. This portrait provides visual evidence that that by 1937 *SSSR na stroike* had become required reading for the Soviet elite and that Stalin was its ultimate ideal subscriber.

¹⁴⁸ While I have not found a reference to Shaw's receipt of a subscription, Gor'kii did write to Khalatov in 1931 to request complimentary copies for the writers John Galsworthy, Romaine Rolland, and H.G. Wells. Gor'kii to Khalatov, end of January 1931, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 239.

¹⁴⁹ Torsten Palmer, Jan Myrdal and Olle Stenholm, *Stalins Fotografer: Pressbilden som vapen under den första femårsplanen 1929-1932* (Stockholm: Sveriges Radios Förlag, 1982): 29, 30.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET PHOTO-ESSAY (*FOTOCHERK*)

While *SSSR na stroike* was initially greeted with enthusiasm, criticism began to mount during the second year of its publication. As the novelty of the new magazine began to wear off, the visual material was faulted for being tedious and failing to fulfill the aims set forth in the initial editorial statement. An anonymous review of *SSSR na stroike* published in *Proletarskoe foto* in October 1931 identified a variety of flaws in the magazine and was especially critical of its failure to visually show the socio-political context of Soviet industrialization. Despite the goal of the high profile magazine to visually represent socialist construction, individual issues often fell far short of this aim:

Several issues of *SSSR na stroike* produce the troubled impression of something resembling well-made dead sales catalogue printed on luxurious paper. The magazine shows objects excellently: electric lamps, bottles, cables, cylinders with oxygen, silk. But where is the socialist quality in these objects, workbenches, and buildings devoid of people and empty workshops, which so often appear on the pages of the magazine? Displaying the material base of socialist construction, the magazine is not always able to show its socialist function. The magazine very often substitutes the display of this socialist quality with a story about it. Under the photograph of a workshop totally devoid of people (No. 4, 1931), the caption states: "The loom workshop, equipped with machines of Soviet manufacture." Without this caption the photograph is incomprehensible and allows any interpretation you like. This means that the idea of the photo did not find expression in the artistic image itself: the help of text was required, so that photography would speak, even if through a translator.

As the photographs alone were unable to visually display the unique socialist character of Soviet industrialization, accompanying captions were relied upon to endow the images

with the correct socio-political significance. Yet the review also found these captions to be far from ideal: "By the way, there's something wrong with the text in *SSSR na stroike*: apart from the defects of content, it is definitely difficult to read because of the poorly selected type and the excessively long lines." In addition to faulting the content, layout and typesetting of the captions, the headlines were attacked for being boring and giving the magazine the flavor of a monotonous travelogue. Critics also identified the fragmented quality of thematic issues as another major flaw. During the first two years of publication, *SSSR na stroike* featured collections of photographs loosely organized around specific themes. A typical issue showcased a single subject with a series of thematic spreads. Rather than providing an integrated, synthetic representation of a particular theme, the magazine more often resembled an inventory or catalogue. The review identified this as a reflection of the formalist approach to the representation of socialist construction:

The formalist treatment of a thing from a notoriously photogenic point of view leads to a specifically non-party representation of things. An integrated social phenomenon is fragmented into a series of broken up moments. But the display of great social conditions demands their all-sided envelopment. This applies also to photo-information, especially in such magazines as *SSSR na stroike*, which should, in distinction from the daily press, show not separate momentary photographs of construction, but give an entire complex of photographic images. What presents itself now is the task of the organization of serial shootings, the problem of the foundation of photo-essays, photo-stories, photo-books, instead of photo-notes, which now are already entirely inadequate. *SSSR na stroike* may, especially given its material and technical means, put before itself the task of the creation of such photo-works about socialist construction.

To counteract this fragmentation, the review endorsed the development of new photographic genres, especially serial or narrative forms that would facilitate the integration of the visual material. However, new forms of photography alone would not

be enough—a new approach to montage was also needed, as the layout of the photographs was in part responsible for creating this sense of fragmentation:

The montage of photographs is boring and lacks inventiveness; these rows of rectangular, sharply delimited photographs still further emphasize the fragmented and broken quality of the material. One would wish to see in *SSSR na stroike* a more strict selection of photographs.

In addition to urging the use of more exciting, inventive montage, the reviewer also advocated more careful selection of photographs, and warns against the pervasive presence of “inexpressive, unmemorable, simply useless photographs” in *SSSR na stroike*.¹

The reviewer noted in conclusion that measures were already being taken to correct these shortcomings of the magazine: “All of these flaws to a considerable degree are flaws of the past. The magazine is now reconstructing precisely in the direction of the more whole and complete representation of individual areas of socialist construction.” Indeed, a series of modifications were made in the next few months that transformed the content of individual issues from lackluster albums of photographs into dynamic narrative photographic essays. Already in 1931 changes were introduced that reveal an effort to improve the quality of both word and image. This transformation appears to have coincided with the replacement of Viktor Mikulin by Petr Krasnov as managing editor, effective with the publication of issue seven in July 1931. First, writers were engaged to compose the accompanying text and captions. While no credits for authors appeared in 1930, the credits for the following year include a variety of established writers and

¹ Ai. S., “Obzor illiustrirovannykh zhurnalov,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 2 (October): 25-26.

journalists, such as Lev Slavin and Boris Lapin.² Second, there were evident attempts to improve the visual quality of the magazine. While earlier issues drew upon diverse sources for photographs and the work of numerous photographers, the tenth issue of 1931 featured exclusively Maks Al'pert's photographs of Tadjikistan. On the very first page, the reader is informed that "All photographs in this number were taken by M.V. Al'pert photo correspondent for *USSR in Construction*."³ The commissioning of photographs especially for the magazine indicates an attempt to improve the quality of images and to tailor the photos to the subject of a particular issue. The next issue of the magazine, devoted to Leningrad, also featured specially commissioned photographs by a "brigade of photo-correspondents." In addition to the dispatch of a photo brigade to Leningrad, the credits note that "Birds-eye view [sic] of Leningrad were taken from an airplane specially for "USSR in construction" by B. Ignatovich and N. Shtertzer."⁴ At the end of 1931, efforts to improve the visual quality of the magazine culminated in an issue designed by the German artist John Heartfield, who was in Moscow from April 1931 to January 1932. This issue, dedicated to Soviet petroleum, included photographs taken by a magazine brigade that traveled to Baku, Batumi, and Odessa and included Heartfield, Maks Al'pert,

² Slavin and Lapin were literary writers who worked as journalists and employed journalistic techniques in their fiction writing. Wolfgang Kasack, *Dictionary of Russian Literature since 1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 207-208, 381.

³ *USSR in Construction*, 1931, no. 11: inside cover.

⁴ The full credit regarding the brigade is as follows: "The pictures in this number were taken by a brigade of photo-correspondents for "USSR in construction" consisting of: B. Ignatovich, E. Ignatovich, N. Shtertzer (the "October" Group) and S. Magaziner, A. Shaikhet, and F. Shtertzer." *USSR in Construction*, 1931, no. 11: 37.

and Arkadii Shaikhet.⁵ The very cover of this issue marked a radical change in the magazine. In place of the standard graphic designed by Ol'ga Deineka (fig. 18), there was a striking photomontage of text and oil derricks by Heartfield (fig. 22). While the contents of this issue remained lackluster, the first number for 1932 represented a genuine breakthrough for the magazine. Dedicated to the construction of Magnitogorsk, one of the largest projects of the First Five-Year Plan, this issue, entitled "The Giant and the Builder," told the story of both the construction site and one of its workers. Breaking from the tedious spreads of thematically linked images, this issue employed a dynamic narrative structure that reflected the close cooperation of all the magazine's contributors. "Giant and Builder" truly answered much of the criticisms made of the magazine in *Proletarskoe foto*. It developed an innovative photographic genre that showed the socio-political context of Soviet industrialization, it made use of the dynamic layout of higher quality photographs, and the accompanying text was of a higher overall quality and conception. This new photographic genre, the photo-essay (*fotooчерк*), had profound consequences for *SSSR na stroike* and culminated in masterful essays produced by El Lissitzky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Sergei Tret'iakov and other Soviet vanguard figures.

The publication of "The Giant and the Builder" in *SSSR na stroike* was preceded by another photo-essay that served as an important prototype: "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family." Within months of its initial publication in September 1931,

⁵ For a discussion of John Heartfield's trip to the Soviet Union, see Hubertus Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship, 1931-1932," *John Heartfield*, eds. Peter

this essay was hailed in the Soviet Union as a major innovation in the application of photography to agitational-propaganda. This original photo-essay, however, was not introduced in the Soviet Union but was first published in the German magazine *AIZ* (*Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung*).⁶ In December 1931 an issue of *Proletarskoe Foto* was devoted to discussion of this photographic essay that depicted the work and life of the Filippov family. "24 Hours" was heralded in *Proletarskoe foto* as a new type of photographic genre, the photo-essay (*fotooчерk*), and a major innovation for agitational propaganda. It was only after the dramatic debut of the *fotooчерk* abroad, that similar narrative photographic essays began to be published in *SSSR na stroike*.

This new photographic genre was derived from the literary *oчерk*, a sketch based upon lived experiences and external reality. The central defining element of the literary *oчерk* is that it shows both the concrete and the typical. In contrast to the short story, the *oчерk* always takes place in a very specific time and place. Honore Balzac's "physiologies" of Parisian types firmly established and popularized the form in the early nineteenth century. In the physiologies, Balzac enlisted the scientific method to the study of man, exploring the formation of various types in relation to their surrounding urban circumstances. The Russian Realist critic Vissarion Belinskii encouraged Russian writers

Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef (New York: Abrams, 1992): 256-289.

⁶ "24 Stunden aus dem Leben einer Moskauer Arbeiterfamilie" (24 Hours from the Life of a Moscow Worker Family), *AIZ* 10, no. 38 (September 1931): 749-767. The photographs of the Filippov family were the first of three related photo-essays published in *AIZ*. The next series, shot by German photographers, presented a comparable German worker family. The final essay, also executed by Soiuzfoto, illustrated a letter from the workers at Filippov's factory. "Die Deutschen Filipows," *AIZ* 10, no. 48 (1931): 964-983. "Sowjet-Russische Arbeiter schildern ihr Leben," *AIZ* 11, no. 12 (1932): 266-277.

to create similar studies of Russian types in Petersburg and Moscow. With the proliferation of literary journals in the nineteenth century, the *ocherk* form flourished in Russia, both as a literary and journalistic form.⁷ In the post-revolutionary period the Soviet *ocherk* depicted the new Soviet types, Civil War heroes, NEP men, collective farmers, and heroes of the Five-Year Plan. The *ocherk* was a particularly popular form for writers publishing in the central press, and *ocherki* regularly appeared in the *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. Not surprisingly, several of the editors of *SSSR na stroike* were major proponents of the Soviet *ocherk* and many of the writers employed by the magazine were established *ocherkisti*. Maksim Gor'kii was a major booster of this genre, while Mikhail Kol'tsov was especially renowned for his talent as an *ocherkist*. Furthermore, the *ocherk* was a regular staple of the journal *Nashi dostizheniia*; hence it is fitting that the *fotoocherk* became the central genre employed by *SSSR na stroike*. The *ocherk's* insistence on showing both the concrete and the typical made it a foundation stone of Socialist Realism. Indeed, the All-Union Meeting of *Ocherkisti* in June 1934 preceded the Writers Congress, which promulgated the initial tenets of Socialist Realism.⁸

Strictly speaking, "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family" was not the first set of published photographs to be called a *fotoocherk*. Already in the early 1920s,

⁷ Nathan Rosen, "Sketch (Ocherk)," in Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. Victor Terras (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 421-422.

⁸ "Ocherk," *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, Vol. 43 (Moscow: Ogiz, 1939): 711-712.

spreads of photographs in the new Soviet illustrated magazines *Ogonek*,⁹ *Prozhektor* and *Krasnaia niva* were identified as *fotoocherki*. In a treatise on the *fotoocherk* in the Soviet press, Vladimir Nikitin traces the development of the extended narrative *fotoocherk* from groups of photographs that were published in the new illustrated magazines during the 1920s. For example, four photographs depicting a women workers' dormitory at a factory by V. Savel'ev were published in *Ogoněk* in 1923 with the designation "*bytovoi fotoocherk*" (everyday life photo sketch).¹⁰ However, this spread of four shots of the women residents of the dormitory at their daily activities was not narrative, and it was not distinct from other thematic spreads of photographs that appeared in the magazine. Narrative series also began to appear, such as the publication in *Prozhektor* in 1929 of a "Photo-essay about the Novo-Bridinsky Commune of the Velikoluststky Region," a two-page spread of photographs, arranged in a filmstrip like narrative, that told the story of the founding an work of an agricultural commune (fig. 23).¹¹ Careful integration of photographs, text, and graphic design distinguished the extended narrative *fotoocherk*. It was not until the publication of "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family" that the new genre was fully elaborated.

⁹ There was also a popular pre-Revolutionary magazine called *Ogonek*, but the Soviet magazine was a separate publication that began publication in 1923 under the editorial leadership of Mikhail Kol'tsov.

¹⁰ V. Savel'ev, "V zhenskom rabochem obshchezhitii (Na Prokhorovskoi manufakture)," *Ogonek*, 1923, no. 20 (12 August): 11. Vladimir A. Nikitin, "Fotoocherk v sovetskoj presse. (Stanovlenie zhanra, voprosy teorii i zhurnalistskogo masterstva)" (master's master's dissertation, Leningradskii Gos. Universitet im. L.L. Zhdanova, 1984): 36.

¹¹ E. Viaz'menskii, "Foto-ocherk o Novo-Bridinskoi kommune Velikoluststskogo okruga," *Prozhektor*, 1929, no. 29: 16-17.

The *AIZ* essay presents the daily life of the Filippovs, a typical Moscow worker family. The photographs and accompanying text are structured in a morning to evening narrative that provides an inventory of the improved living, work and cultural conditions of Soviet workers. The family is well fed and housed, affordable consumer goods are available, progressive labor and educational practices are shown, and the improved conditions of Soviet women are highlighted. In short, the essay creates a positive, glowing image of daily life in the Soviet Union. However this image was clearly at odds with actual conditions in 1931. Collectivization and industrialization had created immense social and economic problems. By the summer of 1931, forced collectivization was nearly complete in the grain growing areas, and a famine commenced in the spring of 1932. Industrialization led to burgeoning, uncontrolled growth in the urban population that strained to the limit housing, food supplies and transportation in cities. Simultaneously, the labor shortage and poor social conditions led to high worker turnover as people moved frequently in search of better living conditions. Babette Gross, a German who traveled frequently to Moscow during this period and was affiliated with *AIZ*, commented later on the disparity between actual conditions and the images in the Filippov essay:

Seen against the background of 1930, 1931, and 1932 this serial becomes positively macabre. Compulsory collectivization had resulted in terrible food shortages everywhere. Patient queues waited day and night outside shops for something edible. The housing conditions of the average wage earner in Moscow were terrible. Each family was entitled to one room, no more. As for public transport, anyone who had lived in Moscow could not but laugh at the sight of the Filipovs in their tram. Trams were always overcrowded, with people hanging from every door. Senior Russian officials were sarcastic among themselves about the Filipov serial. Such

blatant propaganda annoyed them and the saying “as at the Filipovs” became their synonym for Potemkin village.¹²

However, from its initial critical reception in the Soviet Union, this essay was designated as a canonical work and presented as an exemplar for study and emulation. To the present day, the Filippov family unproblematically remains an important historical event in the history of Soviet photography.¹³

The photographs of the Filippov family were initially commissioned by the Agitprop Sector of the Comintern for “Der Land des sozialistischen Aufbaus” (The

¹² Babette Gross, *Willi Münzenberg: A Political Biography* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974): 150.

¹³ In a history of Soviet photography published in 1939, Grigorii Boltianskii singled out this series as the first in a new genre of Soviet photojournalism, the photo-essay (*fotoocherk*). Grigorii Boltianskii, *Ocherki po istorii fotografii v SSSR* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1939): 119-120. Recent discussions of this essay are generally uncritical and follow Soviet sources. See, for example: Grigory Shudakov, *20 Soviet Photographers, 1917-1940*, exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Fiolet & Draaijer Interphoto, 1990): 17, 36, 220; Grigory Shudakov, *Pioneers of Soviet Photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983): 21-23, 249, 251 (includes reproductions of 14 photographs from the series); *The Utopian Dream: Photography in Soviet Russia 1918-1939*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Laurence Miller Gallery, 1992): 13, 51, 54. Margarita Tupitsyn discusses the photographs in this series extensively, but she only examines the images that were reproduced in *Proletarskoe foto* and does not analyze the AIZ version of the essay. As a result, some of her conclusions about the series are rather odd. Instead of examining Soviet discourse about the essay, she analyzes the series in terms of the debate over realism in the work of Brecht, Lukacs, Benjamin, and Adorno. Attempting to identify the representational system employed by avant-garde artists like Rodchenko with Left Trotskyite politics and avant-garde opponents with Stalinists who are opposed to world revolution, Tupitsyn is unable to account for the fact that this essay was published for a foreign worker audience and was sponsored by IAH, an organization connected to the Comintern. Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph, 1924-1937* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 85-98. Inka Greve provides a more contextual reading of the essay in her essay on the reception of Soviet photography in Berlin, ““Glazimi klassa” versus “Novoe videnie” k vystavkam sovetsoi fotografii v Berline,” *Moskva-Berlin/Berlin-Moskau, 1900-1950*, Irina Antonova and Iurii Merkert, eds. (Moscow, Munich, Berlin: Galart, Prestel, 1996): 221-225.

Country of Socialist Construction), an exhibition which traveled to Vienna, Prague and Berlin in the late summer and autumn of 1931.¹⁴ A letter from the Comintern to the Central Committee of the Austrian Communist Party dated 12 July 1932 provided details about a planned exhibition on Socialist Construction in the USSR:

The exhibition consists of about 500 photographs with an average size of 30 by 20 centimeters. A large part of the photographs deal with all sides of the life of a Russian worker family (at the firm, the club, the union, the apartment, etc.). The explanatory text to all the photographs will be prepared here, but you must rewrite it in the appropriate size and layout.¹⁵

John Heartfield, who was in Moscow in the summer of 1931, may have played a role in the organization of this exhibition and the commission of the photographs. In an article published in the Moscow cultural newspaper *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* in June 1931, Heartfield outlined his planned work:

In Moscow I hope to complete an entire series of work: to prepare two books for publication for the Neuer Deutscher Verlag (about the Red Army and about the first and second five-year plans), to organize the exhibition "We are building socialism" [*My stroim sotsializm*] for Vienna, and I am also working at the Museum of the Revolution on the preparation of the exhibition "The Imperialist War and the February Revolution."¹⁶

The exhibition for Vienna that Heartfield mentions (*My stroim sotsializm*) was probably the very same exhibition that was later called "Der Land des sozialistischen Aufbaus."

Not coincidentally, Heartfield's two book projects were undertaken for Neuer Deutscher Verlag, the same printing house that published *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung*. The

¹⁴ "Fotopropagandu--na vysshuiu stupen!" *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4 (December): 2.

¹⁵ Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii (RTsKhIDNI), fond 495 (Ispolnitel'nyi komitet Kominterna), op. 30, d. 730, l. 31. Original in German.

¹⁶ John Heartfield, "Privet brat' iam po klassu," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, 18 June 1931: 2.

photographs of the family and the Red Proletarian Factory were shot early in July 1931.¹⁷ According to photographers Maks Al'pert and Arkadii Shaikhet, the Soviet photo agency Soiuzfoto approached them about executing this theme at the initiative of the Society of Friends of the USSR of Austria.¹⁸ This series was one of the first major endeavors of Soiuzfoto, the newly organized photo agency. *AIZ* would become a regular client of this photo agency and often commissioned thematic photographs from them.¹⁹ The exhibition appeared in Berlin in October in conjunction with the 10th anniversary celebrations for *AIZ* and Workers' International Relief (*Internationale Arbeiter Hilfe*, hereafter IAH) and was preceded by the publication of "24 Hours in the Day of a Moscow Worker Family" in *AIZ* in late September.²⁰

¹⁷ One of the photographs from the series documented a sales receipt of a suit of clothing. The month written on the receipt is July, but the exact date is illegible. *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 31.

¹⁸ A. Shaikhet and M. Al'pert, "Kak my snimali Filippovykh," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 46.

¹⁹ For example, a report on dated 13 January 1932 from the Moscow office of the Internationale Arbeiter Hilfe to the Neuer Deutscher Verlag discussed the preparation of two photo-essays by Soiuzfoto for publication in *AIZ*. Both the photographs and accompanying text for the series "The Red Proletarian Factory" and the "Red Army" were produced in Moscow by Soiuzfoto on behalf of *AIZ*, which paid 1,000 Marks for each series. RTsKhIDNI, fond 538 (Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia rabochei pomoshchi), op. 3, d. 148, l. 6.

²⁰ According to an article in the Berlin daily newspaper *Die Welt am Abend*, an exhibition in honor of this anniversary was held in October and featured a large Soviet section, including photomontages of the life of a Soviet family. "Zehn Jahre IAH.--Zehn Jahre AIZ. Eröffnung einer Ausstellung, die alle sehen müssen," *Die Welt am Abend*, 8 October 1931.

AIZ was a publication of Internationale Arbeiter Hilfe (IAH),²¹ an organization founded by Willi Münzenberg at the initiative of Lenin in 1921. Working in Germany, Münzenberg solicited the support of bourgeois intellectuals and artists for the Soviet regime and was quite successful in creating international support for the Soviets. IAH's activities quickly spread from famine relief, its original purpose, to establishing a large publishing network in Germany and to the production and export of Soviet films. After the German Communist Party (KPD) was banned at the end of 1923, IAH was allowed to continue operation due to its active role in providing aid for unemployed German workers during a period of extreme crisis. Because of this special status and Münzenberg's flair for publicity, the IAH became a primary source of Soviet propaganda and a media empire was established which included newspapers, magazines, film distribution, and publishing houses. Münzenberg championed the power of photography in propaganda and, beginning in 1926, played an active role in promoting and financing proletarian photography both in Germany and internationally through the establishment of the magazine *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf*.²² In 1921 Münzenberg also founded the illustrated propaganda magazine *AIZ*, initially called *Sowjetrussland im Bild* ("The Soviet Union in Pictures"). This weekly magazine was at the peak of its success in the early 1930s, when its circulation neared 500,000. The magazine is best known today for the political

²¹ The Russian name of the organization was *Mezhdunarodnaia rabochaia pomoshch'*, more commonly referred to by the acronym "Mezhrabpom." The English acronym is "WIR".

²² Gross: 126.

photomontages that John Heartfield executed for it.²³ Part of *AIZ*'s appeal was the slick, positive and hopeful image it provided of the Soviet Union and of proletarian life.

According to Babette Gross, Münzenberg's companion and a collaborator in the IAH media empire:

The *AIZ*'s most important duty was to keep its readers informed on Soviet Russia. The reporting was wholly uncritical and used the most questionable means. Many workers wanted to read about a dream world, not reality....in 1931 this culminated in a successful serial on the daily life of a Russian family, "The Filipovs."²⁴

Gross identified the Filipov essay as the culmination of *AIZ*'s efforts in producing positive propaganda about the Soviet Union. Clearly, much of the credit for the establishment of this new Soviet photographic genre must be given to the German communist media. *AIZ*'s presentation and publicity for this series provided a valuable example for emulation by the Soviet illustrated print media.

The cover of *AIZ* features a full-page photograph of "Vera and Nadezhda, the daughters of the worker Filippov of Moscow" wearing sports clothing and carrying tennis racquets (fig. 24). The accompanying caption promises that the issue will "tell in pictures, how these girls, their parents and brothers live today. It is a report of reality that is so multi-facted and gripping, that it will be of special interest to all living outside the Soviet Union."²⁵ Truth claims appear immediately on the very cover of the magazine; the

²³ David Evans, *John Heartfield: Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung/Volks Illustrierte 1930-1938* (New York: Kent, 1992). Heinz Willmann, *Geschichte der Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung* (East Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974).

²⁴ Gross: 150.

²⁵ "24 Stunden": 749.

caption stresses current Soviet living conditions and cites that it is “a report of reality.” Smiling out at the reader, the Filippov sisters exude youth, vitality, and leisure. These identically clad young women evoke a seriality that suggests that they are not distinct individuals, but that many others exist like them. They are types. This will be a central claim of the essay. The family is a typical family, one of thousands of comparable families.

Opening the magazine, the reader first encounters the title of the photo-essay: “24 Stunden aus dem Leben einer Moskauer Arbeiterfamilie” (fig. 25). The essential narrative structure and theme of the issue are immediately established by the introductory paragraph:

Several weeks ago a special number of *AIZ* showed the new Moscow, the red capital of the first worker and peasant state. The new buildings, factories, housing developments, clubs, children’s homes, great kitchens, and cultural places. Today we want first of all to look under the roofs of this city; we want to live through the everyday life of a Moscow worker family. There is the Filippov family that lives on Donskaia Street in house number 59, apartment 638. Father, mother, three boys, and two girls. They are quite indistinguishable from millions of other working class families, who live like the Filippovs in the many cities of the Soviet Union. And just that interests us! We want to observe in these photographs how Soviet everyday life from morning to midnight appears and to compare it with the capitalist everyday, in which we vegetate. Then precisely because our pictures refrain from all glossing over, because they say the truth and nothing but the truth, they thus pose to all working people living in the capitalist countries the great question: Decline in the capitalist barbarism or struggle for the construction of Socialism?²⁶

This introductory text frames the reader’s interpretation of the photo-essay. After the Filippovs are mapped onto an exact coordinate in Moscow, the typicality of the family is stressed—they are just like millions of other working class families. The narrative

structure, the repetitive workday routine, reinforces the typicality of this subject, as does the generic name of the essay, “24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family.” The average day of a typical Soviet worker family is endowed with a comparative function; it will serve as a foil to the everyday existence of workers in capitalist countries. The conclusion makes clear the agitational mission of the essay: By contrasting the conditions of the Soviet family with their own, workers of capitalist countries may easily decide between Capitalism and Socialism.

The narrative form, a single day, provides a tidy structure that enables the detailed elaboration of the work, cultural activities, and domestic life of the family. While crisp, clear narrative structure will come to typify the Soviet photographic essay, this narrative’s focus on the everyday is in sharp contrast to the heroism of later photo-essays. The morning to evening narrative is broken down into six thematic sections, each highlighting different aspects of daily life: 1. Between 6 to 7 in the morning. 2. At the Red Proletarian Factory. 3. The Women of the Filippov Family. 4. Work Break and the End of the Workday. 5. To Learn to Rule the State (The continuing education of Mother Filippov). 6. After Work. The structuring of the narrative into these sub-units invites a thorough inventory of the conditions affecting different aspects of the lives of workers in the Soviet Union. These conditions are clearly laid out in the essay by means of photographs, documents and explanatory captions.

On 24 October 1931 an anonymous article in *Pravda* reported on the publication of “24 Hours from the Life of a Moscow Worker Family” in *AIZ* and its favorable

²⁶ “24 Stunden”: 750.

reception in Germany²⁷ *Pravda* begins by describing the growing interest of the proletarian masses of the world in Soviet socialist construction. Since the bourgeois and, especially, the “Social Fascist” (Social Democrat) press actively sought to obstruct knowledge of true conditions in the Soviet Union, it was a crucial political task to find effective ways of reporting on the realities in the Soviet Union. This essay must be viewed within the context of the extreme split between the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democrat Party (SPD) that intensified in 1928. Fueled by SPD electoral losses and belief that the revolution was not far off, the KPD became increasingly aggressive in its attacks on the SPD. John Willett credited part of the KPD’s bold “do or die militancy” to the media environment created by Münzenberg’s IAH.²⁸ The KPD’s aggressive attacks on the Social Democrats were also a reflection of the destruction of the Left in the Soviet Union, being played out in various international Communist parties.

Pravda described the response to the photo-essay in Germany alternately as that of stormy approval from workers versus rage and confusion on the part of Social Democrats. Two specific aspects of the essay were identified as critical to its effectiveness: the typicality and the effective use of photographic captions. Due to the unexceptional nature of both the factory and of the Filippovs, the narrative “told, in

²⁷ “24 chasa iz zhizni moskovskoi rabochei sem’i. ‘Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung’ (AIZ). (“Rabochaia illiustrirovannaia gazeta”).” *Pravda*, 24 October 1931.

²⁸ John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917-1933* (New York: Pantheon, 1978): 203-4.

effect, a story about the situation of the working class in the USSR.” The second reason for its success is identified as the captions:

The Leninist dictate “to show not only film, but also photographs of propaganda interest with appropriate captions” was in this instance successfully observed in form. A series of photographs was supplied with detailed captions, coordinating the concrete content of the photographs with general conditions in the USSR.

Pravda cited Lenin’s “Directive on Cinema Affairs” of 17 January 1922. This directive marked the beginning of sustained interest by the Party on matters related to film and, more marginally, to photography. The directive declared:

Narkompros must organise the supervision of all programmes and systematize this matter. All films exhibited in the RSFSR should be registered and catalogued by number in Narkompros. For every film programme a definite proportion should be determined:

- (a) entertainment films, specially for publicity purposes and for their receipts (of course without any obscene or counter-revolutionary content) and
- (b) under the heading *From the Life of the Peoples of the World* films of a particularly propagandistic content, such as the colonial policy of the British in India, the work of the League of Nations, the starving in Berlin, etc., etc.

Not only films but also photographs of propaganda interest should be shown with the appropriate captions.²⁹

Lenin conceived of the popular entertainment films as drawing in an audience and generating money for the showing of propagandistic, documentary and educational films. Lenin’s reference to photography in this directive was somewhat ambiguous. Were photographs to be displayed in conjunction with film screenings? Did Lenin make a

similar distinction between photography as entertainment and photography as agent of propaganda, education or documentation? While this statement is extremely ambiguous, its status as a pronouncement by Lenin on documentary photography gave it great authority. In this context, the citation of Lenin legitimized the Filippov essay as a realization of his directive; it was simultaneously educational, documentary, and propagandistic.

After outlining the reason for the essay's success, *Pravda* considered the responses of foreign workers. Excerpts from letters received by the Filippov family were quoted, beginning with letters in which doubts are raised about the content of the magazine. One worker requested a photograph for comparison to those in *AIZ*, and another asked the Filippovs to write and tell him of their life themselves. Another letter expressing doubt emphasized the comparative function of the series: "It seemed to me that I read a fairy-tale. If all that is shown in *AIZ* is true, then to you and your youth my life also resembles a fairy-tale." The writer then described the miserable conditions in which her family lives, providing a self-narrated account of the misery of workers in the capitalist system. A series of wholly positive letters were also excerpted, including two from bourgeois intellectuals, a doctor and a "famous violin player," who are sympathetic to the Soviet Union. Among the letters are expressions of great admiration for conditions in the Soviet Union, questions about how the Soviet system functions, descriptions of conditions for workers and the poor outside the Soviet Union, and desires to emigrate to

²⁹ Vladimir Lenin, "Directive on Cinema Affairs," 17 January 1922, *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, eds. Richard Taylor and Ian

the Soviet Union. *Pravda* explained how the photo-essay served to create certain reactions and conclusions:

The extraordinary concreteness of the photo-story about the Filippov family filled thousands of people with morbid acuteness to sense the difficult conditions in which capitalism placed each of them. They compare their existence with that shown to them of the conditions of the life of Soviet workers and all without exception arrive at the single correct conclusion: about the inevitability and salvation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This assertion directly echoes the introductory paragraph in the *AIZ*: the truth of the photographs of life in the Soviet Union would force workers abroad to decide between Communism and Capitalism.³⁰ This decision was pre-ordained by the reality claims made for the photographs. The reality, typicality and comparative potential of the photo-essay were further reinforced by quotes from two of Filippov's co-workers at the Red Proletarian Factory. One insisted that the conditions shown are "the usual situation for our worker today," while the other drew upon his experience abroad to affirm that the Filippovs live better than the workers he has seen in other countries.

The acknowledgment and discrediting of doubts about the photo-essay was a powerful tactic, which reinforced the claims of truth made for it. *Pravda* commented upon the doubts expressed about the veracity of the essay as follows:

Such doubts are not surprising as the Social Democrats raised a great noise around the Filippov Family. Their magazine *Reichsbanner I.Ts. [Illustrierte Zeitung]* declared this issue of *AIZ* to be a "swindling maneuver" and demanded verification. The question of the Filippov family was brought forth at a series of meetings and the Social Fascists thought

Christie (London: Routledge, 1988): 56.

³⁰ "24 Stunden": 750.

that by demanding verification, they had already paralyzed the influence of the Filippov story. However, the matter turned out otherwise.³¹

Indeed, the October 10th issue of *Illustrierte Republikanische Zeitung*, an illustrated supplement to the newspaper *Reichsbanner*, featured a two-page spread attacking “24 Stunden.” Under the headline “The ‘Worker’s Paradise’ in Soviet Russia! A Clumsy Swindle Maneuver of AIZ,” this spread sought to discredit the AIZ article by using carefully selected photographs that created both positive and negative images of working class life in Germany.³² The doubts expressed by some writers and the Social Democrat press are then proved to be without foundation. *Pravda* described the arrival of a delegation of German Social Democrat workers in Moscow on 15 October:

Already at the train station the delegates displayed an issue of AIZ which they had brought with them and asked to visit the Filippovs. On the next day the entire delegation visited the “Red Proletarian”, from where together with Filippov they set off for his home. All was confirmed, right up to the documents. And all found it truthful to the last detail.

This visit was a carefully planned publicity campaign organized by IAH. On September 17 an announcement was printed in the newspaper *Die rote Fahne*, the central organ of the KPD, about the organization of a delegation of Social Democrat workers for a trip to the Soviet Union. At the invitation of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions, the *Bundes der Freunde der Sowjetunion* (Friends of the Soviet Union), an organization connected to IAH, organized this delegation so that Social Democrat workers could see

³¹ “24 chasa,” *Pravda*, 24 October 1931. The article also mentions attacks by the SPD newspaper *Vorwärts*, but close study of the September and October issues of this newspaper revealed no references to the Filippov Family.

³² “Das ‘Arbeitersparadies’ in Sowjetrussland! Ein plumpes Schwindel-Manöver der AIZ,” *Illustrierte Reichsbanner Zeitung* 8, no. 41 (10 October 1931): 646-647.

for themselves the current state of affairs in the Soviet Union. This was intended as a counter measure to the purported slander being spread in the SPD press about Soviet conditions.³³ On 2 October the SPD newspaper *Vorwärts* printed a notice about the recruiting of forty Social Democrat workers for a fact-finding mission to the Soviet Union, that exposed the recruiting as a treacherous maneuver of the KPD and described the “four week tour with good food and drink” as “Judas money.” Instructing all participation in this undertaking to be sharply refused, *Vorwärts* stated that the true aim of the trip is not to provide the delegation with an opportunity to objectively report on conditions in the Soviet Union but to create communist cells within the SPD.³⁴ Indeed, the Filippov essay was part of an elaborate media stunt orchestrated by *AIZ* amid vicious feuding between German Communists and Social Democrats.³⁵ IAH organized a delegation of Social Democrats to visit Moscow, where they confirmed the existence of Filippov and the truth of *AIZ*. In November 1931 a one page spread was published in *AIZ* that featured photographs of the delegation with the Filippovs and a pile of letters received by the family from foreign workers under the headline “*AIZ* speaks the truth!

³³ “Sozialdemokratische Arbeiter, fährt in die Sowjetunion!” *Die rote Fahne*, 17 September 1931. Also see the announcement about this trip on the back cover of Communist illustrated magazine: “SPD-Arbeiter, fährt in die Sowjetunion!” *Der Rote Stern* 8, no. 15 (October 1931). A departure date in mid-October is mentioned in this notice.

³⁴ “Spazierfahrt nach Russland.” *Vorwärts*, 2 October 1931.

³⁵ *Die Rote Fahne* also reported the SPD delegation’s visit to the Filippovs within days of their arrival in Moscow. “Die Auferstehung des Arbeiters Filippow,” *Die Rote Fahne*, 20 October 1931. The report of an IAH delegation in Moscow includes attendance of a trade union meeting at the Columned Hall that included an appearance by Filippov. RTsKhIDNI, f. 538, d. 3, op. 141, l. 114.

The German Social Democrats visit the Filippovs" (fig. 26).³⁶ Similarly, a photograph of John Heartfield with the Filippov Family was published in *Magazin für Alle*, another popular IAH publication (fig. 27).³⁷ *Pravda* and subsequent Soviet evaluations of the series deemed it a success because of the tremendous impact it had in Germany. But this impact was, clearly, a false construction of the German Communist press--it was a media campaign.

Pravda encouraged the further applications of photography in agitation and propaganda work: "The clearness and convincing concreteness of the photograph in unity with the "accompanying caption" gives to the hands of the press an additional weapon for the mobilization and organization of the masses." *Pravda* attacked the inattention of some Soviet publications towards the agitational power of photography. Lauding the Filippov Family as a "first work" of the newly founded Soiuzfoto, further efforts along this "correct path" were urged. The article concludes with a strong reiteration of the function of Soviet photography:

The matter of proletarian photography is to tell and to show to the entire world the concrete victories of socialism: to tell and to show with a concrete and irrefutable language, which is characteristic of photography and film more, than any other art, and which are accessible to broad millions of masses.³⁸

³⁶ "Die AIZ sagt die Wahrheit! Deutsche Sozialdemokraten besuchen Filipows." *AIZ* 10, no. 45 (November 1931): 903.

³⁷ "Zu Besuch!" *Magazine für Alle* 79, no. 3 (March 1932): 24.

³⁸ Excerpts from this *Pravda* article were quoted in 1939 by Boltianskii, who argued that the sentiments expressed in this article resulted in an increase of attention towards photographic illustration in the Soviet press in the early 1930s. Boltianskii: 114-115.

Ironically, the essay was produced by the professional photography agency Soiuzfoto and was not, strictly speaking, an example of so-called “proletarian” photography, as it was made by professional photojournalists.³⁹ *Pravda*’s high estimation of the series and endorsement of photographic innovation for Soviet propaganda set the tone for much subsequent critical coverage of the Filippov Family *fotocherk* in the Soviet Union.

In December 1931 “24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family” was the subject of extensive discussion in *Proletarskoe foto*.⁴⁰ Previously published as *Sovetskoe foto*, this magazine was renamed in September of 1931 in order to reflect the magazine’s commitment to the Class War and the proletarian photography movement. With the change of name, *Proletarskoe foto* became the central organ of both the press agency Soiuzfoto and the Society for Proletarian Film and Photography (*Obshchestvo za proletarskoe kino i foto*, hereafter OZPKF), the organization that provided ideological and organizational leadership to the worker photography movement. The Filippov coverage included an editorial, a reprint of the *Pravda* article, commentaries from various individuals about the series, a variety of critical articles, and 52 captioned mezzotint reproductions of the Soiuzfoto photographs of the Filippovs. Within *Proletarskoe foto*,

³⁹ In her study of Proletkult, Lynn Mally examines the recurrent problem of class in the membership of purportedly proletarian cultural organizations from the Revolution until 1932. Proletkult often attracted white-collar workers, the so-called “laboring intelligentsia”, whose proletarian credentials were highly dubious. Lynn Mally, *The Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990): 61-90, 230.

⁴⁰ *Proletarskoe foto* was both a “creative-methodological” and “scientific-technical” journal. Following the usual format of *Proletarskoe foto*, the extensive discussion of the Filippov essay occurs in the front of the magazine, where “creative-methodological”

the photo-essay became fertile ground for various agendas, and a departure point for theorization about photography. Claims were made on behalf of proletarian photography, professional photography, and the leftist avant-garde in an attempt to secure increasingly limited opportunities for work, international contacts, and resources for photography during a time of tightening centralization in Soviet culture. Discussion of the essay generated diverse theoretical points about new photographic forms and their application to the representation of workers and the construction of socialism.

The introductory editorial declared that a crucial task for contemporary proletarian photography was to show both the current situation in the Soviet Union and the situation for workers in the capitalist countries. A quote from a report by Viacheslav Molotov at a session of the Central Executive Committee summarized this problem. Molotov argued that numbers and statistics were not able to provide Soviet citizens with an adequate characterization of the conditions facing workers under capitalism. Molotov stated that “living pictures of existence, smooth representations of the contemporary conditions of lives of workers in the countries of the masters of capital will approach this better.”⁴¹ Extrapolating from Molotov’s statement, the editorial declared that the task of proletarian photography was “to create documentary ‘living pictures, smooth reproductions’, accompanied by literary texts.” The major remaining methodological question is “to solve the concrete question of the methods of this display,” and the experience of “24 hours from the life of a Moscow worker family” would be the starting point for this work. The

articles usually appeared. There were also technical articles in this issue of the magazine, following the extensive coverage of the Filippov family.

editorial identified two particular successes of this series -- its representation of conditions in the USSR, and the exposure of the treachery of the German Social-Democrats--and argued that study of the series will help further the search for methods of display:

This examination will permit the assertion of what should be the fundamental method of display: documentary display based upon the serial development of representations and combined with accompanying text. The task of all workers of photography is to study the first experience of Soiuzfoto, to develop and to deepen it further.⁴²

The editorial argued that this particular method would prove very adaptable to the documentation of different conditions throughout the USSR by both branches of Soiuzfoto and OZPKF, and that the activity of amateur proletarian photographers should be organized around it. The editorial cautioned that this does not mean entirely abandoning the individual photograph in favor of the series. In the martial vocabulary of the Class War, the editors urged the readers "to not abandon already conquered positions, but to strengthen them firmly and at the same time to elevate Bolshevik agitation and propaganda to the highest level by the participation of photography." In short, *Proletarskoe foto* laid claim to this new sector of the photographic front.

A reprint of the *Pravda* article follows, illustrated by a photograph of a pile of envelopes and postcards addressed to the Filippovs, facsimile reproductions of individual letters and postcards, and a photograph of the German Social-Democrat delegation visiting Filippov at his work bench in the Red Proletarian Factory. Filippov is shown

⁴¹ "Fotopropagandu -- na vysshuii stupen'": 1-2.

⁴² "Fotopropagandu -- na vysshuii stupen'": 1.

receiving a package of letters from the visitors. Here another level of the proof of veracity is constructed. This photograph confirms the existence of the delegation that was sent to confirm the existence of Filippov. The reproductions of letters corroborate the “reality” of the excerpts quoted in *Pravda*.⁴³

The testimonial format is also employed in a collection of thirteen texts entitled “Workers, Journalists, and Writers on the Filippov Photo-Series.” This section mixes the statements of well known Soviet writers and journalists with those of more anonymous Soviet workers, including Nikolai Filippov himself. In a simply written letter, Filippov testifies that the photographs by the Soiuzfoto brigade really do show his family’s life. He also pledged for the typicality of the photographs: “I am satisfied that the photographs of our family are not only a description of me, but in general of how we, the working class, live here in the USSR.”⁴⁴ Other workers of the Red Proletarian Factory provide further testimony to the truth and typicality of the series.

The statements of the journalists and writers are more specific to their individual professional interests. N. Rabichev, the deputy head of cultural propaganda of the Central Committee, praised *AIZ* for showing the possibilities of the mass proletarian photography

⁴³ “24 chasa iz zhizni moskovskoi rabochei sem’e,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 3-6.

⁴⁴ “Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o ‘Filippovskoi fotoserii’,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 7-12. Filippov also mentions the visits of “comrade Marti” and “Comrade Reese from Germany.” Maria Reese, a German politician, appears to have visited the Filippovs in advance of the SPD delegation. A photograph of Reese and one of the Filippov daughters, holding the issue of *AIZ* with her photograph on it, appeared in *AIZ* three issues later. *AIZ* 10, no. 41 (October 1931): 840. Reese is identified as a former SPD Reichstag deputy who has gone over to the KPD. Andre Marti was a French Communist who traveled in the Soviet Union in 1931 and would later be a central figure in the Soviet involvement

movement: "This number gives more leadership to the mass worker photo-amateurs than has been given in all our photography magazines in all the time of their existence."⁴⁵

Rabichev called for the development of a series of such issues, showing both the Soviet and capitalist systems. Given his important position, Rabichev's endorsement of the photo series is a high level validation of this method.

Among the statements of professional journalists are three by editors of *SSSR na stroike*: Khalatov, Kol'tsov and Uritskii. Their prominent presence indicates that *SSSR na stroike* was already considering the use of this new genre. Khalatov evaluated the series from the point of view of a publisher considering future projects. Khalatov identifies the essay's typicality, captions, concreteness and artistry as major factors in its enormous success. By stressing the factual concreteness of persons and things, the series was able to illustrate socialist construction in a manner that theoretical debate could never achieve. Artistically, "the series of 'The Filippov Family' contains a valuable clarity of photographs and, most importantly, of well thought out general compositions." In contrast to the poor artistic quality of most proletarian photography, Khalatov praised the more refined work of professional photojournalists. Khalatov observed that serial photographs are much stronger than "uncoordinated photo-units" in their ability to record a series of events in their dialectical development. In conclusion, Khalatov noted the vast prospects for the publication of serial photos at OGIZ and urged publishers and editors to "maximally use this method of display, elucidation, and popularization of the most vital

during the Spanish Civil War. The early date of Marti's visit is interesting. Filippov states that he visited on September 1st, before the publication in *AIZ*.

political events and happenings, both here and abroad,” singling out the magazines *Za rubezhom*, *Nashi dostizheniia*, *30 dnei*, and *SSSR na stroike* as especially well suited to the further development of this form.⁴⁶

Mikhail Kol'tsov's statement was informed by knowledge of the foreign press gained through frequent visits abroad. Due to his long familiarity with *AIZ*, Kol'tsov was not surprised by the success of the photo-series. Kol'tsov stated that *AIZ* has “always” served as an example for Soviet photographers and journalists to study for ideas about “how to consider, how to select, and how to present photographic illustrational material to the reader.” Kol'tsov warned against embracing the *fotocherk* to the exclusion of individual photographs, and cited an example from the foreign press to make his point:

It is incorrect to think that only the serial photograph is able to guarantee a strong and deep effect. There are individual, singular photographs that speak, agitate and fight more than any series. Recall the famous photograph of Poincaré, who a photographer caught laughing at a military cemetery, giggling against the background of an entire forest of sinister sepulchral crosses. This photograph, printed in the French Communist newspaper *Humanité*, served as grounds for an entire scandal in the French parliament -- for a scandal which was not a pretty thing for the “Poincaré war.”

Kol'tsov also argued that the success of this series should also be credited to the photographs' “combination of freshness of theme with bold simplicity and honesty of execution.” Kol'tsov concluded by asserting the need for more “photo-raids” to document

⁴⁵ “Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o ‘Filippovskoi fotoserii’”: 7.

⁴⁶ “Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o ‘Filippovskoi fotoserii’”: 7-8.

various strata of Soviet society, such as women, children, collective farmers, and students.⁴⁷

Kol'tsov was most likely behind the publicity campaign for the Filippov Family essay in the Soviet media. By 1931 the Ogonek joint-stock company had been transformed into the State Union of Newspapers and Magazines (Zhurgaz), a media empire that had strong connections with the IAH press.⁴⁸ Like Münzenberg, Kol'tsov sought to develop the level of press photography by establishing the magazine *Sovetskoe foto* and built a small empire of popular magazines. Zhurgaz was also one of the founding members of the newly formed Soiuzfoto, and its publications published glowing reviews of the Filippov Family essay. On October 30th a photograph of Nikolai Filippov reading a newspaper appeared on the cover of the illustrated weekly magazine *Ogonek* (fig. 28). The accompanying article is illustrated by images of the family eating breakfast, the cover of *AIZ*, the German Social Democrats visiting the Filippovs, and reproductions of letters sent to the family.⁴⁹ The appearance of the Filippovs in *Ogonek* reflects the increasing centralization within the Soviet mass media. The foundation of Soiuzfoto and Zhurgaz encouraged the sharing of graphic materials, designers and photographers between

⁴⁷ "Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o 'Filippovskoi fotoserii'": 8-9.

⁴⁸ See, for example, the protocol of a joint meeting of Kol'tsov and Münzenberg in 1932 at which they discussed the strengthening of joint work of Zhurgaz and of the German newspapers and magazines of the IAH. The resolutions made at this meeting include a two month exchange of editors to compare the working methods of the organizations. RTsKhIDNI, f. 538, op. 3, d. 148, l. 70.

⁴⁹ L. Petrov, "Zhizni Filippovoi sem'i udivliat'sia nichego", *Ogonek*, 30 October 1931: 10-12. This photograph of Father Filippov was not printed in *AIZ*, but seems to be a part of the original Soiuzfoto series.

different publications. It also facilitated elaborate publicity campaigns that enabled the promotion of cultural agendas, such as the propagation of the *fotoocherk*.

Semen Uritskii and P. Kazimov, editors of *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* (The Peasant Newspaper), also praised *AIZ*'s skillful use of photography in agitational propaganda and recognized the Filippov series as "a thing of serious political significance." Unlike Kol'tsov, they deemed individual photographs deficient: "In life, all is linked, but the photograph rips out a little piece of life, which it isolates and therefore does not give the necessary representation about this or that thing occurring in life." *AIZ* was able to overcome this limitation through the film-like narrative photo-essay "in which each photograph was tied with the last and all of the photographs together give a visual, convincing representation of how the typical shock-worker Filippov lives and works in a socialist country." This interpretation stressed the ability of the juxtaposition or montage of images to generate meaning and context. They concluded by urging further exploration of the photo-essay genre and, predictably, urged its application to the representation of the collective farms and changes in the countryside.⁵⁰

Viktor Filov, editor of *Rabochaia gazeta*, asserted that the success of the series abroad was due to the comparison it evoked between capitalism and socialism. Once again stressing typicality and reality of the Filippov family, Filov stated that the series exposed the falsifications about socialist construction in the Soviet Union that appear in the bourgeois press. Filov then criticized the Soviet press for failing to utilize photography more extensively in the Soviet Union:

Furthermore, the photo-eye (*fotoglaz*) still does not penetrate all pores of our construction of everyday and production life. The lens very weakly captures the outskirts of our immense country. We are able to tell very much, and everyday we tell stories in the pages of the newspaper about the great construction, but we show this construction little and poorly.

Filov viewed photography as a documentary recording device. Like Dziga Vertov's *kinoglaz*, the *fotoglaz* could be utilized to record real life. However, Filov cautioned that this activity required strong leadership in order to avoid individualistic formal experimentation. Through the organized work of the collective "It will come to be that the high distortion and individual 'point of view' towards the object of shooting will be removed." Filov also called for the further development of forms for the presentation of photographic material: "We need not only the photo-essay, we also need the photo-feuilleton, the photo-epic poem, the photo-chronicle (*fotofel'ton*, *fotopoema*, *fotokhronika*)." By suggesting the development of photographic complements to the established genres of feuilleton, poem, and chronicle, Filov makes clear the literary and journalistic origins of the *fotoocherk*.⁵¹

The text by Vladimir Stavskii, editor of *Prozhektor* and Secretary of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (*Rossiskaia assotsiatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei*, hereafter RAPP), has a more literary tone. Stavskii, an influential Soviet literary official, employs highly rhetorical literary language in his discussion. For example, he prefers to call the genre the photo-story (*fotopovest'*) and rejects the technical term "serial

⁵⁰ "Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o 'Filippovskoi fotoserii': 9.

⁵¹ "Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o 'Filippovskoi fotoserii': 10-11. Written for a mass newspaper audience, feulliton takes the form of a light-hearted first-person narrative that

photograph” (*seriinyi snimok*) as failing to express the content of this new form. This reflects RAPP’s general dismissal of the ocherk genre in favor of “higher” literary forms.⁵² In his discussion, he snubs the Oktiabr’ group for their crankiness (*chudachestvo*) and encourages the involvement of the proletarian photographers in the further exploration of the photo-story and photo-narrative (*fotopovest’*, *fotorasskaz*). This attack on the left avant-garde group is predictable; as the leader of RAPP, Stavskii led the offensive against all avant-garde cultural manifestations, both literary and visual. His general approval of the photo-story may be seen as a mark of benediction from one of the cultural revolution’s literary high priests.

Efim Zozulia’s statement also regards the Filippov photographs from a more literary standpoint. Zozulia, a short story writer who co-founded *Ogonek* with Mikhail Kol’tsov,⁵³ argued that the Filippov series reveals the agitational possibilities for photography both within the USSR and abroad. He criticized the Soviet press for failing to adequately represent socialist construction:

Construction is not shown, and the human-hero of the socialist construction, the hero of the five-year plan, appears even less. In this very matter, are single photographs of only the faces of the best of our shock-workers really in a position to fully show the face of the builders of socialism? The series is the only way to show the genuine heroes of socialist construction more completely, sequentially, and dynamically.⁵⁴

is usually topical in character and is often satirical. Nathan Rosen, “Feuilleton,” in Terras:: 36-137.

⁵² V.N. “Ocherk,” *Bol’shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*: 711-712.

⁵³ Kasack: 491.

⁵⁴ “Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o ‘Filippovskoi fotoserii’”: 11.

Zozulia questioned the value of merely representing shock-workers by iconic photographs of their faces, a commonplace in the printed media of the period. He rejected this type of neutral “objectivity” in photography, art and literature. Instead, “the dialectical method” must be applied to Soviet photography to make it “an effective weapon on the struggle for socialism.”⁵⁵

Lev Mezhericher, editor of the Soiuzfoto brigade and main strategist behind the series, contributed a detailed analysis of the photo-essay entitled “For the Effective Bolshevik Photo Series: To Take Possession of the Serial Exposure is the Political Mission of Photography.”⁵⁶ This text described and analyzed the series along both political and creative lines. Responding to questions about whether the series was “lacquered”—comprised of images that were embroidered to show conditions that were atypical and untrue—Mezhericher outlines the regulations that the Soiuzfoto brigade used in planning the shooting. First, an average worker family had to be shown. Second, the family had to be shown “connected with the surrounding conditions,” thus revealing the links between the family’s existence and socialist construction. Finally, the series had to “distinguish Soviet conditions from the living conditions of the workers of capitalist countries.” Mezhericher also discussed difficulties encountered in the shooting and shortcomings of the series. The extremely short time for shooting the series (three or four days) constrained the fulfillment of the regulations, while the limited number of photographs in the series inhibited the full display of “all the complexity of reality.”

⁵⁵ “Rabochie, zhurnalisty, pisateli o ‘Filippovskoi fotoserii’”: 11.

Mezhericher estimated that 170 to 200 photographs would be required to adequately describe the surrounding conditions. However, the brigade took only 110 photographs and only 78 of these negatives were acceptable. Given these limitations, Mezhericher reasoned that the series was clearly not “lacquered.” In his discussion of the shortcomings, Mezhericher employed a term borrowed from Sergei Tret’iakov to describe the technique employed in the conception of the shooting:

In quality the fundamental method of the shooting was the method of “photo observation” [*fotonabliudenie*] (I conditionally apply here this term belonging to S.M. Tret’iakov). That is, each of the members of the family should have been serially photographed in their usual environment, with the fullest digression to the characteristic side of their usual environment (for example, Filippov at his work bench -- his work bay -- the entire shop -- the entire factory -- the reconstruction of the factory -- the production of the factory). In fact it managed to do this only to an incomplete extent in respect to the father and to a still lesser extent in relation to the mother and daughter Varia. Hence it is apparent, what a meaningful quality of material the series should have contained in detailed form.⁵⁷

Mezhericher concluded by observing the importance of the photographs of objects and documents in photo-observation and their affirmative role in the elaboration of the environment of the story. He asserts that the facsimile reproductions call for the critical reconsideration of traditional genres in photography: “Here the problem of ‘still life’ and purposeful communication of material in all its magnitude arises before photography in an absolutely new light.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Lev Mezhericher, “Za operativnuiu bol’shevistskuiu fotoseriu. Ovladet’ seriinoi s’emkoi -- politicheskaia zadacha fotografii,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 13-19.

⁵⁷ Mezhericher, “Za operativnuiu bol’shevistskuiu fotoseriu”: 18.

⁵⁸ Mezhericher, “Za operativnuiu bol’shevistskuiu fotoseriu”: 19.

The Filippov issue of *Proletarskoe foto* includes a text by Sergei Tret'iakov, "From the Photo-Series Toward the Protracted Photo-Observation," in which the theory underlying the concept of the "photo-observation" is set forth. Tret'iakov's "protracted photo-observation" would enable the fuller representation of Soviet reality and the registration of the dramatic changes taking place during the construction of socialism. Tret'iakov begins by criticizing the traditional painted portrait on the grounds of its exclusive concern with the sitter's image, which, according to idealist aesthetics, is supposed to provide "a mirror of the soul."⁵⁹ Tret'iakov notes that this idealist, anti-materialist approach excludes all consideration of the social relations and the environment of which the individual sitter is a product. Stressing its momentary nature, Tret'iakov attacks the eternal claims of traditional portraiture. As a final condemnation, he draws a parallel between the idealist portrait and the religious icon tradition; both privilege the eternal features of the human face, removed from society and human activity. Extending his analysis to contemporary Soviet culture, Tret'iakov considers the "Alley of Shockworkers", a series of sculpted portrait busts of leading Moscow workers that was on display in the Park of Rest and Culture in Moscow.⁶⁰ Tret'iakov notes that, aside from recording their visual appearance, these images provide no information about

⁵⁹ Sergei Tret'iakov, "Ot fotoserii--k dlitel'nomu fotonabliudeniuiu," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 21, 45. This essay was printed in a column of the magazine entitled "v poriadke obsluzhdeniia" ("By Way of Discussion"). The accompanying editorial note states that the article was printed as a source for discussion, even though the editors had reservations about it and strongly disagreed with some of Tret'iakov's pronouncements.

⁶⁰ For a contemporary discussion of the alley and photographs of the portrait busts, see G.B. Bandalin and V.V. Pavlov, "Alleia udarnikov v parke kul'tury i otdykha," *Brigada khudozhnikov*, 1931, no. 5-6: 22-23.

the workers, their activities, or their connection to the construction of socialism.

Tret'iakov argues that the technical medium of photography will replace painting as the leading weapon of the proletariat in the class war, but that photography must break from its reliance on the antiquated practices of the idealist tradition of the painted or sculpted portrait. In its rejection of traditional art, its pro-technology stance, and dialectical-materialist vocabulary, Tret'iakov's endorsement of photography reveals the Constructivist underpinnings of his thought.⁶¹

While identifying photography as a powerful tool for agitational work in its ability to both capture the dynamic changes taking place during the Five-Year Plan, Tret'iakov diagnoses a major weakness: its momentary, arbitrary nature. For instance, the collections of photographs representing industrial construction projects that often appeared in Soviet illustrated magazines fail to show any sense of development and instead resemble "warehouses of spare parts." To counter these shortcomings, Tret'iakov proposes the accumulation of photographs of the same subject taken over a period of time, the effect of which is to reveal the surrounding milieu and development of the subject. Tret'iakov credits Aleksandr Rodchenko with the initial proposal of building up a series of images of the same subject over time: "In 1928 Rodchenko already wrote about the need to build a portrait on the principle of the combination of snapshots taken of one and the same

⁶¹ The programmatic declaration of the First Working Group of Constructivists within INKhUK in 1921 stressed the synthesis of ideological and formal goals and stated that "Scientific communism, based on the theory of historical materialism, is our only ideological premise." *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Rizzoli, 1990): 67.

person.”⁶² Clearly, the protracted photo-observation developed from the Novyi LEF group’s endorsement of the literary and visual fact.

Tret’iakov discusses the Filippov family essay as an example of the photo-observation. Tret’iakov argues that through the use of the serial technique, the Filippovs are shown not as isolated individuals, but as part of the social fabric of the Soviet Union. Shown within the larger context of Soviet society, the Filippovs are not reduced to an idealized family, but appear as one of many such families of workers. Tret’iakov approves of the basic method of the Filippov essay but criticizes some of the details of its execution, especially the inaccuracy or misidentification of some of the images. He cites the example of the photograph of the inside of a half-empty tram that is identified in *AIZ* as representing the Filippovs on their way to work (fig. 29). Tret’iakov notes that this is a false representation, as this is not a typical image of a Moscow tram, as they are always packed to capacity, and further, that no trams go to the Red Proletarian Factory. The publication of this fabrication is startling, as it reveals a glaring falsehood in the series. Tret’iakov is also critical of the image of the two Filippov daughters with tennis rackets, an image which he deems to be bourgeois beyond hope of redemption. Despite these criticisms, Tret’iakov considers the Filippov series to be a general success due to its reception abroad and concludes with an endorsement of the further exploration of this method, the extended photo observation.

⁶² Rodchenko presented these ideas in the essay “Protiv summirovannogo portreta za momentalniyi,” *Novyi Lef* 2, no. 4 (April 1928): 14-16.

In the regular column "Photo-journalists share their experience," Maks Al'pert and Arkadii Shaikhet briefly discuss their work on the Filippov family.⁶³ They criticized the standard practice of photojournalists documenting socialist construction to go to a construction site once, photograph it and then never return to it. On the contrary, they argued that such sites need to be observed numerous times in the course of their development by both brigades of photo-reporters and *fotokori*, mentioning the example of Tret'iakov, "who has taken into his observation the kolkhoz, of which he is a member even now. Such work of the photo-reporter is rewarded a hundred fold." They also criticized the boring, unimaginative quality of the majority photographs of construction sites, noting that they look like "minutes of a meeting." In contrast, the serial shooting "should reveal the social essence of the building site and of events as a whole, in all their dialectical diversity."⁶⁴ Al'pert and Shaikhet claimed that the Filippov shoot was based upon the principle "to photograph only reality," citing the photographs of Filippova doing laundry and of various family documents as examples of this reality. They also addressed the controversial photograph of the tram:

The question is set to us, "Why does Filippov travel in a tram in which the passengers do not sit packed against each other?" The question, ostensibly, is justified. Moscow trams, as is known, do not suffer from a lack of passengers. We photographed Filippov in a relatively unpacked tram, as he lives on the outskirts, where the trams are simply not full, and, finally, we emphasized that the cost of a trip on the tram in Moscow is 10 kopecks, at

⁶³ Arkadii Shaikhet and Maks Al'pert, "Kak my snimali Filippovykh," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 46-47.

⁶⁴ This preliminary discussion seems to be shaped by Al'pert's work on "Giant and Builder," the photo-essay devoted to Magnitogorsk which was published in *SSSR na stroike* in January 1932.

that same time that in other countries it is much more expensive. Therefore, “unfortunately”, the tram turned out to be “untypical.”

Despite their claims, there is no reference to the cost of the tram in the captions and no evidence of such emphasis in the image. Like Mezhericher, the photographers also noted that the rigid time frame for the shooting placed limitations on the series. Indeed, the Filippov essay was not truly an extended photographic observation. Unlike the scenario they describe of repeatedly returning to document changes over time, these photographs were recorded in a scant few days. After stressing the typicality of the family and describing the foreign response to the essay, the photographers concluded by urging the further application of serial photography to agitation and propaganda, and the need to carry it over to the *fotokor* masses.

The last text in *Proletarskoe foto* is a resolution of the Central Council of OZPKF about the Filippov photo-series.⁶⁵ This document solidly places the interpretation of the Filippov essay within the “Class War.” In fact, the majority of the text is devoted to outlining the differences between the “petty bourgeois formalism” of the Oktiabr’ photographers and a group of photographers, including Al’pert and Shaikhet, affiliated with Russian Organization of Proletarian Photo-Reporters (*Rossiiskoe ob’edineniia proletarskikh fotooreporterov*, hereafter ROPF). These professional photojournalists are depicted as the vanguard of the proletarian photography movement:

Refashioning themselves, adopting the principles of proletarian ideology, photo-reporters are moving in union with the mass photo-movement and are helping to work out the creative method of proletarian photography.

⁶⁵ “Shire razvernut’ tvorcheskuiu diskussiiu: Rezoliutsiia plenuma TsK OZPKF o ‘Filippovskoi’ fotoserii,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 48.

The Filippov photo-series is greeted as a great success in the development of proletarian photography. However, the essay is faulted for its failure to “describe the contradictions of the class war” and for “toadyism” (*alliluishchina*).⁶⁶

A series of 52 photographs of the Filippov Family, distinct from the German Version, were reproduced in the December issue of *Proletarskoe foto*.⁶⁷ Unlike the anonymous presentation in *AIZ*, credits appear prominently at the start of this essay: “Photo-essay (*fotocherk*) by the Soiuzfoto brigade composed of: L. Mezhericher (editor), M. Al’pert, S. Tules, A. Shaikhet.”⁶⁸ *Proletarskoe foto* did not simply print a Russian language version of the *AIZ* series. While retaining the basic narrative sequence and thematic groupings of *AIZ*, the photo-essay in *Proletarskoe Foto* employed different captions and a different set of images. The different captions, selection of photographs, and layout create radically different readings. Comparison of the two versions vividly exposes their artifice. For example, a photograph of a man with a hose spraying water bears the following captions:

AIZ: At six in the morning the spraying man, who at each apartment block keeps watch on the thriving of the young green spaces, is at work.

⁶⁶ Literally, this term may be translated as “hallelujah-ism,” implying the blindly positive affirmation of a subject. The expression would have had very negative connotations in 1931, at the height of the class war and the war on religion.

⁶⁷ “Den’ iz zhizni moskovskoi rabochei sem’i,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4: 22-44.

⁶⁸ This lack of credits was typical in *AIZ*. It may be accounted for by two reasons: 1) To protect the contributors of the magazine, especially worker photographers. 2) To deny bourgeois concepts of individuality in favor of anonymous cultural production for the good of the working class. See Leah Ollman, “The Worker Photography Movement: Camera as Weapon” in *Multiple Views: Logan Grant Essays on Photography, 1983-89* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1991): 236.

Proletarskoe foto : From six in the morning the little town of Shabolovskii wakes up. Street flushing begins.⁶⁹

These two captions create very different readings of the same photograph. The *AIZ* caption draws attention to the creation of green urban environments, of livable cities: the man is watering the plants. In contrast, *Proletarskoe foto* draws attention to urban sanitation; the man is cleaning the street. While these are subtle differences, more disparate captions appear that change the interpretation of entire narrative sections.

Compare the texts that accompany the kindergarten spreads (figs. 30, 31):

AIZ: The kindergarten in which the youngest Filippov spends the greater part of the day is a nursery school of the new life, for which the Soviet state already trains the little one. When Volodia is handed over by his mother, he must first -- as the inscription on the wall says -- thoroughly brush his teeth, carefully wash his hands, then he will play, sing, and do handicrafts until the communal lunch. And when the mealtime approaches, the boys and girls set the table, one child brings the food around and they will be fed, until all are full and are soon so tired, that they gladly take an hour nap. Now Volodia is again fresh and cheerful, he sits himself at his favorite activity at the table and paints with bright colors that occur to him at that moment.

Proletarskoe foto:

24. Before lunch it is required to wash the hands.
25. At lunch to chat is not allowed, it is harmful for the health.
26. After lunch and a nap -- games.
27. Then a very interesting thing, drawing. Vitia draws somewhat worse than Liza, but all the same rather well.⁷⁰

These captions create vastly different readings of the same set of four photographs. The German version highlights the progressive social and educational aspects of state childcare, while showing clean, happy, well-fed, creative children. The Soviet captions

⁶⁹ "24 Stunden": 750. "Den' iz zhizni": 21.

⁷⁰ "24 Stunden": 757. "Den' iz zhizni": 34.

give the kindergarten an authoritarian air; the future that the Soviet state prepares these children for requires strict discipline and silence. The captions structure the reading of the group of photographs differently. The single paragraph in *AIZ* encourages a spontaneous, associative reading of the text and images, while the numeric sequence of *Proletarskoe foto* acts against this. The numbering of the photograph imposes a strict linear narrative order. Furthermore, the order of events of the kindergarten day is not the same; the hand washing and games occur at different times. Finally, the Soviet captions descend into inane saccharine prose through their commentary on the relative drawing ability of the two children, something that is not at all evident in the photographs.

Comparison of the kindergarten spreads reveals another striking difference: The child is called both Volodia (diminutive form of Vladimir) and Vitia (diminutive form of Vitalii). This glaring discrepancy extends to other family members, including the father, the central figure of the story:

	<i>Proletarskoe foto</i>	<i>AIZ</i>
Father	Nikolai Fedotovitch	Dmitri Petrovich
Mother	Anna Ivanovna	Anna Ivanovna
Daughter/factory	Varia	Vera
Daughter/shop	Sonia	Nadezhda
Oldest son	Konstantin/Kostia	Konstantin
Middle son	Nikolai/Kolia	Nikolai
Youngest son	Vitia	Volodia/Vladimir

In his essay about the series, Mezhericher noted that Vitia is mistakenly called Volodia in *AIZ*, but he failed to point out the lack of correspondence among the other names.⁷¹ It is

⁷¹ Mezhericher: 14. There is also a discrepancy in the description of the two daughters. In *AIZ* the daughter who works in the factory is older, while in *Proletarskoe foto* the daughter who works as a shop girl is the eldest. The identifies of the individuals continued to fluctuate: In discussion of "Giant and Builder," Mezhericher described the

possible that there were propagandistic reasons for the difference in names. The father and the middle son share the same name in Russian. Undoubtedly, this could create narrative confusion. For the sake of clarity, a different name may have been provided for the father. In the facsimile reproduction of official Soviet documents the name is clearly written as “Nikolai Fedotovich”--and not Dmitri Petrovich. The youngest son appears to have been called Volodia in the German version due to propagandistic motives; the text in *AIZ* explained that he “like many of the children of his age carries the name of Volodia in memory of Lenin.”⁷² Yet these propagandistic explanations do not justify the completely different name of one of the sisters. The fluidity of both the names and ages of the family members reveals that they are being considered as types more than as specific individuals.

The selection and presentation of the photographs also reveals significant differences. First, different sets of photographs are reproduced in the two magazines. Roughly eight-five percent of the images appear in both magazines. Since the full set of images for “The Filippov Family” consisted of 78 photographs, the unique images were most likely part of the initial series. Here the question emerges of what exactly the photo-essay consisted. Was it the series of photographs? Or was it the way that they were presented? Or the narrative construction that they were presented within? The Soviet version of the essay places much greater emphasis on facts and documents. Quite a few of the photographs reproduced only in *Proletarskoe foto* are of documents (Filippova’s

cover image of *AIZ* as “the portrait of Varia and her friend Marusia.” Lev Mezhericher, “Proverka tvorcheskoi praktiki,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 15.

request to leave work, a grocery receipt, a savings account book, a savings bond, and a receipt for a suit of clothing). The accompanying captions include more factual information, much of which is specific to a reader familiar with the Soviet context. This indicates an attempt to confirm the reality of the family to a Soviet audience. Notably, the caption of the tram photograph is different: “Near the home of the Filippovs was recently laid a new tramway line -- routes 11 and 42.”⁷³ The tram no longer shows Filippov and his sons on their way to work; under attack for the atypicality and unreality of the half-empty tram, the caption has been changed. To make up for the loss of this step in the narrative from the *AIZ* essay, a new image has been added that shows the five working family members dispersing to work (fig. 32). The layout of the two versions is also quite different. *AIZ* is more carefully designed, playful and appealing to the eye. For example, the layout of “The Women of the Filippov Family” plays with geometric forms while creating an ordered and visually pleasing effect (fig. 33). The geometric shapes of the drafting instruments play off the round photograph of Volodia being escorted to school. In contrast, the layout for this section of *Proletarskoe foto* is far more Spartan and lackluster; it seems to have been a secondary consideration (fig. 34). In *Proletarskoe foto* the photographs were of primary interest, while graphic presentation and montage clearly remained secondary or unconsidered.

Close scrutiny of these essays further undermines their credibility, contesting their claims of reality. One photograph reproduced only in *Proletarskoe foto* is particularly

⁷² “24 Stunden”: 751.

⁷³ “Den’ iz zhizni”: 23.

suspect. In the spread entitled “Evening at the Park of Culture and Rest,” a photograph of Vitia and Filippova is captioned: “Vitia is received into the supervision of the director of the children’s town” (fig. 35).⁷⁴ However, a more recently published print from the same negative reveals that it is a detail of a shot of a medical clinic, where children are being vaccinated (fig. 36). There is also evidence that photographs were staged. Both German and Soviet versions of the essay include a photograph of workers playing checkers during the lunch break. This image is distinct and memorable, since the players use lug nuts instead of traditional gaming pieces (fig. 37). This photograph strongly resembles an earlier image by Arkadii Shaikhet that had already been published extensively in the Soviet Union and Germany. This photograph was first printed in *Sovetskoe foto* in conjunction with the first exhibition organized by the Moscow Association of Photo-Reporters in 1926 and was heralded for employing a new method of composition derived from the cinema, the close-up.⁷⁵ This same photograph was subsequently published in *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* in 1927 (fig. 38) and was included in an exhibition of an international proletarian photography in Germany.⁷⁶ Shaikhet appears to have incorporated this highly successful and critically celebrated composition into the new photo essay by staging the checker game at the factory.

⁷⁴ “Den’ iz zhizni”: 42.

⁷⁵ *Sovetskoe foto*, 1926, no. 2 (May): 54, 60-61. Shaikhet received a prize for the photograph from *Sovetskoe foto*: a complimentary subscription to the magazine.

⁷⁶ *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 1, no. 9 (1927): 8. The photograph was subsequently published in the newspaper *Bednota*, 1 May 1928, and in a book published by the IAH. Ernst Glaeser and F.C. Weiskopf, *Der Staat ohne Arbeitlose* (Berlin: 1931): 67.

Conclusion

The entire Soviet discourse concerning the success of the Filippov Family essay required a willful suspension of disbelief by its participants. The image of worker life that the essay created was clearly at odds with existing conditions in the Soviet Union. As suggested by the use of the derogatory expression “as at the Filippovs” among Soviet officials, the critics, photographers and editors engaged in the promotion of the photo-essay were all aware of its lack of conformity to existing Soviet conditions. Notably, the two versions of the essay were published in very different types of publications. The German version appeared in *AIZ*, a popular workers’ illustrated magazine, while *Proletarskoe foto* was a specialty publication devoted to discussion of creative, technical, and political issues confronting of Soviet photography. As a publication backed by the Comintern and aimed at establishing international support for the Soviet Union, *AIZ* sought to create as great an impact as possible on its readers through striking montage layouts and accompanying captions. In creating a positive fantasy image of conditions in the Soviet Union for distribution to workers in the West, *AIZ* did not need to concern itself with the actual conditions in the Soviet Union. *Proletarskoe foto* showcased the individual photographs in order to publicize the activities of the new Soiuzfoto agency and the work of photographers who belonged to the newly formed group ROPF. Unlike the German version of the essay, the series that appeared in *Proletarskoe foto* was not published for broad consumption by a mass audience within the Soviet Union. The disparity between the fantasy world shown in the essay and actual Soviet conditions in 1931 made its wide distribution impossible.

The IAH's creation of an elaborate media stunt around the verification of the existence of the Filippov family and the reality of the essay was emulated by the Soviet critics, editors and photographers who supported the further development of the *fotocherk* in the Soviet Union. In celebrating the success of the essay in Germany, *Proletarskoe foto* sought to ensure the establishment of Soiuzfoto at the forefront of Soviet photojournalism. However, before being shown to a Soviet audience, the *fotocherk* needed to be adapted to the contemporary needs of Soviet propaganda. In essays intended for a Soviet audience, the disparity between existing conditions and the visual narrative needed to be minimized. For its application to *SSSR na stroike*, adjustments were needed to emphasize the primary content of the magazine: the radical transformation of the Soviet Union through socialist construction.

CHAPTER 3 “GIANT AND BUILDER”

Теперь Калмыков стал иной,
Хоть срок прошел небольшой.
Он лучший из лучших ударников стройки,
Партиец, рабочий, герой.

Now Kalmykov has become different,
Although the time passed is not long.
He is the best of the best shockworkers of the building site,
Party member, worker, hero.¹

Soviet Children's Primer, Cheliabinsk, 1934

The next *fotocherk* to be critically celebrated in the Soviet Union, "Gigant i stroitel' " ("Giant and Builder") was published in *SSSR na stroike* in January 1932, just one month after the discussion of the Filippov family in *Proletarskoe foto*. "Giant and Builder" presented simultaneously the story of Magnitostroi, the colossal construction site of the steel town Magnitogorsk, and the story of an individual worker there (fig. 39). This photo-essay tells the story of Viktor Kalmykov, an illiterate peasant youth who is transformed into an educated Party member and recipient of the Order of the Red Banner of Labor in less than two years after his arrival at Magnitostroi. Viktor Kalmykov was a

¹ *Kraevaia uchebnaia kniga* (Cheliabinsk: Ural Ogiz, 1934). Oksana Bakke, the granddaughter of Kalmykov, shared this book with me.

historical figure, transformed by this photo-essay into a local hero of Magnitogorsk, where, despite his execution during the Terror, he was remembered for decades.²

While the Filippov family essay served as a precedent for this series, the subject matter, temporal frame, and intended audience of “Giant and Builder” were distinctly different. While “24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family” presented the living conditions of a well established urban working class family, “Giant and Builder” showed the transformation of a backwards Russian peasant into a literate urban Soviet worker. The differing temporal frames of the two narratives matched their subject matter. During critical discussion of the essays in 1932, the photographer Semen Fridliand distinguished the two narratives as follows:

The Filippov Series itself presents something like a horizontal line. It shows one day of the Soviet worker and his family. It is only a single phase. There is no development, there is no dynamic... The Filippov series only tells us, how a worker lives in the Soviet Union, but it does not explain why he lives well, and for us lately this is much more important.

And exactly the most striking difference of the Kalmykov series is that it shows why and not only how. In the Kalmykov series we already have development along the vertical line... We have two years of the development of a person, we have to a meaningful degree convincing material, showing this growth, and thus, the possibility to understand, why namely the proletariat develops such, and not otherwise. We have the possibility to understand why in the Soviet Union such forging of a person--unthinkable in the Capitalist countries--is possible.³

While the Filippov essay showed “how” Soviet workers lived, the Kalmykov story presented the historical developments that shaped socialist construction and industrialization. By depicting the transformation of Kalmykov’s life, the narrative was

² Stephen Kotkin, *Steeltown, USSR* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 232-234.

able to convince more effectively readers of the reality of Soviet conditions. Whereas the *AIZ* photo-essay described conditions for workers in the Soviet Union, “Giant and Builder” sought to document the transformation of the Soviet Union through socialist construction. In part these differences were due to the different audiences of the two magazines. Published for German workers, *AIZ* created a fantasy image of the Soviet Union that was intended to inspire revolutionary fervor and devotion in its readers. This fantasy image was at odds with the everyday conditions for Soviet workers in 1931 and could not be broadly circulated within the Soviet Union. Published for both a domestic and international audience, *SSSR na stroike* had to create an image of life in the Soviet Union that would be convincing to both domestic and foreign readers.

Shortly after its publication, the Soviet press critically hailed the story of Magnitostroi and Kalmykov as a major advance in the genre of the *fotocherk*. “Giant and Builder” marked a major turning point for *SSSR na stroike*, after which the *fotocherk* became one of the magazine's central features. Despite the importance of “Giant and Builder” in Soviet photographic history and to the further evolution of *SSSR na stroike*, this photo-essay has been largely neglected by Western scholarship.⁴ This is due in part to the fact that the main photographer for the series was Maks Al’pert, a

³ S. Fridliand, “Po vertikali,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 12-13.

⁴ One exception appears in the work of historian Andrea Graziosi, who has considered “Giant and Builder”, “The Filippov Family”, and the Belomor Canal issue of *SSSR na stroike* (1933, no. 12). Andrea Graziosi, “Stalin’s Antiworker “Workerism”, 1924-1931,” *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995): 254-257.

member of the Russian Association of Proletarian Photo-Reporters (ROPF).⁵ Because ROPH members have been generally dismissed as untalented “realist” hacks who attacked the Oktiabr’ photographers, little serious attention has been given to their work. As a result, the significance of the development of the narrative *fotocherk* and its relevance to the later work of avant-garde artists on *SSSR na stroike* has been largely overlooked. This chapter will analyze this narrative photo-essay, considering how it was made and how it solved the problem of representing socialist construction. This analysis will reveal the rich combination of cinematic, journalistic, literary and left avant-garde approaches that informed the creation of this essay. The chapter will also consider some of the thorny moral issues involved in the study of Stalinist visual culture by examining the fate of its hero, Viktor Kalmykov.

Before embarking on an in-depth analysis of “Giant and Builder,” a brief outline of the story told by the photo-essay is in order. The narrative begins with views of the site prior to the start of construction in 1929 (fig. 40). The accompanying text introduces the theme of the magazine:

“Magnetostroi [sic] must become a training school”--said the party. In the process of socialistic construction a new man is being created,--a man of iron energy and socialistic habits, who embodies “Russian revolutionary enthusiasm and American efficiency.”

In this issue of our magazine we show with what great speed the Soviet metallurgical giant is being erected, and also show the new type of man that the Magnetostroi has given.

This new man is **Kalmikov**--a worker, who within a period of

⁵ The name of this organization is often mistranslated. For example, Tupitsyn calls it “Russian Society of Proletarian Photographers.” Tupitsyn, *The Soviet Photograph*: 101. The Russian title of the group, *Rossiiskoe ob’edineniia proletarskikh fotooreporterov*, clearly specifies “photo-reporters” and not the more general term “photographer.”

eighteen months has risen from an illiterate village lad to a skilled workman, a member of the party and a carrier of the Order of the Red Banner. **Kalmikov** is not an exception. **Kalmikov** is one of the many thousands of new men that socialistic construction has re-moulded.⁶

The odyssey of Kalmykov begins with the visit by a recruiter to a collective farm (fig. 41, above). Socialist construction will transform backward peasants into educated, politically conscious industrial workers. Kalmykov first appears in a train car with other recruits, en route to Magnitogorsk (fig. 41, below). Kalmykov is shod in *lapti*, peasant bast shoes, and the *lapti* of another passenger are also prominent. The *lapti* function as visual markers of their backwardness. Through the experience of Magnitostroi, they will quickly shed that backwardness and those shoes. Kalmykov arrives at Magnitogorsk station, which is no more than an old railroad car by the side of the tracks (fig. 42). A young woman shows him to his place in a tent. The caption mentions the fresh white linens, a first indication of improvement in the new recruit's standard of living: "At home Victor Kalmikov never had any linen on his bed...."⁷ Next, Kalmykov sets to work. At first he is a digger at the construction of a dam for the factory pond. Upon completion of the excavation, he graduates to skilled labor, working as a concrete mason. As Kalmykov's class-consciousness awakens and develops, he joins a voluntary night sentry to guard against "wreckers," anti-Soviet saboteurs. He begins to study, quickly gaining basic literacy. He moves on to his political education and becomes a candidate member of the Communist Party (fig. 43). Kalmykov continues to advance professionally: he becomes a brigade

⁶ "Giant and Builder," *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 1: 5.

⁷ "Giant and Builder": 9.

leader, and his brigade distinguishes itself under his command.⁸ Kalmykov's material conditions improve; he moves from the tent into a barrack (fig. 44). The steady progress of construction at the site is paralleled by the steady progress of Kalmykov's career at work and in politics. Kalmykov becomes a fitter and petitions for full membership of the Communist Party (fig. 45).

To the Communist Party Nucleus at Koksokhimkombinat, Magnetostroi.
From Victor Emelyanovitch Kalmikov, leader of mason's brigade.

Application.

I hereby request to be admitted to the party as my 6-month candidate term has already expired. I was illiterate when I first came to the socialist works. Here I have abolished my illiteracy. I have raised my political knowledge to a higher level. I began work as a digger. Now I am a mason, a brigadier, a shock-worker. I exceeded my program of work by 20 to 25 percent. Here I understood that all workers engaged in socialistic construction are building for their own benefit, and I therefore believe that I should be in the ranks of the Communist Party to help put through the general line of the party.

July 30, 1931

V.E. Kalmikov⁹

The facsimile reproduction of this handwritten petition documents Kalmykov's recently achieved literacy. Upon completion of a plant for the production of coke, a type of coal used as fuel in the steel-making process, Kalmykov follows the advice of the local secretary of the Party Committee and studies to become a machinist at that plant.

Kalmykov's steadily improving material conditions are documented by the wages on his

⁸ At Magnitostroi and other construction sites, groups of workers were organized into brigades, led by "brigadiers". Like other terms from this Soviet period, "brigade" is military in origins and furthers the metaphor of industrialization as a military front. This martial vocabulary extended to culture during this period. Groups of artists, writers and journalists who visited construction sites were similarly called "brigades."

pay slips (fig. 46). Kalmykov's private life also progresses; he marries Emilia Bakke and they now live in a room. Kalmykov enjoys the domestic comforts of family life--a wife to serve him a hot meal while he reads the paper.¹⁰ The transformation of the *lapti shod* peasant boy into a socialist man is complete when Kalmykov is rewarded with a suit and tie for his exemplary work. Kalmykov's story ends with his receipt of the order of the Red Banner of Labor (fig. 47). Neatly clad in warm clothes and boots, he appears against the background of the newspaper announcement of his award. This image is a pendant to the full-length photograph of Kalmykov arriving at the construction site (fig. 42). Kalmykov the peasant is shown from above, an eager boy from the country, looking off to the right, setting off on his adventure at the construction. Kalmykov the worker is larger, dominating, self-assured--an effect created in part by the low camera angle. He faces left, bringing the onward narrative drive to an end.¹¹ The final spread features a face shot of Kalmykov montaged over a crowd of workers (fig. 48). Text and image emphasize Kalmykov as a type:

Many thousands have followed the same course that Kalmikov has taken.
A new man makes his appearance on the arena of history.
Socialist construction creates this new man.¹²

⁹ "Giant and Builder": 20.

¹⁰ For a contemporary review which specifically linked family life with an improvement in Viktor's eating and dressing, see G. Printsmitul, "Poema o liudiakh velikikh del," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 4 March 1932.

¹¹ Many of the spreads in this essay contain compositional or representational features that give the images a strong orientation to the right, pushing the narrative onward.

¹² "Giant and Builder": 42.

Kalmykov is not exceptional but typical. He is set forth as a new type, the new Soviet man molded by the experience of socialist construction.

Maks Al'pert and Aleksandr Smolian co-authored this narrative.¹³ Smolian was special correspondent of ROSTA, the Russian Telegraphic Agency, at Magnitostroi from April 1931,¹⁴ and in September 1932 he was on the editorial board of "The History of the Magnitogorsk Combine," a local branch of Maksim Gor'kii's All-Union History of Plants and Factories.¹⁵ Zinadii Ostrovskii, the representative of *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta* at Magnitostroi, was consultant. One of the few journalists at the construction site who was conversant with technology, he was able to speak with engineers "in their language."¹⁶ Prior to Magnitostroi, Ostrovskii had been posted at the construction of the Turkmenistan-Siberia railroad, one of the first major Soviet construction projects, about which he wrote several books that emphasized the transformation of "backwards" Central Asian peasants into Soviet workers.¹⁷ A two-part article by Ostrovskii about the work of reporters at Magnitostroi that appeared in *Zhurnalist* suggests that he was considered an

¹³ "Giant and Builder": 43.

¹⁴ GARF, fond 4459 (Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Soiuza), op. 18, d. 3318, ll. 1-12.

¹⁵ "Istoriia Magnitostroia," *Za Magnitostroi literatury*, no. 6 (September 1932): 10.

¹⁶ Iurii Chaplygin, "Lager' pressy u gory Magnitnoi," *Sovetskaia pechat'*, 1957, no. 10 (October): 47.

¹⁷ Zinadii Ostrovskii, *Velikaia magistral': O delakh i liudiakh Turksiba* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1930); Zinadii Ostrovskii, *Turksib. Sbornik statei uchastnikov stroitel'stva Turkestan-Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi* (Moscow: Transpechat' NKPS, 1930). Ostrovskii also published a book about a Magnitostroi for a series of large-print books intended for newly literate workers. Zinadii Ostrovskii, *Magnitostroi* (Moscow: Partiinoe izdatel'stvo, 1932).

expert on journalistic work at major construction sites.¹⁸ The inside front cover of "Giant and Builder" features an essay about Magnitostroi by Paul Valliant-Couturier, a French Communist journalist who arrived in Magnitogorsk on 18 October 1931, shortly before the shooting of "Giant and Builder".¹⁹ This essay serves as the testimony of a non-Soviet foreigner to the actuality of events at Magnitostroi. Two additional photojournalists, Georgii Petrusov and N. Vladimirtsev, contributed to the essay. Petrusov was a professional photographer who during the twenties worked for various Moscow publications, including *Pravda*, before an extended sojourn at the Magnitostroi from approximately 1929 to 1931.²⁰ The layout artist for this issue was Nikolai Troshin, another regular contributor to *SSSR na stroike*.

The publication of "Giant and Builder" coincided with the setting into production of the first blast furnace at Magnitostroi on January 31, 1932. Copies of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* were distributed at the 17th Party Conference, which was devoted to industrial development, in Moscow from January 30 to February 4, 1932.²¹ A few weeks after its appearance, *Zhurnalist* heralded the essay as a major innovation in Soviet photojournalism and an improvement for the magazine *SSSR na stroike*:

¹⁸ Ostrovskii, "Zhurnalist na udarnoi stroike," *Zhurnalist*, 1932, no. 2 (15 January): 16-18; *Zhurnalist*, 1932, no. 3 (30 January): 6-7.

¹⁹ "Tov. Kutiur'e v Magnitogorske," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 19 October 1931. Another essay by Valliant-Courtier appeared in a special Magnitostroi number of *Ogonek* in May 1932. For an overview of Valliant-Courtier's travel in the Urals, see A.A. Shmakov, *Pis'ma iz Lozanny* (Cheliabinsk: Iuzhno-Ural'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1980): 76-84.

²⁰ Anri Vartanov, "Zvezda Petrusova," *Sovetskoe foto*, 1989, no. 1 (January): 35-39.

²¹ Khalatov to Gor'kii, 3 February 1932, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 262.

Leaf through last year's pages of even the photo journal *SSSR na stroike*, which presents exceptionally factual and documentary photos, and you will see that until very recently the colossal possibilities of photography have been far from fully used by us. But the shortcomings of *SSSR na stroike* are to a meaningful extent the shortcomings of all of our photo-agitation and photo-propaganda. Some of its issues tended to resemble albums of reportorial photographs assembled without order. Fragmentation, lack of connection, chance, lack of planning of photo-information, a predilection towards "objectism," and the inability to show the living person of socialist construction noticeably weakened the agitational value of the journal... ["Giant and Builder"] persuasively shows, what great possibilities are present in the form of the **connected photo-story, overcoming the narrowness, immobility and staticness of a single photograph.** [sic]²²

This passage identified the shortcomings of Soviet photojournalism which "Giant and Builder" overcame. Earlier issues of the magazine, although usually devoted to a single subject, resembled random collections of photographs with little coherent ordering. Beautifully printed and often compositionally strong, these photographs offered little interpretive content or human interest. By singling out fragmentation, chance, and "objectism" (*veshchizm*), the review implied that one source of the magazine's flaws was a formalist orientation that prevented it from showing "the living person of socialist construction." "Objectism" was a catchword for both Western *Neue Sachlichkeit* and LEF aesthetics.²³ Critics accused LEF of over emphasis on the material object alone, to an exclusion of the social and economic context of the object, and this approach was identified with bourgeois Western formalist art, as typified in photography by the work of

²² A. Narvskii, "Gigant i stroitel'," *Zhurnalist*, 1932, no. 6 (20 February): 8. The references to "objectism" and fragmentation may be interpreted as criticism of left photography and formalist visual experiment.

²³ See, for example, Sergei Tret'iakov, "Biografiia veshchi," in *Literatura fakta. Sbornik materialov rabotnikov lefa*, ed. Nikolai Chuzak (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929): 66-70.

Renger-Patzsch and Moholy-Nagy. The narrative structuring of "Giant and Builder" overcame these weaknesses. *Zhurnal* was not alone in its appraisal of *SSSR na stroike*. Founding editor Maksim Gor'kii harshly criticized early numbers of the magazine:

The twelfth number [of 1930] of *Na stroike* is definitely bad. The photographs are shallow, and some sort of talentless bureaucrats made them...

Whom and with what could the pile driver of the mine surprise? Or the 25 copper ingots? Or the cable-crane? The bars of aluminum? The samples of minerals? The monolith? All of this is shallow and not new, and therefore is not needed in the magazine. Moreover, the English and French all well know that, for example, we still buy aluminum from abroad.²⁴

Gor'kii attacked the magazine's photographic fixation on industrial objects and materials, devoid of any ideological nuance. As a solution to this shallowness, he proposed that "the magazine will function as is useful to us when we begin to impress the spectator by magnitude--by the mass of copper ingots, by the mass of construction, in general by the mass. And it is necessary to learn how to photograph material from its showy side."²⁵"Giant and Builder" was the first issue of *SSSR na stroike* to which Gor'kii gave an unqualified positive rating: "the first number for 1932 is superbly good."²⁶

The representation of industrial construction was a central creative concern in Soviet culture during the First Five-Year Plan. However, it also posed major problems. Visitors to the construction sites found the huge scale overwhelming and initially incomprehensible. As Ostrovskii pointed out with reference to Magnitostroi:

²⁴ Gor'kii to Khalatov, end of January 1931, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 239.

²⁵ Gor'kii to Khalatov, end of January 1931, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 239.

²⁶ Gor'kii to Khalatov, 17 February 1932, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 264.

The site of the construction is spread out over 64 square kilometers. In order to receive an adequate visual impression of the entire construction, it is necessary to spend no less than ten to fifteen days traveling around to all parts and all objects. But during this time, understandably, it is not possible also to get to know the people and to master the economics and technology of the construction. No less than a month passes, before a correspondent, even if he were a genius, begins to grasp the pattern of things and is able to probe into the essence of the task being undertaken here, to properly formulate a question and find the path to its solution.²⁷

Ostrovskii also mentioned other problems confronting journalists at Magnitostroi. First, most journalists lacked the technical literacy needed to understand the chaotic events of the enormous construction. Second, many correspondents from the central press visited Magnitostroi for two or three weeks and never gained more than a superficial understanding of what was happening at the site. The complexity and scale of the construction led to misinterpretations by touring journalists who visited Magnitogorsk for short stretches. The writer Valentin Kataev's initial response to Magnitostroi points to another problem:

I was already prepared for the perception of Magnitka, but it literally stunned me. And not because I saw something more majestic than what I had seen before. There was not yet anything majestic, besides the audacity of the bold idea to build there, in the wild Pugachev steppe, the greatest metal plant in the world.²⁸

Not only was there little to see at Magnitostroi in its first years, but the hazardous work-site and squalid living conditions did not lend themselves well to positive documentary representation.

²⁷ Ostrovskii, "Zhurnal'ist na udarnoi stroike," *Zhurnal'ist*, 1932, no. 2 (15 January): 17. While Al'pert was only at the site for a short period of time, he collaborated with two of the more permanent journalists of the central press, Smolian and Ostrovskii himself.

²⁸ Valentin Kataev, *Raznoe* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1970): 286.

In addition to the huge scale and diffusion of the enormous construction sites, photojournalists were also confronted by representational problems specific to their medium. In 1930 Lev Mezhericher criticized *SSSR na stroike* for failing to meet the task of representing industrial construction:

As is known, this magazine has the aim to shown the socialist reconstruction of the country in photographs. The editors set to work with optimistic expectations--after all, we have hundreds of photojournalists, an ocean of photographs, and it will be possible to present a magnificent reflection of socialist construction to the entire world. What happened? It turned out that in photojournalism production not even one percent are genuine shots, expressive shots. In individual examples this was not noticeable, but if one hundred photographs on a given theme are gathered for an issue, the wretched flat documentation of our photojournalists becomes apparent in all its misery. Quantity turns into a quality of the most negative sort--into murderous tedium; and the issues devoted to the largest objects of construction resemble run of the mill fare.²⁹

As Mezhericher pointed out, the publication of more photographs did not automatically guarantee the magazine greater expressive impact. The photographer Maks Al'pert attributed the development of the *fotoocherk* to the struggles of the photographers of *SSSR na stroike* to make the transition from newspaper to magazine format.³⁰ *SSSR na stroike* was a unique publication in the Soviet Union during the early 1930s; other illustrated magazines were of far inferior print quality, and none were exclusively composed of photographic spreads. The first photographers to work on the magazine had been recruited from the elite of newspaper photojournalism. These newspaper photographers had to shift from composing in terms of individual shots to making

²⁹ While published in 1931, the foreword dates the text to late 1930. Lev Mezhericher, *Sovetskaia fotoinformatsiia na novom etape* (Moscow: Ogonek, 1931): 3, 20, 22.

³⁰ Maks Al'pert, "Dorogie serdtsu kadry," *Sovetskoe foto*, 1981, no. 9 (September): 26.

coherent series of photographs ("Giant and Builder," for example, is composed of over 80 photographs). Individual sharp frames were no longer adequate; instead, the photographer had to form a definite, coherent visual system to describe a subject. The French communist writer Louis Aragon commented after his visit to Magnitogorsk in 1932:

The gigantic Magnitogorsk combine does not yield to description, not even to photographic representation. Only the eye may stop at details and at the same time grasp the monumental perspective of the works being carried out everywhere.³¹

While the frozen, static shot of the camera was inadequate to represent Magnitostroi, a moving, active eye--reminiscent of Dziga Vertov's *kinoglaz*--could close in on details, pan monumental perspectives, and collapse problems of time and space. "Giant and Builder" employs a type of photographic montage based on narrative cinema to solve the problem of the representation of Magnitostroi and socialist construction. The scale, tempo, and spatial characteristics of the site recommended it to cinematic treatment. Montage juxtaposition was able to capture the rapid pace of changes, the transformation of space and people, the huge scale and diversity of the enterprise. Film provided the model for the most successful representations of Magnitostroi. Cinematic references occur frequently in representations of the site, such as the filmstrip of the dam construction that illustrated an article in the Magnitogorsk literary magazine *Buksir* in 1931 (fig. 49).³²

³¹ Louis Aragon, "Ural otvechaet tovarishchu Stalinu," *Internatsionalnaia literatura*, 1933, no. 2: 106.

³² Graphic of three "film frames" appears on the cover of the newspaper *Opyt stroiki*, 13 November 1931. Valentin Kataev's novel *Vremia, vpered!* (1932), discussed in detail below, is also cinematic in its construction. The Dutch director Joris Ivens made a film

On July 2, 1932, "Giant and Builder" was the focus of critical discussion at a meeting of the Creative Association of Photo-Workers of the Press (Tvorcheskoe ob'edinenie foto-rabotnikov pechati),³³ and excerpts of the speeches were subsequently printed in *Proletarskoe foto*.³⁴ Formed after the dissolution of all independent literary and artistic organizations in April 1932, the Creative Association was composed of former members of the disbanded ROPF. At the time of the publication of "Giant and Builder," ROPF was engaged in bitter polemical skirmishes with the Photo Section of Oktiabr'. Prior to its forced dissolution in April 1932, ROPF had bitterly attacked the photographers of Oktiabr' for their formalist distortion of socialist reality.³⁵ The Creative Association was a short-lived attempt to re-group ROPF members in a new organization, so as to distance themselves from their earlier close alignment with RAPP. Through their critique of "Giant and Builder" the former members of ROPF sought to re-establish their authority in Soviet photography.³⁶

about Magnitostroi, *Pesnia o geroiakh* (1932), in collaboration with the German composer Hans Eisler and Soviet writer Sergei Tret'iakov.

³³ "Tvorcheskaia praktika fotoreporterov: 'Gigant i stroitel'." V chem sil'naia storona fotoserii t. Al'perta," *Fotokor*, 1932, no. 20 (July): 3.

³⁴ *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 5-16.

³⁵ The critical attacks on the Photo-Section of Oktiabr' began in September 1931, when the journal changed its name from *Sovetskoe foto* to *Proletarskoe foto*, and continued on into 1932.

³⁶ Both the editorial for this issue of *Proletarskoe foto* and the introductory speech of the creative discussion make clear that these texts were written in response to the dissolution of April 1932 and are an attempt to develop forms of self-criticism. The editorial stresses the need of *Proletarskoe foto* to transform itself into a "scientific-methodical journal, helping photo-workers find methods to show socialist construction and raising their political and technical qualifications." See "Puti perestroiki nashego zhurnala"

An especially contentious issue prominent in the July 1932 discussion of the essay centered on the photographic "reconstruction" of Kalmykov's story. Careful examination of the photographs reveals flaws in continuity. For instance, Kalmykov has a bandaged finger in various photographs that are supposed to depict events over a year apart. This indicates that the photographs were not taken over the course of eighteen months but during a much more limited period of time (figs. 43, 44, 46). In *Proletarskoe foto* Al'pert carefully delineated his work at Magnitogorsk, describing it as the application of a new photographic method, the "restoration of fact" (*vosstanovlenie fakta*).³⁷ The idea of showing the progress of the construction through the "reconstruction" of a person belonged to Al'pert, who worked on the essay with Ostrovskii and Smolian, veteran Magnitostroi journalists. Smolian helped Al'pert locate two possible subjects for the essay: Nuzrulla Shaikhutdinov and Viktor Kalmykov. A demobilized Red Army soldier of Tatar ethnicity, Shaikhutdinov was the first Magnitostroi worker to be awarded the Red Banner of Labor.³⁸ The brigade of diggers headed by Shaikhutdinov during the fall of 1930 was reported to have worked 34 hours straight to complete the excavation of the

Proletarskoe foto, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 1-2; and V. Grishanin, "Put' perestroika -- tvorcheskaia praktika," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 5.

³⁷ Maks Al'pert, "Sotsializm pereplavliaet cheloveka," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 8.

³⁸ "Za tov. Shaikhutdinovym -- pervym udarnikom krasnoznamenetsem magnitostroiia," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 8 September 1931. For further biographical information, see L. Shikhanova, "Ordenosets No. 1," *Magnitostroi*, 12 January 1972. Photographs of both Shaikhutdinov and Galliulin (another Tatar brigade leader who will be discussed below) are included in a photomontages by El Lissitzky (figs. 83, 84) that were published in both *SSSR na stroike*, 1933, No. 2 (Red Army) and the deluxe album *Raboche-Krest'ianskaia Krasnaia Armiia* (Moscow: Izogiz, 1934).

dam.³⁹ Al'pert stated that Shaikhtudinov "arrived at the construction as a fully [politically] conscious person. In contrast to him, Kalmykov arrived at the site as a raw person. So we chose Kalmykov as our candidate."⁴⁰ However, other factors led to the selection of Kalmykov. Despite his alleged political consciousness, Shaikhtudinov was illiterate; in 1935 Zaveniagin, the director of the steel plant, ordered him to be relieved from work for six months to take a course to remedy his illiteracy.⁴¹ Shaikhtudinov's illiteracy may have hindered his rapid advancement. His award was for work as the brigade leader of *chernorabochie*--unskilled laborers (literally, "black-workers"). Most importantly, perhaps, Shaikhtudinov could not be chosen as a heroic ideal in a Russo-centric culture.⁴² While the majority of the young "enthusiasts" who voluntarily came to Magnitostroi were Russian, the "forced settlers" were predominantly Tatar, hence his story was both atypical and politically sensitive.

An article about Smolian's work at Magnitostroi, which appeared in a house publication of ROSTA in late 1931, suggests that Kalmykov was in close contact with this journalist in 1931. A photo accompanying the article shows Smolian with Kalmykov

³⁹ "Nuzrulla Shaikhtudinov," *Slovo o Magnitke*, ed. N. Kartashov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979) 82.

⁴⁰ Al'pert, "Sotsializm" 8.

⁴¹ For a reproduction of Zaveniagin's order, see *Slovo o Magnitke*: 51. Tatar, and not Russian, was presumably Shaikhtudinov's first language.

⁴² Nevertheless, the national minority member could effectively function as a marker of extreme cultural transformation. John Scott noted in reference to Shaimat Khaibulin, a Tatar from Kazakhstan: "His life had changed more in a year than that of his antecedents since the time of Tamerlane." John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel* (1942; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989): 16.

and Vol'fman, head of construction at the coke plant (fig. 50).⁴³ After his selection, Kalmykov told his life story to Smolian and Al'pert in detail. Using this oral history, the journalists identified the essential points in Kalmykov's story and sketched out the bare minimum of photographs necessary for the photo-essay, a process reminiscent of the composition of a storyboard for a film. When the shoot first began, Kalmykov was not exempted from work. However, the publication of the positive review of "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family" in *Pravda* on 24 October smoothed the way for further work. Kalmykov was released from work to spend four days posing for Al'pert.⁴⁴

Upon returning to Moscow, Al'pert made presentations about the photographs of Kalmykov at meetings of ROPF on 17 November and 2 December.⁴⁵ After a slide display of the photographs at the second meeting, several photojournalists attacked the essay for its departure from "the laws of photo-reportage."⁴⁶ At the above-mentioned July 1932 discussion of the Creative Association after the essay's publication, Al'pert rejected this

⁴³ "Tov. Smolian -- spetskor Rosta na Magnitostroe," *Za tempy, kachestvo v informatsii*, 1931, no. 4 (December): 12. At first glance, Kalmykov does not appear to be the same person as in *SSSR na stroike*. Close scrutiny, however, suggests that this is a result of his neatly combed shorter hair.

⁴⁴ The photo shoot with Kalmykov appears to have begun around October 26. This would allow for the two day lag in newspaper delivery from Moscow. The newspaper, which Kalmykov reads in figure 26 is *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 26 October 1931.

⁴⁵ "V ROPFE," *Proletarskoe foto*, No. 4 (December 1931): 52. "V ROPFE," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 1 (January): 41. Al'pert's slide show on December 2 was preceded by a presentation by John Heartfield.

⁴⁶ Al'pert, "Sotsializm": 8. Among those who disapproved of the method was Arkadii Shaikhet, another leading ROPF photographer and contributor to "24 hours in the life of a Moscow worker family." Significantly, there was not consensus among "proletarian"

adherence to the principle of only shooting "that which it is possible to see." Asserting that his method of "restoration of fact" was especially well suited to showing Soviet achievements in all sectors of socialist construction, Al'pert dismissed the problem of the bandaged finger:

In several photographs Kalmykov is shot with a bandaged finger. What the comrades said about this certainly did not convince me. Several comrades reckoned that this "finger" unmasked the entire series. It must be said that neither I, as the author, nor the editorial board came to the first person found and began to photograph him. To seriously believe that this "finger" is able to unmask the entire series is, of course, nonsense.⁴⁷

Al'pert added that anyone wishing to confirm Kalmykov's identity could look him up in Magnitogorsk or read the letter of workers confirming the accuracy of the representation of socialist construction at Magnitostroi in the March 4th issue of the newspaper *Magnitogorskii rabochii*.⁴⁸ The precedent of the Filippov family series is clearly evident here. As in the Filippov campaign, letters were used to verify the truth of the essay, and doubters were encouraged to look up Kalmykov themselves--an unlikely proposition given the geographic remoteness of Magnitogorsk. Al'pert concluded that Kalmykov himself was not so important--"it could be Ivanov, Stepanov and so forth"--as this innovative photographic method which promised to be a powerful tool solving the problems of the representation of socialist construction.

photographers in regard to aesthetic issues. See Arkadii Shaikhet, "Zakonen li metod vosstanovleniia fakta?" *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 11.

⁴⁷ Al'pert, "Sotsializm": 8.

⁴⁸ This letter is signed by Kalmykov and members of his brigade. See "Rastut riady udarnikov, riady geroev truda: Viktor Kalmykov ne odin," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 4 March 1932.

Soiuzfoto editor Lev Mezhericher argued in favor of Al'pert's method and lauded "Giant and Builder" for its representation of the dramatic changes taking place in the lives of Soviet workers as well as for its demonstration of the fundamental difference of socialist society from capitalist society. Mezhericher singled out the essay's parallel and integrated portrayal of the transformation of an individual worker and the transformation of the site. He accepted the technique as entirely valid, since "the method of the reconstruction of fact applied by Comrade Al'pert did not deprive photography of its documentary nature." Mezhericher also addressed the problem of the bandaged finger:

Comrades not agreeing with the creative method of Comrade Al'pert and those similar-minded to him attempt to find shortcomings in his work and point out most of all the bandaged finger... This "unmasking" does not have any significance.

As regards the finger, it would have been possible to retouch it in order to divert somehow the search for fleas.⁴⁹

It is significant that this flaw was not retouched. While there is proof, which I discuss below, that other photographs were retouched, the bandage was left on Kalmykov's finger. The rough, unretouched grittiness of the majority of the photographs adds to their sense of authenticity, thereby heightening their documentary quality.

Close reading of the critical discussions of both "24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family" and "Giant and Builder" in *Proletarskoe foto* indicates that the representation of the typical experiences of individual Soviet workers participating in socialist construction was another important creative problem motivating the development of the Soviet *fotocherk*. The Filippov essay captured one day in the life of

an established proletarian family in Moscow. While the essay represented the family's daily routine, it did not show the longer-term temporal transformation experienced by the family as a whole and the individuals who constituted it. By extending the temporal frame of the narrative, "Giant and Builder" presented a more dynamic representation of the transformation of both individual and industry within socialist construction. In the discussion of the Filippov family essay, Sergei Tret'iakov had endorsed "the protracted photo-observation," a concept that was discussed once again during the debates over "Giant and Builder."⁵⁰ At first glance, the later photo-essay appears to be an extended photo observation. However, the "proletarian" photographers and critics were careful to distance themselves from Tret'iakov. They rejected the extended photo-observation for its lack of economy and efficiency:

It is absolutely clear that the extended observation, the method advanced by the writer Sergei Tret'iakov is a lottery or an effort to build a house on the hopes of winning 200,000 [rubles]. Comrade Al'pert made the right decision.⁵¹

Rather than photographing Kalmykov over eighteen months, the ROPF photographer recreated the passage of time in four short days. The rapidity of the photographic work corresponds to the acceleration of work at the construction site, where "Bolshevik tempos" and shock-work were privileged. It should be noted, however, that "Giant and

⁴⁹ Lev Mezhericher, "Veshch' gromadnoi vospitatel'noi sily," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 9-10. This method of verification is similar to that used by AIZ in regard to the Filippov family essay.

⁵⁰ Sergei Tret'iakov, "Ot fotoserii--k dlitel'nomy fotonabliudeni," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 4 (December): 21, 45.

Builder” also employed Georgii Petrusov’s photographs of the construction site that were taken over an extended period of time during his two year residence in Magnitogorsk.⁵²

In the creative discussion Arkadii Shaikhet, one of the photographers of the Filippov family, expressed his doubts about both Al’pert’s “restoration of fact” and Tret’iakov’s “protracted photo-observation.”

For me the question is not decided, whether we can with such boldness make a series using the method of the rehabilitation of events and facts, regardless of whether it is politically correct or useful. I do not side with the tendencies of the members of Oktiabr’, who assert that we should take a Komsomol or worker and in the course of a series of years follow each of his steps. This method, of course, is by no means justified. Kalmykov succeeds as an outstanding shockworker, who has traversed the well-known path, but I would like to find the answer to this question: may we make such a series? The creative meetings should put an end to such doubts.⁵³

While he had doubts about Al’pert’s method, Shaikhet rejected Tret’iakov’s “protracted photo-observation” outright. Shaikhet intimated that Tret’iakov’s technique was slow and inefficient, dragging out the urgent tasks of Soviet photography. This complaint recalls attacks on bourgeois engineers and western technical specialists, who questioned the soundness of “Bolshevik tempos”, the acceleration of construction and production to breakneck speeds. By extrapolation, Shaikhet implied that Tret’iakov’s approach was an

⁵¹ V. Grishanin, “Pravo proektsii minuvshogo,” *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 14.

⁵² Petrusov’s work was clearly influenced by Rodchenko, but it is not clear whether Petrusov was a member of Oktiabr’. While the biography for Petrusov in the catalogue for the exhibition *Photography in Russian: 1840-1940* states that he joined the Oktiabr’ Photo Section in 1931, I have not found any confirmation of his membership in this group. Elliott, *Photography in Russia: 1840-1940*: 251.

outdated, inefficient method that sought to impede Soviet progress. While Tret'iakov was not, strictly speaking, a member of Oktiabr', the method that he endorsed was identified with the group. As ROPF's attacks on Oktiabr' intensified after the celebration of the Filippov family essay, Tret'iakov's ideas were increasingly vilified. The concept of extended narrative photographic works was initially advocated by Tret'iakov and was even suggested by his own work as a *faktovik*, film scenarist and photographer. While he had a politically sound reputation for his work on a collective farm, he was culturally suspect to the proletarian photographers due to his earlier affiliation with LEF. Hence, his method was categorically rejected, despite the strong influence that it had on the development of the *fotocherk*.

Despite the purported rejection of the extended photo-observation method in "Giant and Builder," its creators employed a related "left" avant-garde practice: the fixation of facts. Like the Filippov family series, "Giant and Builder" employs photographs to document the "reality" of Kalmykov's story, including images that capture such factual items as: blackboards showing the percentage of assigned work plans fulfilled by Kalmykov's brigade, both before and after he became a brigade leader; his petition for Party membership; his pay slips; and the newspaper clipping announcing his being awarded the Red Banner of Labor (figs. 43,45, 46, 47). The obvious fabrication of the writing on the blackboards for October and November of 1930 and the possible forgery of pay-slips and petition point to a danger of this method: the devaluation of truth

⁵³ Shaikhet, "Zakonen li metod vosstanovleniia fakta," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 11.

in favor of the production of facts. A related danger of "the restoration of fact" is the falsification of the historical record. This is evident in connection with photographs of Kalmykov, which are often published or catalogued as being from 1929 even though all were shot in October 1931.⁵⁴

Pre-publication versions of photographs from "Giant and Builder" and unpublished variants are preserved in the collection of the Museum of the Revolution in Moscow. Comparison of these photographs with those montaged in the magazine provides further insight about the making of the essay. For example, the full-length photograph of Kalmykov arriving at the site was clearly staged inside one of the tents, with the assistance of artificial illumination (figs. 51, 42). Close comparison of the original and printed versions of the image of passengers disembarking from a train (figs. 52, 42) reveals evidence of re-touching: the woman standing in the train door with a bundle in her hands that appears to be a swaddled baby has been removed.⁵⁵ Given the decision not to retouch the infamous bandaged finger, this erasure is significant. *SSSR na stroike* presents an ideal image of young enthusiasts arriving at Magnitostroi to construct a new life. Arriving as raw youths, their lives were soon transformed by their experience at the site. They become socialist adults and start families in this "brave new world."

⁵⁴ See, for example, the photograph of Kalmykov in lapti with the caption "Stroitel' Magnitki. 1929" printed in *Iunost'*, 1987, no. 3: 4. In the card catalogue for the negative fond at the Museum of the Revolution, Moscow, several Kalmykov photographs are dated to 1929 and 1930.

⁵⁵ According to Anatolii Kniازهv, a Magnitogorsk photographer with expertise in film and photo documents from the early days of the construction, this image is a frame from a film showing the arrival of workers at the station. Anatolii Kniازهv, interview with author, Magnitogorsk, 2 April 1996.

However, the realities of life and work at Magnitostroi in the wake of the collectivization of agriculture were varied and different.⁵⁶ A photograph from the collection of the Museum of the Revolution shows another image of arrival: a peasant woman and three small children sit on their bags at the train station (fig. 53). They have not arrived to create a new life, so much as to escape the destruction of an older one. The image of them sitting on their bags and waiting signals that it is not clear how or if they will fit into the construction. The magazine does not represent these displaced families and the many so-called special settlers, dekulakized peasants who were forcibly deported to Magnitogorsk.⁵⁷

The full frame photograph of Kalmykov being shown his place in the tent reveals further manipulation of the image of Magnitostroi (figs. 54). While the caption in the magazine stresses that "Kalmykov had never had any linen on his bed," the uncropped photograph reveals that there is no linen on the neighboring bed. The "courteous maid" who shows Kalmykov his bed is Emilia Bakke, his future wife. They appear together again in another cropped photograph of a group of workers entertaining themselves inside a barrack (figs. 55, 44).⁵⁸ Both the man next to Emilia and the woman on the right of the

⁵⁶ For discussion of peasant seasonal workers, migration and labor leakage, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: California University Press): 82-85, 94-98.

⁵⁷ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*: 133. Also see the documentary film by Pieter Jan Smit, *Magnitogorsk: Forging the New Man* (Amsterdam: Viewpoint Productions, 1997).

⁵⁸ John Scott's memoir suggests that the scene shown was a part of daily life at Magnitostroi: "At about six o'clock a dozen or so young workers, men and women, gathered in the Red Corner with a couple of balalaikas and a guitar. Work was finished

photograph have been removed; the presence of the former and the latter's interaction with the man next to her disrupt the development of Viktor and Emilia's romance. Additionally, the top of the photograph has been cropped, removing Stalin's portrait. This omission was probably made to avoid redundancy, as a portrait of Stalin was included in the previous two-page spread (fig. 43). The pre-publication photograph of Kalmykov at the savings bank reveals that the version in "Giant and Builder" was also retouched (figs. 56, 46). An optical irregularity in the original, possibly the reflection of strong artificial lighting, resulted in bright bands across Kalmykov's face. In the published version the missing features of Victor's profile--the eye and end of his nose--have been reconfigured. Notably, Kalmykov's bandaged finger is prominently visible in this photograph, but it was not retouched.

One photographic variant provides insight about Al'pert's perception of this photo-essay and its place in Soviet photojournalism. A spread on the foreign specialists at Magnitostroi is included in "Giant and Builder" (fig. 57). The photograph at the bottom of this page shows some of the foreign specialists, many of whom are German and Dutch architects, during their leisure time. A variant of this photograph shows some of these same individuals relaxing in a different room (fig. 58). One of the men is looking at the cover of the issue of *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* devoted to the Filippov family (fig. 24) and the man standing behind him is looking at the same issue of this magazine, but only its back-cover is visible. Al'pert clearly conceived of "Giant and Builder" as a development and improvement upon the Filippov series, a relationship made visible in

for the day, supper was on the stove, and it was time for a song. And they sang! Worker's

this photograph. This self-conscious historicization fits in with the general tone of discussion of both "The Filippov Family" and "Giant and Builder" in *Proletarskoe foto*. As soon as they were published both essays were celebrated as landmarks in the history of Soviet photography, a status they have unproblematically retained to this very day.⁵⁹

While "Giant and Builder" purports to document the biography of a typical worker transformed by the experience of industrial construction, close scrutiny of both visual and textual materials again raises questions about the "authenticity" of this narrative essay. Initial comparison of the published and uncropped versions of the photograph of Viktor and Emilia in their new home suggests extreme fabrication (figs. 59). What seems to be a quaint domestic scene in the magazine, appears to be a staged environment in the original photograph. A blanket was hung behind the couple, blocking off newspaper coated walls, while an over-sized table and rubber plant were added to create an effect of domesticity. When I first saw this photo, I deemed it authoritative proof of outright fabrication in Kalmykov's biography and reckoned that this tableau was created at the editorial offices of a local newspaper. Further investigation has led me to revise my initial conclusion. This is indeed the room in which Viktor and Emilia lived at the time of the shooting. The blanket was used to produce a softer, more aesthetically pleasing image. The room is not one of the scarce rooms in the first permanent housing of Magnitogorsk; it is a room in a barrack. The windows are similar to those in the earlier barrack scene (fig. 44), while covering the wall with newspapers was a regular practice in

revolutionary songs, folk tunes, and the old Russian romantic lyrics." Scott: 41.

the Magnitogorsk barracks.⁶⁰ Further, Emilia Bakke, who is still alive and living in Magnitogorsk, recounted to me the story of the rubber plant without any prompting or leading questions during an interview in 1996. After their marriage, the now blind Bakke deserted Kalmykov and returned to her village, as she was in love with someone else. Kalmykov followed Emilia to the village and softened her heart by crying like a child in public before her house. She agreed to return to Magnitogorsk with Kalmykov, and they brought the entire household with them, including her mother, two younger brothers and the rubber plant.⁶¹ While the photograph does not appear to be a fabrication, the photo-essay fails to mention that the extended family also inhabited the same room, an indication that the new socialist society was not as utopian as its representation.

Despite an excellent memory, Bakke remembers no concrete details about the shoot, except that she was embarrassed to be photographed, as she was seven months pregnant and her face was swollen.⁶² Al'pert told her not to worry, that she would look great.⁶³ While her pregnant condition is evident in this domestic scene (fig. 59), Al'pert skillfully hid her advanced pregnancy in other photographs. Revealing Bakke's pregnancy in this scene has significance for the narrative flow: it suggests Kalmykov's progression to

⁵⁹ For a recent example of such an interpretation by a Russian art historian, see Aleksandr Lavrentev "Klassika fotocherka," *Fotografiia*, 1994, no. 4 (July-August): 23-26.

⁶⁰ John Scott mentions the use of newspaper to cover cracks in walls and as insulation. Scott: 40, 51.

⁶¹ Emilia Bakke, interview with author, Magnitogorsk, 7 April 1996.

⁶² Viktor Viktorovich Bakke was born on January 2, 1932, about two months after the shoot.

fatherhood and the creation of an entirely new life. Its origins integrally connected with Magnitostroi, this child will be born into socialism--unlike the children brought by women escaping turmoil in the countryside (figs. 52, 53).

My interview with Bakke transformed my perception of the photo-essay. The legends about Kalmykov that proliferated after the publication of "Giant and Builder" distorted the memories of both family and acquaintances as they struggled to remember him after his disappearance in 1938, during the Stalinist Terror. Bakke, on the other hand, was never heroicized and there are no legends about her. I questioned her extensively about what drew her to Magnitostroi, the early days at the construction site, and her life there. A recruiter came to her village in 1929. Bakke, then seventeen, signed up with other young people of the village to work at the construction site. They were motivated by a desire to see the world, to escape an unpromising village life, and by the lure of building a new socialist society. She spent her first winter at Magnitostroi in a tent. Her first job was in the housing authority. Later she was the director of a dining room at the construction site. The fact that both these details are recorded in "Giant and Builder" suggests that Smolian and Al'pert followed the life story provided to them by Kalmykov, even if they did embroider it or make omissions along the way. For instance, according to Bakke, Kalmykov had received several years of schooling before arriving at Magnitogorsk and thus was not completely illiterate.⁶⁴

⁶³ See also: E. Karelina, "Emiliia i Viktor," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 11 June 1988.

⁶⁴ Kalmykov's fourth grade education is mentioned in N. Kartashov, *Tovarishch Direktor* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1974): 69.

Other, less mythical sources for biographical data are the published references to Kalmykov which pre-date the publication of "Giant and Builder." In *Na novykh putiakh* ("On New Paths"), a book about Magnitostroi published in September 1931, a section on the dam construction includes several passages about a brigade leader named Kalmykov (no first name is given), who worked at the dam construction in the fall of 1930:

Healthy, red-cheeked Kalmykov after 14 hours of work curled up in a ball on a table in the office and slept. He did not go to the barrack, because it was still necessary for him "to coordinate" something regarding the next day's work of his brigade.

Here is what Kalmykov relates about his brigade:

"We don't look at the clock. When the whistle sounds, we are already long at work--to prepare the [work] front, to examine the wheelbarrows, to clear off the boards. Long before the whistle, I already stand by the concrete mixer. As soon as the whistle sounds, I give the signal and the first wheelbarrow with sand or cement is already turned over into the concrete mixer...

"Our brigade all enrolled as enthusiasts. We work, for example, ten hours, we go to eat dinner and then we come again and work anew for four or five hours.

"Earlier I worked at Stalingrad. And I speak the truth: how we work now, they did not work there. Here you work such that it immediately takes your breath away. Inside something burns, something that words cannot relate..."⁶⁵

Is this the same Kalmykov found in "Giant and Builder"? Bakke confirms that he slept little and was hardly ever at home due to his obsession with work and study. But what about Stalingrad? Like the presence of the extended family in their barrack room, this

⁶⁵ E. Korin, *Na novykh putiakh* (Sverdlovsk-Moscow: Ural OGIZ, 1931) 55-56. Kalmykov is also mentioned in the events described by Korin around the completion of the concrete pouring on dam on October 26th, 1930. Many of these early Soviet publications about Magnitostroi feature self-narratives of workers. These narratives function as both testimonies of eyewitnesses and interpretations of social change. As Ostrovskii wrote in his book about Magnitostroi (which includes many such narratives): "The workers of Magnitostroi are the very best proof of our successes in the matter of the socialist transformation of man." Ostrovskii, *Magnitostroi* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1932) 37.

detail of Kalmykov's biography appears to have been omitted from "Giant and Builder."⁶⁶ *Na novykh putiakh* refers to the same Kalmykov as a brigade leader at the construction of the dam's spillway in the winter of 1931.⁶⁷ An article in a Magnitogorsk literary journal from April 1931 that celebrates the completion of the dam also mentions both Kalmykov and Shaikhutdinov as brigade leaders of heroic workers who labored in freezing sub-zero conditions.⁶⁸

Valentin Kataev's novel *Vremia, vpered!* (*Time, Forward!*) of 1932 provides yet another source about Kalmykov's activities at Magnitostroi prior to the photo-essay's publication. This novel describes events at Magnitostroi in May 1931 during the course of a 24-hour day, when a production record is broken by a brigade of cement workers. "Giant and Builder" uses the facsimile reproductions of documents such as pay slips and letters to demonstrate improvement in Kalmykov's material condition, education, and in his political level. A letter by Ishchenko, a brigade leader in Kataev's novel, appears to be a verbatim copy of one of these facsimiles, Kalmykov's letter petitioning for advancement to full Communist Party membership (fig. 45, see English translation

⁶⁶One of the legends about Kalmykov also mentions Stalingrad: After one week working as a digger Kalmykov already distinguished himself through hard work, and the foreman took interest in him. Kalmykov explained that he had first served as a concrete worker at the Stalingrad tractor factory. Upon learning of Kalmykov's skill, the foreman immediately transferred him the Shleinov's brigade. A. Bogatskaia, "Komrad Magnitka," *Koordinaty podviga. Iz istorii Cheliabinskoi Oblastnoi Komsomol'skoi Organizatsii. 1916-1968* (Cheliabinsk, 1968): 157.

⁶⁷ Korin: 66.

⁶⁸ Semen Narin'ian, "Khronika odnoi pobedy," *Buksir*, 1931, no. 3 (April): 11.

above).⁶⁹ The biographical details and the wording in the letters are essentially identical: the autobiographies of the historical figure Kalmykov and the fictional character Ishchenko merge. How is this blending of fictional and historical figures to be explained?

A conversation with Vladimir Mayakovsky served as Kataev's inspiration to write *Vremia, vpered!* The poet recited his poem *March of Time* to Kataev. Among its lines are the following:

Vpered,	Forward,
vremia,	time,
Vremia, vpered!	Time, forward!

Kataev commented that this would be an excellent title for an industrial novel about the first five-plan, in response to which Mayakovsky told him to write this novel. For Kataev "this was the testament of Mayakovsky," indicating the novel's significance as fulfilling the futurist poet's will after his suicide in April 1930.⁷⁰ Kataev arrived at Magnitostroi in the spring of 1931, after a tour that included the Dneprostroi hydroelectric dam construction site, the Stalingrad tractor factory, and various collective farms. Even before he came to the construction site, Kataev intended to write a Magnitostroi novel, for which he already had a name and a theme--"tempos, outdistanced time."⁷¹ Almost immediately Kataev found a subject for this novel:

I did not look for material. It pounced upon me itself. This was the time of construction records. The entire world thundered with the names of the

⁶⁹ Valentin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* (1933; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984): 317.

⁷⁰ Kataev, *Raznoe*: 286.

⁷¹ Kataev, *Raznoe*: 287.

Magnitogorsk concrete masons, who achieved miracles of speed in concrete pouring. Not in my dreams, I saw people who overcame time.⁷²

Based upon actual events and people observed at Magnitostroi, Kataev's novel incorporates a great deal of factual material, such as newspaper articles. For example, the bright young concrete engineer David Margulies was modeled on Moisei Tumarkin, who worked on the pouring of both the dam and the coke plant.⁷³ Kataev emphasized the factual nature of his novel by including the genre designation *roman-khronika* (novel-chronicle) as a sub-title. While at Magnitostroi, Kataev telegraphed reports to *Rabochaia gazeta* and was a member of the newspaper brigade of *Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn'*--the same brigade to which Ostrovskii, consultant for "Giant and Builder," belonged.⁷⁴ Kataev worked closely with a group of correspondents, capturing their work and personalities in the novel. The most easily identified model for a fictional character was Aleksandr Smolian. Kataev breaks out of the fictional frame by including an actual letter from himself to Smolian within the novel.⁷⁵

Smolian and the other journalists described by Kataev practiced "operative" journalism. Instead of simply reporting events and conditions at the site, they were active

⁷² Kataev, *Raznoe*: 287.

⁷³ Tumarkin later worked at Uralvagonstroi. When his direct superiors there were caught up in the purge and his own arrest seemed imminent, he committed suicide by electrocuting himself at the construction site. Kataev later confirmed to his widow that Margulies was based upon Tumarkin. G. Shebarov, "Privet vozhdii narodov!," *Ural'skii sledopyt*, 1989, no. 8: 25-27. An issue of *SSSR na stroike* devoted to Uralvagonstroi includes a spread with a photograph of Tumarkin. *SSSR na stroike*, 1936, no. 7.

⁷⁴ *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 11 March 1932.

⁷⁵ Kataev, *Time, Forward!*: 336-341.

participants in the construction. Their goal was to use the press to solve problems arising at the construction site, to promote innovation, and to facilitate competition. The article about Smolian's work at Magnitostroi which was printed in a house publication of the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) endorsed "operative" journalism by praising the correspondent's active involvement in shock-work and socialist competition:

Comrade Smolian organizes effective battle information with his unmediated participation in the process of construction, with the organization of an extensive set of posts and worker brigades. Gathering grains of experience and synthesizing them, he makes the experience of genuine shock work the common property of all laborers of the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

The "operative" journalists intervened in the production process, sought to rationalize and order construction work, and then publicized the new methods they developed in both the local, regional, and national press.⁷⁷ This "operative" work included the organization of socialist competition, such as the "production Olympics" organized by Smolian between brigades of concrete workers at the coke plant during 1931.⁷⁸

Magnitogorskii rabochii for May 1931 contains a plethora of reports concerning the work of mixing and pouring concrete. At Kharkov a string of records was established: 258, 270, 306 mixes per shift; these were surpassed by a record 324 mixes at

⁷⁶ "Tov. Smolian -- spetskor Rosta na Magnitostroe": 12.

⁷⁷ Ostrovskii, Narin'ian and Smolian worked together in organizing self-supporting supply brigades. This is the subject of Z. Ostrovskii and Semen Narin'ian, *Milliard nachinaetsia s kopeiki* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1931). The All-Union newspaper *Opyt stroiki* was published at Magnitostroi by a collective of journalists from regional and central press.

⁷⁸ Ostrovskii, "Zhurnal'ist na udarnoi stroike," *Zhurnal'ist*, 1932, no. 3 (30 January): 6.

Kuznetskstroï.⁷⁹ One of the articles describes a record of 429 mixes in one shift by Sagadeev's brigade at the coke plant on May 31. This article, "Enthusiasm + planning = victory," was authored by Smolian, Kataev, and Kozakov, another writer affiliated with *Ekonomicheskaiia zhizn'*.⁸⁰ This historical event is the central subject of the novel *Vremia, vpered!*

The character Ishchenko, whose biography parallels Kalmykov's, is a fictional composite of several brigade leaders who worked at the coke plant construction in 1931. Though Sagadeev was the primary source for the character, the novel contains details from the biographies of other brigade leaders. For instance, the competition between Ishchenko and Khanumov, a Tatar brigade leader, was based upon socialist competition entered upon between the concrete brigades of Egor Smertin and Khabibully Galiullin.⁸¹ In the novel, Khanumov carries the red banner won by his brigade wherever he goes.⁸² This distinctive attribute has its historical counterpart in the conferral of the All-Union Traveling Red Banner of Concrete Workers to Galiullin's brigade in April, 1931.⁸³

⁷⁹ *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 21 May 1931; 26 May 1931; 29 May 1931.

⁸⁰ Smolian, Kataev and Kozakov, "Enthuziazm + planovost' = pobeda," *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 31 May 1931.

⁸¹ Vladimir Kolosok, "Gordost' strany -- Magnitka," *Slovo o Magnitke*: 10.

⁸² Kataev, *Time, Forward!*: 30.

⁸³ Text of the telegram to Gugel, head of the construction, with this order is printed in *Slovo o Magnitke*: 54.

In the novel three brigade leaders--Ischchenko, Khanumov and Ermakov--lead the three shifts of the 24-hour rotation. In the real events that served as Kataev's source, Kalmykov was one of two other brigade leaders working the same rotation as Sagadeev. A notice printed in *Magnitogorskii rabochii* from Mar'asin, the head of construction at the coke plant, commends the brigade leaders Kalmykov and Artemkin for their work in pouring the foundations of the plant. Their organization of supply brigades played a critical role in Sagadeev's establishing a new record.⁸⁴ This shows that Kalmykov's biography generated the "fictional" events depicted by Kataev and the "factual" events represented in "Giant and Builder." Various shock-workers are reproduced in a spread in *SSSR na stroike* (fig. 60). Kalmykov appears in the lower left corner. Third from the right is Sagadeev, "leader of the comsomol [Communist Youth] brigade of masons which set a world record in mixing concrete." Tatar shock-workers from Galilullin's "brigade of masons which beat Sagadayev's [sic] record" are second and fifth from the left. On July 26, 1931, Galiullin's brigade set a quite unbelievable world record of 1196 mixes in one shift.⁸⁵ Notably, these heroic records and Kalmykov's involvement with them are barely mentioned in *SSSR na stroike*. Their extraordinary nature would run counter to Kalmykov's presentation as an everyman, an ordinary worker, one of thousands at the

⁸⁴ *Magnitogorskii rabochii*, 4 June 1931.

⁸⁵ This record is the subject of an epic poem of the construction: Aleksandr Voroshilov, *Pesnia o mirovom rekordom* (Magnitogorsk, 1931).

site. This "gallery" of shock-workers in *SSSR na stroike* also seems to suggest their typicality and interchangeability, even down to their biographies.⁸⁶

While Kalmykov's involvement with the events chronicled in *Vremia, vpered!* is thus established, how did his petition for full party membership come to be in the novel? Kataev's two months at Magnitostroi ended well before July 30th, the date of Kalmykov's petition. *Vremia, vpered!* was initially published in nine monthly serial installments in the literary journal *Krasnaia nov'* from January to September of 1932. The final installment contains both Ischenko's petition and Kataev's letter to Smolian.⁸⁷ In the letter, Kataev refers to Smolian's reactions to segments of the novel that had already been published. This indicates that Kataev continued to work on the novel after it had already begun publication. It is probable that Kataev finished the last chapter after the publication of "Giant and Builder" and incorporated Kalmykov's letter into his novel as factual documentary material. Alternatively, this genre of letter may have been "typical" at Magnitogorsk. Given the rapid advancement of barely literate workers into the Party, such petitions may have been formulaic or copied from one application to another. However, another passage in the final installment of the novel confirms Kataev's use of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* as a source for the novel. This passage occurs as Seroshevskii, chief engineer of the entire construction, flies over the site:

Seroshevsky was looking down through the slanted window.
Three-quarters of the horizon was covered by the huge white wing....

⁸⁶ Limitation of space makes further comparison of the narratives of *Vremia, vpered!* and "Giant and Builder" impossible here. I do want to note, however, that Ishchenko, like Kalmykov, becomes a father at the end of the story. Kataev, *Time, forward!*: 343-344.

⁸⁷ *Krasnaia nov'*, 1932, no. 9 (September).

Four letters were written on the wing of the airplane. The four letters stretched into the spaces of the night: A huge P; after it, somewhat smaller but still large--a C; and then a somewhat smaller C; and then a very small C.⁸⁸

This powerful visual image of an airplane wing with "СССР"--the cyrillic spelling of the Russian abbreviation for "USSR"--written across it, blotting out most of the landscape, also occurs in an aerial photograph in *СССР на строике* (fig. 61).

As the traces of his biography in *Time, Forward!* suggest, Kalmykov's image took on a life of its own in the wake of his appearance in *СССР на строике*. A bifurcation occurred that split the actual person Kalmykov from the heroic representation of a typical Magnitogorsk worker. The publication of "Giant and Builder" quickly brought Kalmykov both good and bad fortune. Someone from Kalmykov's village sent an accusation to Moscow that Viktor's father was a *kulak* (a rich peasant, the "class enemy" in the countryside), and not a poor peasant, as stated in the captions.⁸⁹ The Magnitogorsk City Committee of the Communist Party was notified of the accusation, and Kalmykov was summoned to Moscow to discuss this matter. A short while later, a Moscow official came to Magnitogorsk and informed Kalmykov that a special commission had investigated the affair and found him innocent. Cleared of this accusation, Kalmykov's party career took off. He was promoted to Secretary of the Communist Youth Organization (Komsomol) at the coke plant and developed contacts with leading local Komsomol and Party officials.

⁸⁸ Kataev, *Time, Forward!*: 311-312. I have quoted Charles Malumuth's translation verbatim; he cites the cyrillic spelling "СССР."

⁸⁹ E. Karelina, "Emiliia i Viktor'," *Magnitogorskii rabochii* 11 June 1988. Unless cited otherwise, the information in this paragraph is taken from this article, based upon interviews with Emiliia Bakke.

In January 1935 he took part in the funeral of Beso Lominadze, a one-time member of Stalin's inner circle who was made the Party boss of Magnitogorsk after falling out of favor with the leader. Later in 1935 Kalmykov was removed from the city party committee plenum along with other Lominadze associates.⁹⁰ Despite this setback, Kalmykov rose to be Chairman of the City Committee for Physical Culture by 1937. Yet in this same year the purge of the Komsomol apparatus began. Kalmykov was expelled from the party in 1937 for participating in the funeral of Lominadze, an enemy of the people. Kalmykov then briefly reverted to being an ordinary metalworker. He was arrested on the 21st of December 1937--Stalin's birthday--for allegedly taking part in a counter-revolutionary organization. After Kalmykov's arrest, his family was evicted from their housing. Because she had not changed her name upon marriage, Bakke managed to rent a seven square meter room for the five family members. While the wives of Kalmykov's associates were soon arrested, Bakke was spared, possibly because she was four months pregnant at the time of his arrest. The family stayed in Magnitogorsk, where they lived as ostracized relatives of an enemy of the people for twenty years, until Kalmykov was rehabilitated in 1957. At that time Bakke was informed that her husband had died on December 15th, 1944, but was given no place or cause of death. During the 1970s, Kalmykov was featured in a display at the Magnitogorsk Regional Museum. During a school visit to this museum, Oksana Bakke, Kalmykov's granddaughter, noticed that the display stated that he had died at the front during World War II. Hoping to find the truth about the fate of her grandfather, she asked the museum officials as to the source

⁹⁰ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*: 558.

of this information, but they were unable to provide it.⁹¹ Emilia finally received notification of her husband's fate in 1992; Kalmykov had been sentenced and shot on July 28, 1938, and his place of burial remains unknown (fig. 62; for English translation, see appendix F).⁹²

In 1932, the editors and contributors of *SSSR na stroike* could not have anticipated that this issue of the magazine would play a role in the demise of its hero, Viktor Kalmykov. Indeed, most of the magazine's editors and many of its contributors would also fall victim to the Terror, another matter that they could not anticipate. The response of Kalmykov's family to this issue of the magazine heightens the paradoxical nature of such Stalinist representations. While painfully aware that "Giant and Builder" played a role in his downfall, Kalmykov's wife, children, and grandchildren are extremely proud

⁹¹ Oksana Bakke, interview with author, Magnitogorsk, April 7, 1996. Shikhanova also states that Shaikhutdinov was killed at the front, but this may also be disinformation. Like Kalmykov, Shaikhutdinov became a party member and was active in local quickly rose through the ranks of the party. Perhaps the key phrase in this text is "Little is known of the last years of the Life of Nurzulla Shaikhutdinov. In the local museum are presented many of his documents, from which it may be learned that he had a family... and that he was killed at the front." L. Shikhanova, "Ordenosets No. 1," *Magnitostroi*, 12 January 1972.

⁹² Kalmykov's story was also typical in its tragic end. A parallel to Kalmykov is found in the film *Man of Marble*, dir. Andrzej Wajda, Poland, 1977. This film examines the fate of an enthusiastic young worker, Birkut, who arrives at the construction site of a new socialist city in post-war Poland. A young film director approaches the administration of the construction about making a documentary film, and Birkut is selected to lead a brigade which will attempt a record that will be documented in the film. As in *Vremia, vpered!*, "operative" journalism ensures Birkut's success. Birkut is catapulted into national fame as a hero of socialism. When things don't quite work out, he "disappears" and is removed from the collective memory. With minor alterations, this film could be about Kalmykov. Masterfully undermining socialist realist cultural practices, Wajda examines the creators of these legendary heroes and implicates those creators in the destruction of their human subjects of representation.

that he appeared in the magazine and that he remains a heroic figure in the history of the town. This again points to the bifurcation of the living human being Kalmykov from the representation of Kalmykov as typical hero worker of Magnitostroi.

Some time before the photographer's death in 1980, Al'pert commented on the representational challenge of the photo-essay:

To show his present day was not a hard task. However, a shot was needed that would make him a symbol of the transformation of the human essence, the reincarnation of yesterday's peasant into a builder of socialist society.⁹³

Analysis of this passage reveals the violence of representation. As death is necessary before reincarnation, Kalmykov's transformation into a symbol of socialist society necessitated a symbolic death and reincarnation that led to Kalmykov's actual death. Al'pert's "needed shot" was discharged from an actual rifle six years later. During the Terror, the metaphorical shot of the camera was instantiated into the actual fatal shot of the executioner. Once Kalmykov had entered and was fixed on the plane of representation, anything that actually happened to him physically after his symbolic transformation was irrelevant. It could have been Ivanov or Stepanov. Kalmykov's symbolic reincarnation may account for his representational longevity as a symbol of Magnitostroi, even after his disappearance as an enemy of the people.⁹⁴ The theme of

⁹³ Al'pert, "Dorogie": 26.

⁹⁴ For example, evacuees from Moscow in Magnitogorsk during the Second World War told Bakke that an enlarged portrait of Kalmykov from "Giant Builder" hung in a Moscow factory right up to the start of the war E. Karelina, "Emiliia i Viktor": 2. Photographs of Kalmykov occur in numerous Soviet books and albums related to Magnitogorsk, the Soviet iron industry, and the First Five-Year Plan. For a recent example, see *Slovo o Magnitke* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literaturi, 1979).

transformation was recurrent in *SSSR na stroike* and will be explored further in chapter five.

Close scrutiny of the variety of arguments which emerged in the critical discussion of “Giant and Builder” suggests a more dynamic cultural atmosphere and greater engagement with aspects of vanguard practice among proponents of proletarian photography than previous studies have suggested. During the 1930s, the *fotocherk* would become one of the major Socialist Realist genres of visual print culture. Yet, this exploration of its origins demonstrates that its formation was strongly shaped by the Soviet left avant-garde. The dissolution of all independent cultural organizations by a resolution of the Central Committee in April 1932 ultimately dampened out the bickering between ROPF and Oktiabr’, opening the path to collaboration between former “Proletarians” and “leftists.” In the wake of the dissolution of the independent cultural organizations, a period of cultural realignment, adjustment, and cross-fertilization began. Within the pages of *SSSR na stroike* this resulted in the collaborative interaction of the former rivals.

Petr Krasnov, managing editor of *SSSR na stroike* and the purported “godfather” of the series,⁹⁵ wrote in 1932 that “Giant and Builder” resulted from a conscious decision of the editors to alter the magazine by breaking away from the photographic inventory of construction sites and giving, instead, a determined political direction to the

⁹⁵ In the creative discussion of “Giant and Builder” Mezhericher described Krasnov as the person who “may be reckoned to the greatest degree the godfather of the series.” There was evident conflict between Mezhericher and Krasnov, editors of the rival photo essays.

representation of construction.⁹⁶ For Krasnov and the other editors the Kalmykov series was very successful in its "artistic transmission of material"--presumably this included ideological content. As a result, not only were the editors openly disappointed by subsequent issues of *SSSR na stroike* which employed the earlier compositional method, but they also decided to launch an entire series of new essays, employing innovative narrative techniques similar to those used in "Giant and Builder." These essays began to appear in late 1932 and combined both "proletarian" and "left" creative talent. The next major narrative issue of the magazine was published in October 1932. Devoted to the Dnieper hydroelectric dam construction project (Dneprostroi), this issue was a product of the joint collaboration of Al'pert, Lissitzky, and the writer Boris Agapov. This essay will be considered in the following chapter.

Lev Mezhericher, "Proverka tvorcheskoi praktiki," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 15.

⁹⁶ P. Krasnov, "V plane bol'shoi khudozhesvennoi fotopovesti," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 7-8 (July-August): 11-12.

CHAPTER 4
THE REPRESENTATION OF DNEPROSTROI IN SSSR NA STROIKE

A fleet of lights floats over the Dnieper. The ransoms of bolted planks; crosswise riveted girders; the wooden geometry of the hoardings; which climbs upwards, clutching the air with its clamps; the chasms of the shafts; and the heights of the passages--all this is lit by thousands of lamps. The foot parts with firm ground. You enter a zone where every level has been made by man, where stone and earth are no more than material that is all the time being shifted, their forms and volumes undergoing constant change. There is no ground level here. All measurements here have the sea level for their starting point. Hanging over the unsteady barrier, you look down into the bottomless darkness expecting actually to get a glimpse of the oily surface of the Black Sea. Lokomotives [sic] pass over your head at a height where you would only expect birds to fly. Cranes stand at a depth where it would be difficult for a man to descend. Somewhere on high, almost in the sky, shine the green stars of the electric welding plant; down below people are shaken working pneumatic drills; still further below in the wooden chasm of the shaft ten tiny human figures in waterproof overalls all stand on the concrete straining their necks upward. A bucket comes tumbling down. One of them--you cannot tell whether it is a man or a woman--runs up to it, kicks it open, the concrete flops down, the bucket is hoisted up and young feet start dancing on the soft cement--quick, quick!

Boris Agapov, *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 10

When I saw the Dneprostroy Dam I thought that Socialism was all built.
James E. Abbe, *I Photograph Russia*, 1934

A recurrent subject in Soviet visual culture of the 1930s, the Dneprostroi hydroelectric project was widely publicized both in the Soviet Union and abroad as a microcosm of socialist construction. As American photojournalist James Abbe's quote makes clear, the visual experience of this enormous dam created a profound effect of the transformation of

the Soviet Union into an industrialized socialist society. The Dneprostoi hydroelectric dam project was a prototype for the large Soviet construction projects of the first Five-Year plan. Approved in late 1926, work on this massive project accelerated during the first Five-Year Plan. As one of the first huge industrialization projects, it was highly propagandized both within the Soviet Union and abroad. In connection with this publicity, both Soviet and foreign artists, writers, photographers, and filmmakers visited the site frequently during the course of construction. Representations of Dneprostoi reflect changing attitudes towards the depiction of Socialist Construction during the first Five-Year Plan and during the critical period of the formulation of Socialist Realist aesthetics during the early 1930s. As most issues of *SSSR na stroike* were devoted to a single subject related to industrialization, agriculture, trade, or culture, it is possible to observe the transformation of representations of recurrent themes within the magazine. Close study of the representation of a particular aspect of socialist construction enables the correlation of the content of the magazine to shifting government policies and programs. This chapter will examine the representation of Dneprostoi and the industrial base connected to it over the course of five years in *SSSR na stroike* and will consider the changing depiction of the site in terms of the cultural and political debates of the time.¹

Dneprostoi was part of an electrification plan that was originally drawn up in 1920 at the initiative of Lenin, who envisioned the electrification of the Soviet Union as a vital step towards both industrialization and the development of communism. At the

¹ “Dneprostoi” refers to the construction of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam. The dam itself and power station are also referred to by the Russian acronym “Dneproges,” while “Dnieper Combine” or “Dnieper Kombinant” refers to the plants and factories that were planned along with the dam and were powered by it.

request of Lenin, Gleb Krzhizhanovskii prepared a plan for electrification emphasizing the role of the proletariat. Although it included concrete details such as projects and dates, the scheme was not a specialist technical document. After Krzhizhanovskii presented his plan to Lenin in February 1920, the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia (*Gosudarstvennaia komissiiia po elektrifikatsii Rossii*, hereafter GOELRO) was formed for the purpose of preparing a fairly detailed electrification scheme within two months. Lenin presented the GOELRO electrification plan to the 8th Congress of Soviets in December 1920, where he asked for it to be given priority and declared that "Communism is Soviet power and the electrification of the whole country."² Electrification was Lenin's "second Party plan"--the first being the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin's writings include many references to electricity that often take on a visionary, utopian quality. The electrification plan offered a new vision of a world with mechanized agriculture, clean and efficient factory production. Metaphorically, electricity would light up the peasant darkness of Russia. Lenin believed that "social revolution and development would inevitably follow technological change."³ Ultimately, the GOELRO commission accomplished little and there was opposition to the plan by various individuals, including Leon Trotskii, who felt that it was unrealistic and visionary. The Council of Commissars terminated GOELRO in May of 1921 and

² For an overview of the planning and implementation of this project, see the history of the Dneprostroi construction site by Anne D. Rassweiler, *The Generation of Power: The History of Dneprostroi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): 3-58.

³ Rassweiler: 14-15.

replaced it with Gosplan, a general state planning commission.⁴ The plan had little effect on industrial construction in the years of economic devastation following the Civil War. Though the plan remained a draft, its association with Lenin would later greatly enhance its prestige during the industrialization drive of the late 1920s.

A hydroelectric dam on the Dnieper river was one of a variety of projects included in the GOELRO plan. The Dnieper above the site of the dam was largely innavigable due to a long stretch of dangerous rapids. Damming the Dnieper had already been proposed during the time of Peter the Great, to facilitate transportation of grain, coal and troops to and from this increasingly significant economic and agricultural area. With the development of electrical current transmission and hydroelectric technology at the end of the 19th century, interest was rekindled in such a project. In the Fall of 1924, Ukrainian politicians argued for the revival of the Dnieper dam project, pointing out that Ukraine deserved this project as it had sustained inordinate economic damage and outright destruction of property during the Civil War. Trotskii, as head of an interdepartmental commission of the Supreme Economic Council, met with an investigative commission on Dneprostroi in 1925. He advised them that the hydroelectric project had to be conceived in terms of integration with a larger industrial project.⁵ Chief among the Ukrainian politicians arguing for the Dneprostroi project was Grigorii F. Grin'ko (1890-1938), who was then president of Ukrainian Gosplan. In October of 1930 Grin'ko became People's Commissar of Finance and was added to the editorial board of *SSSR na stroike* at the start of 1931. Ivan Aleksandrov, the chief engineer on the project

⁴ Rassweiler: 25-26.

since the formation of GOELRO in 1920, was influential in keeping the proposal prominent in the early 1920s and was active in the campaign for its approval. In 1926 Aleksandrov led a delegation to the United States to study hydro-technology and to familiarize American engineers with the proposed project. Colonel Hugh C. Cooper, an American hydroelectric dam expert, agreed to review the project and visited the site in August 1926.⁶ Gosplan approved Dneprostoi after the 15th Party Congress in November 1926. The Turk-Sib Railroad was also approved at the same time. Both of these projects strengthened "the leading role of industry" and the "socialist transformation of the peasant" into the worker.⁷ Excavation began in 1927, and the dam and power plant were completed by 1932, while the construction of factories and plants that would run off its power continued into the later 1930s.

The Soviet artistic and literary communities responded quickly to the new emphasis on industrialization in the late 1920s. Acting on their own initiative, such disparate groups as the staunchly realist AKhRR and the Oktiabr' group responded to the industrialization drive by urging artists to become involved in the construction of socialism. Dneprostoi became a prominent subject of such efforts by writers and artists to involve themselves in the industrialization process. The plethora of paintings, drawings, posters, books, films and music devoted to Dneprostoi attests to this. Dneprostoi was the subject of Oleksandr Dovzhenko's film *Ivan* (1932), and was

⁵ Rassweiler: 38, 42-43.

⁶ On Cooper's role in Soviet-American relations and the United States' recognition of the Soviet Union, see: Harold Dorn, "Hugh Lincoln Cooper and the First Détente," *Technology and Culture* 20, no. 2 (1979): 322-347.

prominently featured in Dziga Vertov's *Odinnadtsatyi (The Eleventh Year)* of 1928.⁸

Fedor Gladkov, author of *Tsement (Cement, 1925)*, a novel that propagandized industrial reconstruction during the NEP period, made his contribution to First Five-Year Plan literature with a novel about Dneprostroi entitled *Energiia*.⁹ The All-Russian Cooperative Union of Workers of the Fine Arts organization (*Vserossiiskii kooperativnyi soiuz rabotnikov izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv, 1929-1940*; hereafter *Vsekokhudozhnik*), a part of Narkompros, organized artists' brigades which were sent to various industrial construction sites, a practice that will be discussed further in chapter seven.¹⁰

Vsekokhudozhnik sponsored an exhibition devoted to Dneprostroi in Moscow, November 1931,¹¹ and works featuring Dneprostroi were a regular feature of its group exhibitions

⁷ Rassweiler: 54-55.

⁸ For a discussion of *Ivan*, see: Vance Kepley, Jr. *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986): 85-105. For Vertov's own description of the Dneprostroi segment of his film, see: Dziga Vertov, "Outline for the Scenario of *The Eleventh Year*," *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, Annette Michelson, ed., Kevin O'Brien, trans. (Berkeley: University of California, 1984): 279-282.

⁹ Parts one and two of *Energiia* were initially published in *Novyi mir* in 1932. The remaining parts three through five were published in the same journal in 1937-38. For publication history, see: Fedor Gladkov, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, B. Ia. Brainina et al, eds., volume 2 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1884): 681.

¹⁰ D. Ia. Severiokhin, D. and O.L. Leikind, *Zolotoi Vek: Khudozhestvennie ob'edinenii v Rossii u SSSP* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatels'stvo Chernisheva, 1992): 330-331.

¹¹ This exhibition, consisting largely of works on paper, showcased art by three members of AKhR: V.A. Komarov, A.N. Tikhomirov, and N.I. Shestapolov. *Dneprostroi letom 1931. Katalog vystavki proizvedenii brigady khudozhnikov chlenov AKhR* (Moscow: Vsekokhudozhnik, 1931).

during the 1930s.¹² Dneprostoi was also the theme of an enormous photomontage-sculpture monument erected by Gustav Klucis on Sverdlov Square in Moscow for the May Day celebration of 1932.¹³ Klucis and other graphic artists designed numerous book jackets and posters that featured this construction project. At the end of the decade, a large mechanized model of the hydroelectric complex was included in the Soviet pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair, New York.¹⁴ These are just a few of the more notable works of art that feature this prototypical industrial construction project.

The representation of Dneprostoi in *SSSR na stroike* is a potentially exceptional case amid this plethora of imagery. Prior to 1932, the majority of artists and writers worked under the sanction of independent cultural organizations. Yet from its inception in 1930, *SSSR na stroike* was supervised by an editorial board, which contained many high-ranking government officials, including Central Committee members who were framers of the first Five-Year Plan. In 1931 Georgii Piatakov, *SSSR na stroike*'s Editor-in-Chief, became the deputy of Sergo Ordzhonikidze within the Supreme Council of the

¹² For example, the first Vsekokhudozhnik exhibition in December 1930 included two Dneprostoi works by A.I. Kravchenko, while the second exhibition in February 1931 included a total of eleven Dneprostoi works by Kravchenko, L.P. Britanishskii, A.P. Mogilevskii, D.V. Nashchekin, and N.A. Sheverdiaev. *Vystavka Vsekokhudozhnika: Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskom iskusstve* (Moscow: Vsekokhudozhnik, 1930): 20. *Vystavka Vsekokhudozhnik: Ochetnye raboty khudozhnikov kommandirovannykh v raiony industrial'nogo i kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva* (Moscow: Vsekokhudozhnik, 1931).

¹³ Gustav Klucis wrote about this project in *Proletarskoe foto*, yet his discussion is devoted to the general subject of monumental photographic agitational art and does not address Dneprostoi other than as a representative example of socialist construction. G. Klucis, "Mirovoe dostizhenie," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1932, no. 6 (June): 14-15. For a German translation of the article, see: Hubertus Gassner and Roland Nachtigäller, eds., *Gustav Klucis: Retrospektive* (Kassel: Museum Fridericanum, 1991): 330-336.

National Economy (VSNKh), the branch of the government that became the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry in 1932.¹⁵ Guided by Ordzhonikidze's deputy, *SSSR na stroike* may be seen as providing an image of the party line on industrial construction. Created both for export propaganda and for consumption by the Soviet elite, this photographic magazine presents a highly ideological yet subtle image of industrial construction. The representation of Dneprostroi in *SSSR na stroike* changes dramatically in the course of five years. A close reading of issues of the magazine that prominently feature Dneprostroi will reveal the nature of these changes and illuminate their significance.¹⁶

1930, no. 4: "The Dniepr Hydro-Electric Scheme" (fig. 63)

Electrification emerged as a central theme of *SSSR na stroike* in its first year of publication. While the first two issues presented a wide variety of subjects related to industrial construction, the third issue featured the GOELRO plan, while the fourth issue was divided into two separate thematic essays, one devoted to Dneprostroi and the other

¹⁴ Anthony Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair, 1939," *The Russian Review* 57, no. 3 (1998): 370.

¹⁵ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *In Stalin's Shadow: The Career of "Sergo" Ordzhonikidze* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995): 93.

¹⁶ At least twelve issues of the magazine include spreads related to Dneprostroi, Dneproges and the affiliated industrial development around the hydroelectric dam. Not all of these issues will be discussed, as some of this material is redundant. In chronological order, the following issues include material related to Dneprostroi and related industrial constructions: 1930, no. 4 (Dneprostroi and Turk-Sib); 1931, no. 1-2 (The Soviet Press); 1932, no. 7 (Krammashstroi and Uralmashstroi); 1933, no. 2 (15th Anniversary of the Red Army); 1934, no. 3 (The Dnieper Combinant); 1936, no. 6 (White

to the Turk-Sib Railroad. The two projects were approved together in December 1926.¹⁷ Both projects were seen as exemplary models for transformative industrial construction, which would create a needed industrial base while simultaneously facilitating the transformation of the surrounding agricultural economies and peoples into industrial ones. The centrality of Dneprostroi to the representation of Soviet industrialization is evident in its appearance in the fourth issue of *SSSR na stroike*.

This is the first issue designed by Nikolai S. Troshin, one of the most prolific designers of the magazine.¹⁸ Troshin attended the Vkhutemas from 1918 to 1920, where he studied in the studio of Il'ia Mashkov. During the 1920s, he was engaged with a variety of activities, from teaching workers art to creating children's books to writing the book *Osnovy kompozitsii v fotografii* (*Foundations of Composition in Photography*, 1929). During the thirties, Troshin was one of the main artists for *SSSR na stroike* and was also active as a theater, book, and revolutionary festival designer.¹⁹ The layout style is typical of the magazine's first year of publication. Photographs are presented in a conventional rectilinear grid layout that is enhanced by monotone bands (fig. 64). The

Coal); 1936, no. 7 (The Ural Car Works); 1939, no. 3 (Song of Our Motherland); 1939, no. 6 (The Korobov Family); 1939, no. 7 (Special Steels); 1941, no. 2 (GOELRO).

¹⁷ The Turk-Sib railroad may similarly be considered the prototypical industrial construction project for the non-Russian, Eastern Republics. Prior to becoming the head of Gosizdat, Artemii Khalatov was an important figure in the Soviet railroad and was active in propagandizing Turksib. See, for example, the pamphlet published in the series "Sputnik Agitatora": Artemii Khalatov, *O Turkestan-Siberskoi (Semirechenskoi) zheleznoi doroge* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1927).

¹⁸ Troshin designed at least 46 of the 121 issues of *SSSR na stroike*; see appendix G for listing. See appendix H for the table of contents and credits for the issues under discussion.

authorship of the photographs is not identified. The photographs tend to follow the conventions of architectural and engineering construction photography of the day. This photo-essay depends upon captions and text to structure the reader's comprehension of the photographs.

The issue begins with a dense, barely punctuated essay about Dneprostroi that provides much detailed information about the history of the project and its technical specifications. Throughout the article, the technical achievement of Dneprostroi is expressed through the presentation of facts and figures about the project. One caption highlights Dneprostroi's use of foreign technology:

WHAT CONSTRUCTION INVOLVES: POWERFUL CRANES, A WIDE NETWORK OF TRACKS ON THE JOB, MACHINES FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS, CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY, BORERS, AND OTHER MODERN EQUIPMENT PURCHASED IN EUROPE AND AMERICA.²⁰

Scaffolding, construction materials, and cranes, many of which are identifiably American in origin, dominate the landscape. There are many large format wide-angle images of the construction site, as well as five panoramic multiple negative images. The general impression that these images convey is of a chaotic, enormous construction site (figs. 63, 64). It is difficult to see workers in the photographs of the work site. When they do appear, they are minute ciphers lost in the huge landscape of the construction site, whose

¹⁹ *Nikolai Troshin. Zhivopis'. Grafiki. Katalog vystavki* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1978).

²⁰ The cited captions follow the punctuation, spelling and capitalization of the text as printed in the English edition of the magazine. *USSR in Construction*, 1930, no. 4: 12.

working population in 1929 was as high as 15,000.²¹ Maksim Gor'kii's estimation of the Dneprostroi issue also reinforces this interpretation. In a letter to Khalatov on 22 May 1930, Gor'kii briefly commented on this issue: "The fourth number of *Na stroike* is the most successful, but the photographs of "Dneprostroi" are rather monotonous and there are too many cranes. "Turk-Sib" is more consistent."²²

While the workers are barely visible in most views of the construction site, a two-page spread entitled "MEN AND MACHINES" features photographs of people (fig. 65). However, the captions make no reference to individuals. Instead, the people are presented as types, such as a "GIRL APPRENTICE WORKING UNDER INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDANCE."²³ This anonymous treatment also extends to the photographs of the management, such as one captioned "LEADING WORKS STAFF."²⁴ In the entire essay, only three individuals are both named and represented: Ivan Aleksandrov, the original GOELRO engineer for Dneprostroi; A.V. Vinter, the director of Dneprostroi; and Colonel Cooper, the American consultant.

In addition to highlighting the technical achievement of Dneprostroi, this essay also presents its broader social impact upon education, living conditions, and leisure. The industrial construction project is presented as dramatically restructuring almost every aspect of life, from work to entertainment to dining. Women are shown as industrial

²¹ The size of the work force peaked at over 30,000 in 1931. For a chart with work force statistics, see Rassweiler: 120.

²² Gor'kii to Khalatov, Sorrento, 22 May 1930, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 200.

²³ *USSR in Construction*, 1930, no. 4: 28-29.

construction workers, pursuing non-traditional work with the encouragement of Bolshevik labor policy. A spread entitled "THE FUTURE CITY'S SUBURBS," presents the broader social effects of the project beyond the construction site. Here, the totality of Bolshevik planning is presented. The construction of housing, recreational facilities, mechanized dining facilities, and the landscaping of the future town are featured. In actuality, due to planning blunders and the decision to use more workers instead of improving the productivity of the expensive imported machinery, there was massive overcrowding in the unhygienic living quarters. Housing problems, food shortages, water supply problems, and low wages contributed to extremely high labor turn over at the site and poor attendance at educational institutions.

While the initial planner of the scheme, Aleksandrov, is mentioned, there is very little reference to the technical specialists or engineers who would make all this possible. This may be a reflection of the backlash against engineers and the technical intelligentsia, which occurred in the wake of the Shakty and Prompartiiia trials (1928-1930). Most of the Soviet engineers involved in the early stages of industrialization were trained or had worked under the Imperial government. As such, they were tainted and their loyalty to the Soviet government was frequently questioned. A much more surprising absence in this issue is any reference whatsoever to the Party. There is not a single reference to Lenin, Stalin, or the Communist Party.

²⁴ *USSR in Construction*, 1930, no. 4: 24.

A similar absence of ideological underpinnings was evident in the preceding issue of *SSSR na stroike*, dedicated to the GOELRO electrification plan.²⁵ This issue outlined Lenin's electrification plan, new electrical stations already in operation, and future stations under construction, various research institutes devoted to electrification, factories producing necessary electrical equipment, the electrification of villages, and statistics on electricity in the pre- and post-revolutionary periods. A review of *SSSR na stroike* published in *Proletarskoe foto* in October 1931 was highly critical of this GOELRO issue:

There is no need to prove that electrification has enormous meaning for us as the energy base of socialist, industrial, and agricultural production. It is necessary to show electrification precisely in this connection, as part of the socialist reconstruction of the country. Meanwhile, *SSSR na stroike* showed the electrification of the country not in action, but as a self-contained electrical industry. Instead of translating the slogan of Lenin in all its deep meaning into the language of photography, the magazine provided an inventory of electrical stations, essentially not connected neither to each other, nor to industry, nor to farming, nor to communal economy. This incomprehension of the essence of electrification was also manifested in details. Each electrical station in the issue was shown individually, isolated from the others... in practice the issue was reduced to an album of uncoordinated postcards, representative views of electric stations.²⁶

Proletarskoe foto criticized the GOELRO issue for failing to utilize the theme to reveal the ideological foundations of socialist construction, for failing to translate Lenin's slogan "Communism is Soviet government plus the electrification of the whole country" into the language of photography. This criticism could also be applied to the Dneprostroi

²⁵ *SSSR na stroike*, 1930, no. 3. Dneprostroi is only referred to once in this issue, on a map of the GOELRO plan.

²⁶ Al. S., "Obzor illiustrirovannykh zhurnalov," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 2 (October): 25.

issue; the contents of the magazine resembled an album of photographs of the construction site and neighboring settlement.

1931, Nos. 1-2: The Bolshevik Press

Dneprostoi was next featured in an issue devoted to the broader subject of "The Bolshevik Press" at the start of 1931. Also designed by Troshin, it is one of the more visually daring early issues. The presentation of the material includes extensive montage that combines photographs, charts, drawings and text. The drawn imagery includes tractors, elevators, trains, and wheat in a style that is reminiscent of the graphics of Aleksandr Deineka. Devoted to the press, the front pages of diverse Soviet newspapers are reproduced. The layout includes illusionistic shadowing around many of the montage elements, which unconvincingly implies real space. This is the first issue to consistently employ more complex montage techniques of overlapping images.

Dneprostoi is featured in a three page spread with the lead-in caption "THE PRESS-THE ORGANIZER OF SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION."²⁷ The first two pages of the spread feature materials related to a *Pravda* "shock brigade" at Dneprostoi (fig. 66). Over drawings of the dam sluices, cranes, and buckets for pouring concrete are a reproduction of a poster announcing the arrival of the *Pravda* Brigade and the foundation of a central shock post to aid the fulfillment of Dneprostoi's production plan, two small photographs of the *Pravda* brigade and of a "MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DNIESTROSTROY TOGETHER WITH THE 'PRAVDA' SHOCK BRIGADE." An issue of the newspaper *Pravda na Dneprostoie (Pravda at Dneprostoi)*--a special

publication of the *Pravda* brigade and the editorial staff of the local paper *Dniprobudu*--is partially reproduced and overlapped by a map of the site whose Russian caption reads: "Map-Plan of the night raid of the shock brigade of the newspaper *Pravda* on theme of Dneprostroi at night." While this spread suggests the presence of *Pravda* at the construction site, it is not at all clear to a non-Soviet reader how the press is "the organizer of social construction." Turning the page, the role of *Pravda* at the site is elucidated.

At the top of the page a "zap" shape presents a "LIGHTNING TELEGRAM" printed in *Za industrialisatsii* (*For Industrialization*, a newspaper published by the Supreme Economic Council), which announces to Stalin and Ordzhonikidze the record breaking pouring of over 500,000 cubic meters of concrete at Dneprostroi (fig. 67). An accompanying text elucidates the role of *Pravda* and *Dniprobudu* in achieving this. The travelling brigade of *Pravda* organized investigative squads of worker-correspondents (*rabkori*) to go out onto the site. For instance, on the night of September 12, 1930:

THEIR TASK WAS NOT ONLY TO INVESTIGATE ON THE SPOT THE CAUSES OF STOPPAGES AND JAMS IN THE WORK--THEY WERE ALSO TO HELP IN REMOVING DIFFICULTIES ON THE SPOT. BY MORNING THE BRIGADES RALLIED AT THE QUARTERS OF THE CENTRAL POST AND HASTILY TOLD THE STORY OF WHAT THEY HAD SEEN AND TAKEN PART IN. AND THESE BRIEF REPORTS GAVE THE WHOLE PICTURE OF THE WORK AT DNEPROSTROY, OF ALL ITS STRONG AND WEAK POINTS.

The newspaper reproduced on the previous page is the result of this *Pravda* night raid. An account of this *Pravda* travelling brigade by its leader, Aleksandr Magid, was published in *Prozhektor* in October 1930. This was not the first *Pravda* brigade; another

²⁷ *USSR in Construction*, 1931, nos. 1-2: 28-30.

had already visited the site in January 1930. The brigade first stopped and organized raids and meetings at a metallurgical factory in Kharkov before heading to Dneprostroi. As at Magnitostroi and other construction sites, the Soviet press did not function simply as a reporter of events; the operative press intervened in the construction process.²⁸

The actual effectiveness of such "raids" was rather dubious. Rassweiler notes that the *rabkori* were unpopular at the construction site. The local Party newspaper attempted to develop a network of worker correspondents to report on construction errors and mistakes, but these workers were shunned by their co-workers and their higher-ups as "snitches."²⁹ At about the same time that this issue of *SSSR na stroike* was published, a minor scandal occurred involving the local Dneprostroi press:

In January 1931, the local *Proletar Dniprobudu*, "under the pretense of self-criticism," spoke out against socialist competition and the party organization of shock work and complained that nothing was working right, that there was no plan or perspective for the future.³⁰

This reporting resulted in the quiet transfer of several individuals and a change in the local party organization.

This page includes two photographs by the American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White, who is credited at the bottom of the page. Bourke-White traveled to the Soviet Union in 1930 at her own initiative. According to Bourke-White, who was then an associate editor of *Fortune*, her higher-ups were unwilling to sponsor the trip as they were skeptical of its success. Hence, she made her own arrangements and acquired the

²⁸ Aleksandr Magid, "Na metallurgicheskom gigante (Putevye zametki), *Prozhektor*, 1930, no. 28 (10 October): 11-13.

²⁹ Rassweiler: 79.

necessary papers and permission. Bourke-White claimed that her portfolio of industrial photographs served as a visual "passport" that opened doors for her through the Soviet bureaucracy in the United States, Berlin, and, finally, in Moscow. Before leaving for Europe, Bourke-White met with Boris Skvirskii, the head of the Soviet Union Information Bureau in Washington D.C. In a book about her trip and photographs of the Soviet Union, *Eyes on Russia*, Bourke-White reported Skvirskii's response to her work:

"It is a fine thing you are going to Russia. They will probably use your pictures in their own magazines. In fact, I shall write suggesting it. Your photographs will appeal to the Russians; they have the Russian style. Eisenstein, the great Russian movie director, should see them. He is in New York now, on his way to Hollywood. Perhaps we can still catch him."³¹

Back in New York on the following day, Bourke-White met with Eisenstein, who supplied her with letters of introduction to artists in Berlin, Paris, and Moscow.

Arrangements for her trip were made with the assistance of VOKS. A report of the Anglo-American Section of VOKS from 30 June 1930, commented on the upcoming arrival of the photographer:

Miss Margaret Bourke-White - Skvirsky has written us of the intended arrival in this country of this lady. She is an exceptionally good photographer, well-known in American photographic circles. Her products are very similar in method and style to those published in "SSSR na stroike". Skvirsky thinks she should visit the photographic office and acquaint herself with samples of Soviet photographic work. Miss White intends travelling around visiting our industrial plants and photographing them. We shall send her around with some working member of Union-Photo.³²

³⁰ Rassweiler: 173.

³¹ Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931): 25.

³² GARF, f. 5283, op. 3, d. 275, l. 75. Original in English.

Through a letter of introduction she met Leonid P. Serebriakov (1890-1937), a revolutionary who was then a member of the Collegium of the Commissariat of the Means of Communication. Serebriakov then introduced her to Artemii Khalatov.³³ At Serebriakov's suggestion, Bourke-White was engaged by the Soviet government to take photographs and was made the guest of the government for the remainder of her trip. Bourke-White was provided with extraordinary financial and administrative support, including a document that instructed all the citizens of the Soviet Union to assist her and cooperate for the photographer. Bourke-White and a translator then set off on a trip which included visits to Dneprostroi, the Verblud State Farm, a cement plant in Novorossissk, and the Stalingrad Factory complex.³⁴ While Bourke-White makes no reference in her book to giving photographs or negatives to Soviet authorities for publication, she left her developed negatives with censors "who were to examine them and forward them to Paris by diplomatic courier, where the Soviet Embassy would then send them on the me in America."³⁵ A spread of nine photographs entitled "Soviet Panorama" was published in *Fortune* in March 1931. Three of these photographs featured Dneprostroi. Another seven photographs of Dneprostroi were published in *Eyes on Russia*, and her photographs of the project also appeared in other contemporary

³³ Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia*: 39-42. Biographical information on Serebriakov in: Joseph L. Wiczyński, ed., *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1976-1993), vol. 34: 38-39.

³⁴ Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia*: 73. The cement plant Bourke-White visited was the setting of Gladkov's production novel *Cement*.

³⁵ Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia*: 133.

publications.³⁶ Several photographs by Bourke-White were published in earlier issues of *SSSR na stroike*, but none were credited to her.³⁷ In 1931 and 1932, Bourke-White returned to the Soviet Union, where she traveled extensively and produced a large body of both photographs and film footage. In October 1932, Bourke-White filmed the opening celebration of the Dneproges and Cooper's inspection of the dam.³⁸ However, no more photographs by Bourke-White were published in *SSSR na stroike*.

While further exploration of Bourke-White's photography in Russia is not relevant to the subject at hand, the great official Soviet interest in her industrial photography is significant. Bourke-White's machine and industrial images were very appealing to various government figures and to the staff of *SSSR na stroike*. They provide one possible model for the visual depiction of Dneprostoi and, more generally, of industrial construction sites. In contrast to the photographs in 1930, no. 4, these images eschew clutter, anarchy, and overwhelming detail. Instead, they are highly monumental

³⁶ Bourke-White, "Soviet Panorama," *Fortune* 3, no. 2 (February 1931): 60-68; Michael Farbman, *Piatiletka: Russia's Five-Year Plan* (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1931): cover, 100; Louis Fischer, *Machines and Men in Soviet Russia* (New York: Harrison Smith, 1932): opposite 30.

³⁷ Two photographs in this issue are identical or closely resemble others published in the United States in *Fortune* and *Eyes on Russia* after her trip: a close-up of disk plow blades, and a shot of a worker on the assembly line of the Stalingrad tractor factory. *USSR in Construction*, 1930, no. 10-11: 32, 34.

³⁸ The film footage was part of her problem-ridden attempt to make a film version of *Eyes on Russia*. Bourke-White to Bourke-White Studio, telegram, 5 November 1932, box 16, Bourke-White Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University. The photographer's papers contain memorabilia from her 1932 trip to the Soviet Union, including a clipping of an article from *The Moscow Daily News* entitled "Margaret Bourke-White Back Again -- her camera Shoots Dneprostoi." The author, John Hughes, notes that they were introduced at the opening of Dneprostoi. Bourke White Papers, box 99.

images of Dneprostoi, which are carefully composed to give clarity to the industrial forms. The curving tracks in the foreground of "PART OF THE DNIEPER DAM" gently direct the viewer's attention to the monumental row of concrete sluices.³⁹ These sluices are presented as a series of bold forms, their silhouettes reinforcing the insistence of these monumental shapes. The photograph of the "NEW KICHKASS BRIDGE AT DNEIPROSTROY" is similarly dramatic in composition. Again, a repetitive form is employed, the rounded steel frame arch of the bridge spans. Only one arch is completely represented, but the end of another arch in the foreground combined with the dramatically receding perspective creates a sense of the continuity and repetition of these industrial forms. Both photographs present these new industrial monuments set off by bold, dramatic cloudscape. The careful composition of these images truly monumentalizes the image of Dneprostoi. As they impressively render the grandiosity of the construction, no other photographs of the site were needed in this spread.

1932, no. 10: "Dnieprostroy"

Dneprostoi was next featured in a special issue published in conjunction with the completion of the dam and its opening ceremony on October 10th, 1932. In addition to celebrating the completion of the dam and its opening, this issue was published in conjunction with the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the October

³⁹ This device appears in later images of the dam in *SSSR na stroike*. See: "White Coal," *USSR in Construction*, 1936, no. 6: 8, 10-11.

Revolution.⁴⁰ The dramatically different style of this issue is apparent before opening the magazine; the dull cover graphics of most earlier issues was replaced by a color photomontage of the dam and power plant illuminated at night, search lights beaming across the blazing word “Dniprobud”, the Ukrainian equivalent of “Dneprostoi” (fig. 68). The visual and textual difference of this issue from those preceding it is remarkable. It features an unprecedented number of full page and two page illusionistic montages. Despite the sporadic presence of montage elements in earlier issues, few contained complex montage compositions. Montage in earlier issues more often consisted of cut out figures occasionally overlapping rectangular photographs. In contrast, this issue features eight large montage compositions.

This is the first issue designed by El Lissitzky, who subsequently became a regular contributor to *SSSR na stroike* and who designed a total of nineteen issues, often in collaboration with his wife Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers.⁴¹ No previous issue had been designed by a prominent artist associated with the 1920s Soviet avant-garde. In terms of foreign reputation, Lissitzky was an excellent choice for the magazine. A true internationalist, Lissitzky had spent many years in Germany and had close ties with various avant-garde groups in Western Europe. Furthermore, Lissitzky had direct connections with the editorial board of *SSSR na stroike* through his installation for the

⁴⁰ Khalatov to Gor’kii, Moscow, 18 March 1932, *M. Gor’kii i sovetskaia pechat’*, book 1: 273.

⁴¹ See appendix E for a list of issues designed by El Lissitzky. Lissitzky signs many of the montages in this issue with his western-style logo, the lower case Roman letters “el.” Curiously, the Russian text “Lisitski” seem to have been pasted onto the montages as an afterthought, disrupting their relatively seamless appearance. Was this for the benefit of the Russian-reading party elite who received copies of the magazine?

Pressa exhibition in Cologne in 1928. By 1932 Lissitzky had a well-established record of propaganda and installation work for the government. Lissitzky mentions his work on *SSSR na stroike* in letters to Jan Tschichold in 1932 and 1933. Lissitzky wrote to Tschichold that, for health reasons, he had decided to rest from architectural work for a while and to pursue quieter, lighter montage works instead. In these letters, he takes evident pride in his new commissions, although he complains about the technical limitations of Soviet typography.⁴²

On 20 April 1932 Lissitzky signed a contract for this issue with *SSSR na stroike*, represented by managing editor Petr Krasnov. This contract stipulated three primary tasks, to be completed by 15 September 1932:

1. Co-authorship in the development of the plan of the number.
2. Composition of the montage of the entire 48 pages of the issue.
3. Completion of montage compositions for all parts of the issue.⁴³

In exchange for his work, Lissitzky would receive 2,000 rubles. This amount was also intended to cover the expenses for Lissitzky's trip to Dneprostroi. Lissitzky collaborated in the plan of this issue with the photographer Max Al'pert, the photographer of the Filippov Family and "Giant and Builder." Arkadii Shaikhet, a ROPH protege of Al'pert, also contributed "special photographs for this issue." While individual photographs are not credited, Al'pert and Shaikhet appear to have shot images especially for the composition of some of the more complex montages. The American portrait photographer and photojournalist James E. Abbe, who worked for the *New York Times*

⁴² The letters to Tschichold are dated 29 September, 1932 and Fall, 1933. They are reproduced in: El Lissitzky, *Proun und Volkenbügel*: 138-140.

⁴³ RGALI, fond 2361 (Lisitskii, Lazar Markovich), op. 1, d. 55, l. 9

and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, is also listed in the photo-credits. Abbe traveled to Moscow in 1932, purportedly on assignment to photograph Stalin. This memorable portrait sitting at the Kremlin and other antics are described by Abbe in his humorous and vulgar account of his trip, *I Photograph Russia* (1934). While in Russia, Abbe visited Dneprostroi and the Donbass region. Although Abbe clearly lacked the artistic stature of Margaret Bourke-White, his connections with the *New York Times* and its Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty, enabled him to meet and photograph many top Bolsheviks. Short on cash, he joined the foreign section of Soiuzfoto, the Soviet press photo agency.⁴⁴ It is not clear how Abbe's work appeared in *SSSR na stroike*, but the Soviet photographer and journalist Vladimir (Walter) Chumak worked as his assistant. Chumak's name also appears among the credits for this issue, and he was the English translator for nine subsequent numbers.⁴⁵ According to Abbe, Chumak spent part of his childhood in the Detroit area and spoke fluent English. During the early thirties, Chumak

⁴⁴ James Abbe, *I Photograph Russia* (New York: Robert M. McBride and Co., 1934): 130-161. For an overview of Abbe's career and work, see Terrence Pepper, *Limelight: Photographs by James Abbe*, exhibition catalogue (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1995). Abbe's contract was actually with Union-Bild, a Soviet press agency based in Berlin that worked closely with Soiuzfoto. Margaret Bourke-White similarly signed a contract with Union-Bild in Berlin, prior to her visit to the Soviet Union in 1932. This contract stipulated that Union-Bild's Moscow partner, Soiuzfoto, would provide Bourke-White with the fullest assistance possible during her work in the Soviet Union. Copy of contract translated into English, 28 August 1928, Bourke-White Papers, box 52.

⁴⁵ *SSSR na stroike*, 1932, nos. 8, 12; 1933, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8.

worked sporadically as both editorial secretary and reporter for *The Moscow Daily News*, an English language paper published by Zhurgaz.⁴⁶

The accompanying text is also dramatically different from the turgid and dense recitation of facts in the first Dneprostroi issue (1930, no. 4). In the 1932 number, the text flows smoothly and is both very literary and witty. The author of the accompanying text captions was the writer and journalist Boris Agapov (1899-1973). During the 1920s, Agapov was a member of the Literary Center of the Constructivists, a group that was inspired by the example of Constructivism in the fine arts. During the 1930s, Agapov wrote numerous *ocherki* on themes related to socialist construction and industrialization.⁴⁷ Analysis of Agapov's highly evocative description of the construction site (quoted above, at the start of this chapter), reveals his interest in technology and its transformation of nature. However, while Agapov is credited as the author, it must be remembered that the general plan and theme of this issue was the work of Al'pert and Lissitzky. Undoubtedly, all three worked closely together to produce a highly cohesive, coherent visual and verbal narrative.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The archival records of Zhurgaz indicate that he worked as editorial secretary at *The Moscow Daily News* until August 1931 and started work as a reporter in January 1933. GARF, f. A-299, op. 1, d. 23, l. 5; f. A-299, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 12, 52.

⁴⁷ Kasack, *Dictionary of Russian Literature Since 1917*: 4. Agapov also served as author for the following issues: 1936, no. 6: "White Coal"; 1937, no. 9-12 "The Stalin Constitution".

⁴⁸ Art historical discussions of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* have generally ignored Al'pert's contribution to its development and have exaggerated the role of Agapov. Art historians tend to exaggerate the role of the genius vanguard artist and ignore the contributions of the proletarian photographer, while writers tend to want to credit other writers with authorship. See, for example, Margolin: 172, 175.

The text of the English edition of this issue features vastly improved translation. The awkward technical English with grammatical and spelling errors has been replaced by well written, smoothly flowing literary prose. The translator for this issue was Prince D.S. Mirskii, the literary critic and historian whose classic history of Russian literature had already established his reputation as the leading authority on Russian literature in the English speaking world by this time. An erudite and aristocratic polyglot, Mirskii emigrated in 1920 and was engaged as a lecturer at the University of London shortly thereafter. During the 1920s, Mirskii became a convert to Marxism while working on a study of Lenin which coincided with the start of the Depression and of the First Five-Year Plan. In 1932, Mirskii obtained Soviet citizenship, resigned from the University of London and returned to Russia in September. Immediately after his return, he translated two issues of *SSSR na stroike*, the one devoted to Dneprostroi (1932, no. 10) and the other to "Yakutia and the Port of Igarka" (1932, no. 11).⁴⁹

The Dneprostroi issue was the next major *fotocherk* to appear in *SSSR na stroike* after the publication of "Giant and Builder" in January 1932. The collaboration of Al'pert and Lissitzky in the planning of the issue indicates the merging of "proletarian" and "vanguard" forces at the Soviet photographic front in the wake of the April Resolution. The result of this convergence was a strong narrative structure combined with forceful synthetic photomontage compositions. "Giant and Builder" had been criticized for the lack of montage "within the frame." While individual photographic shots were juxtaposed in the spreads, the layout generally did not include dynamic montaged

⁴⁹ Biographical information on Prince Mirskii is from: Charles A. Moser, "Prince Mirsky," *American Scholar* 61, no. 2 (1992): 260-266.

compositions that synthesized more than one photographic shot. In contrast, this issue of *SSSR na stroike* incorporated numerous full-page montage compositions. The contract's stipulation that Lissitzky complete "montage compositions for all parts of the issue" indicates that this was a matter of concern to the editors of the magazine.

This *fotocherk* traces the course of the conception, construction and completion of Dneprostroi. The narrative begins inside the front cover with Lenin's slogan, "COMMUNISM IS SOVIET GOVERNMENT PLUS THE ELECTRIFICATION OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY" (fig. 69). It reaches a climax with the full page montage captioned "THE CURRENT IS SWITCHED ON" and dominated by a paternalistic portrait of Stalin (fig. 70). The narrative then leads off into the future with the announcement of a decision to construct a series of power stations along the Volga. The narrative documents various historical events, such as the development of the GOELRO plan and its approval at the 8th Party Congress. This documentation is both visual and verbal, with quotes from Lenin, photographs of historic occasions, and facsimile reproductions of documents and newspapers.

The historical narrative is embellished by the story of the English writer H.G. Wells's visit to Russia in 1920. While better known today as the author of fantastic fiction, Wells had an established reputation for his analysis of global current affairs. In 1920 Wells took up the offer of Lev Kamenev, then with the Russian trade delegation in London, to follow up on an earlier visit to Russia in 1914. Wells's visit coincided with the trade negotiations that would eventually lead to Britain's recognition of the Soviet

Union in 1921.⁵⁰ During his visit, Wells met with Lenin and discussed, among other things, the proposed electrification plan. Finding the plan to be far-fetched in light of the dire economic and social conditions he observed in Petrograd and Moscow, Wells depicted Lenin as a utopian dreamer in *Russia in the Shadows* (1920). A Russian translation of this book was published by an émigré press in Sophia, Bulgaria, early in 1921, shortly after its initial English publication. This was followed by the publication of a Russian edition in Ukraine in 1922. However, it was not until 1958 that the book was published in Russia itself.⁵¹ Lissitzky's montage reproduces the actual page of Wells's book that is most critical of Lenin's utopianism (fig. 71):

For Lenin, who like a good orthodox Marxist denounces all “Utopians,” has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia of the electricians. He is throwing all his weight into a scheme for the development of great power stations in Russia to serve whole provinces with light, with transport, and industrial power ... Can one imagine a more courageous project in a vast flat land of forests and illiterate peasants, with no water power, with no technical skill available, and with trade and industry at last gasp?⁵²

Wells's text is visually countered by the printed publication of Lenin's Plan for electrification.⁵³ The English writer's departure from Russia is accompanied by a montage that includes a sowing peasant clad in ragged clothing and bast shoes (fig. 72).

⁵⁰ Mary Mayer, “Russia in the Shadows and Wells Under a Cloud,” *The Wellsian*, no. 15 (1992): 16-17, 19, 22. In her discussion of the Soviet reception of *Russia in the Shadows*, Mayer focuses primarily on the early 1920s. While noting the renewal of interest in the book during the late 1950s, and the focus of interest on Wells's comments on Lenin's electrification plan, she does not make any reference to Soviet responses of the 1930s.

⁵¹ Mayer: 18, 20.

⁵² H.G. Wells, *Russian in the Shadows* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920): 134-135.

⁵³ While both the page from *Russia in the Shadows* and *Plan eletrifikatsii R.S.F.S.R* are reproduced at tilted angles, Wells's text is effectively up-side down.

This detail is significant as an essential feature of Lenin's plan is the transformation of the countryside from the darkness of the primitive peasant past to the light of mechanized agriculture and industrial production.

References to H.G. Wells occur further in the text, as the Bolsheviks prove that he was wrong. A complex two page montage depicts the heads of a bearded peasant and a shaven worker against the background of a construction site that includes a horse-drawn peasant's cart, a steam shovel, and a steam engine (fig. 73). This montage is accompanied by a text which scoffs at Wells' skepticism:

Bearded peasants (they were those same peasants about whom Wells had asked Lenin: "And you will boldly embark on to those things with the peasants rooted in your soil?"), young people with the C.L.Y. [Komosomol] badge on their blouses, women and men on an equal footing--they all worked miracles of self-devotion and endurance.⁵⁴

Indeed, the primary cause of Wells' doubts about Lenin's plans lay in his impressions of the Russian peasantry:

The peasants are absolutely illiterate and collectively stupid, capable of resisting interference but incapable of comprehensive foresight and organization. They will become a sort of human swamp in a state of division, petty civil war, and political squalour, with a famine whenever harvests are bad; and they will be breeding epidemics for the rest of Europe.⁵⁵

This montage counters Wells's appraisal of the state of the peasantry, by showing the transformation of the peasant into an industrial worker through the experience of Dneprostoi. Wells is again taken to task for his skepticism in a spread entitled "After Ten Years" which features a montage consisting of an airplane flying over the new

⁵⁴ *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 10: 16.

⁵⁵ Wells: 46.

industrial landscape of Russia. The caption refers to Lenin's invitation to Wells to visit again in ten years in order to see the progress of the Bolsheviks--an invitation that he did not follow up on until 1934. Inset graphs present the production figures of electric power, coal, oil, collective farms, housing, pig iron, and tractors over ten years. Needless to say, all of the charts rise dramatically upwards.

In his memoirs, Al'pert extensively discussed the conception and execution of this issue of the magazine. According to Al'pert, both he and Lissitzky extensively studied and collected material related to the history of the construction site before settling on a format for the *fotoocherk*:

We did not right away find a plot solution that would reveal the conception of the great theme. Finally, the sought for "key" appeared: at the foundation of the photo-essay would be placed the meeting of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin with Herbert Wells, who arrived in Russia in September 1920.

After describing the "meeting of two worlds" at the Kremlin, Al'pert clarified how the *fotoocherk* devoted to Dneprostroi found its base in an incident that happened in 1920:

Saying goodbye to Wells, Lenin said: "Come back to Russia again in ten years and see what we have done in this time..."

Wells did not come back after ten years. We the authors of the special issue of the magazine, availed ourselves of this invitation of Lenin and on its pages was shown what Wells would have seen in 1932 by means of the language of the *fotoocherk*.⁵⁶

The framing of the photo-essay within the story of this meeting added impact to this narrative, heightening the drama of the actual realization of Lenin's utopian ideas.

However, the use of Well's visit with Lenin as a framing device for the celebration of the achievement of Dneprostroi was not the original conception of Al'pert and Lissitzky.

⁵⁶ Al'pert: 53.

This theme had already appeared in several Soviet publications earlier that same year.⁵⁷ In April 1932 an essay by Lev Nikulin entitled “Three Meetings with Herbert Wells” was published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, accompanied by a caricature of a shocked Wells confronted by an image of the hydroelectric dam, the electrical utopia made real (fig. 74).⁵⁸ This article was published shortly after the announcement of the completion of the dam structure on 18 April 1932. In Nikulin’s text, the Englishman’s doubts about the Kremlin Dreamer are juxtaposed, in montage fashion, with the telegram announcing the dam’s completion. After discussing two other “meetings with Wells”—that is, of a reader who encounters an author through literary texts—the article concludes with Lenin’s invitation to Wells to visit Russia again in ten years. At the end of April 1932, shortly after the publication of Nikulin’s article, the Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR issued the booklet *Dneprostoi: The Biggest Dam in the World* in both German and English editions.⁵⁹ The prefatory sketch “From Volkovstroi” by Anastasiia Zorich includes an extended version of the Lenin-Wells story.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ One of the first such references may have been made by Lunacharskii. A. Lunacharskii, “Razgavor s Gerbertom Uel’som,” *Prozhektor*, 1931, no. 13-14: 23-24. No copy of this text in my files. Currently requesting this volume via ILL. Also looking up his collected works.

⁵⁸ Lev Nikulin, “Tri vstrechi s Gerbertom Uellsom”, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 23 April 1932. Also see a subsequent article by this author: L. Nikulin, “Dve vstrechi z Gebertom Uel’som,” *Nashi dostizheniia*, 1934, no. 11: 65-74.

⁵⁹ The following publication data is printed in the English version: “Ready for setting: 13.IV.1932. Ready for press: 29.IV.1932..” D. Zaslavskii, ed., *Dneprostoi: The Biggest Dam in the World* (Moscow: Cooperative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1932): 2.

⁶⁰ A. Zorich, “From Volkhovstroi,” *Dneprostoi: The Biggest Dam in the World*: 14-21. There was no reference to Wells in *Prozhektor*’s extensive coverage of *Dneprostoi*,

Regardless of the source of this device, Al'pert and Lissitzky effectively employed the story to enliven and dramatize the visual presentation of Dneprostoi. Comparison of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* with an issue of *Prozhektor* that was also published in conjunction with the October 1932 opening ceremony of the hydroelectric station make this clear. *Prozhektor's* coverage of the event takes the form of a variety of shorter texts, many written by the engineers, planners, and workers of Dneprostoi. These texts are accompanied by numerous photographs of the site and of the people who worked there. While the central essays detail much of the same historical events of GOELRO and Dneprostoi, *Prozhektor's* coverage is generally much dryer and less dynamic than that of *SSSR na stroike*.⁶¹ *Prozhektor's* incorporation of texts by workers and engineers followed the practice of the magazine *Nashi dostizheniia*, which often published texts--frequently of dubious literary quality--by workers, peasants, and other participants in industrial construction. In contrast, *SSSR na stroike* drew upon the skills of "the best of the best." An elite enterprise, it was not a product of the collective.

The framing narrative and its central theme of transformation give this *fotoocherk* a particularly dynamic quality. Transformation operates at many levels: the metamorphosis of the Soviet Union from a backwards agricultural economy to an industrial one, from a society of peasants to one of workers, from darkness to light, from utopian dreaming to living actuality, from the wild unnavigable rapids of the Dnieper to the tamed dammed waters, from destructive civil war to the productive struggle of

however an article published in late 1932 employed the meeting of Lenin and Wells as the departure point for a discussion of achievements in Soviet railroad transportation. I. Dubrovskii, "Oshibka mistera Uel'sa," *Prozhektor*, 1932, no. 23-24 (31 December): 1.

⁶¹ Various authors, *Prozhektor*, 1932, no. 17 (15 September): 4-18.

industrialization. The transformation of the role of women in Soviet society and their integration into the work force is also featured in both the images and the text: "women and men on equal footing--they all worked miracles of self-devotion and endurance."⁶²

The central role of Stalin as the main agent of transformation is visually emphasized in the montage entitled "The Current is Switched On" (fig. 70), which incorporates a portrait photograph of Stalin taken by James Abbe (fig. 75).⁶³ From the standpoint of narrative construction, the story begins with the quote of Lenin and reaches its climax with the Stalin montage. This pairing of Lenin and Stalin is reminiscent of Christian typology, with Lenin as the Old Testament prophet, and Stalin as the Messiah in whom all becomes clear and light, and who realizes the Word. In the climactic montage, powerful searchlights beam up from the dam and other lights fill the new industrial landscape. Stalin smiles benevolently as a powerful, disembodied masculine hand--reminiscent of the hand of God in Byzantine iconography--grasps a large electrical switch. Stalin is shown bringing Lenin's plan to fruition and leading the Soviet Union out of the darkness. The masculine hand in the Stalin montage is the pendant of the feminine hand operating the controls in the montage opposite Lenin's quote at the beginning (fig. 69). Gender attributes reinforce the construction of Lenin as the feminized dreamer of the *vita contemplativa*, while Stalin embodies the *vita activa* as an aggressive, powerful man of action who is capable of realizing these visions.

⁶² *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 10: 16.

⁶³ In his book, Abbe claims that sitting for a portrait was a novel experience for Stalin, who apparently was amused by the process. While Abbe mentions that he promised Stalin a set of photographs, it is not clear how his photograph was used in the montage. Abbe: 40-48.

These analogies are not coincidental. As a model construction taking place during the Bolshevik war on religion, Dneprostroi did not include any religious institutions. Instead, secular practices and organizations, such as workers clubs, provided alternatives to organized religion and encouraged the expression of faith in the Soviet regime. Ironically, the culture of the class war borrowed heavily from the old culture that it sought to replace. The semioticians Iuri Lotman and Boris Uspenskii have argued that, due to the fundamental dualism which is a deep structure of Russian culture, efforts to introduce radical cultural change “invariably include mechanisms which regenerate the culture of the past.”⁶⁴ They argue that

...the new emerged not from the structurally “unexploited” reserve, but as a result of the transformation of the old, as it were, of its being turned inside out. In this way repeated changes could in fact lead to the *regeneration* of archaic forms.⁶⁵

This mechanism may account for the pervasive presence of inverted forms of both traditional Russian Orthodox church culture in the representation of Dneprostroi.

The overall thematic emphasis of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* is dramatically different from the first one devoted to Dneprostroi (1930, no. 4). Though technical information about the hydroelectric dam and the applications of its energy are included in both narratives, it is no longer the dominant message communicated. Also, in 1932 the

⁶⁴ Iu. M. Lotman and B.A. Uspenskii, “The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture.” *The Semiotics of Russian Culture* (Ann Arbor) *Michigan Slavic Contributions*, no. 11 (1984): 4. Lotman and Uspenskii, perhaps due to ideological difficulties during the Soviet period, limited their analysis to Russian culture up to the 18th century, but much of their argument may be applied to the study of Soviet culture. The fundamental polarity of Russian medieval culture also existed in the Soviet system, with its strict division of the world into good/bad, Communist/Capitalist, us/them, et cetera, and its lack of tolerance for any sort of “deviation,” political or cultural.

images of Dneprostroi have a more human scale; they are no longer panoramic vistas in which workers are reduced to incidental ciphers. These differences reflect changes in Soviet industrialization policy after Stalin's speech of June 23, 1931. In this speech, Stalin reformulated the relationship between technology and the labor force. Since 1928, Party policy had been that "technology determines everything," but in 1931 Stalin gave human labor priority over technology and emphasized the decisive role of "active people" in the production process. Stalin's speech also signaled the end of the "class war" and a move towards reconciliation with the peasantry and specialists after the extremes of collectivization and the Shakty trials. As a result of these changes, more productive workers were rewarded and valorized, competitive wages were introduced, and technical specialists were restored to a prestigious position. The effects of this change in policy were reflected in the visual and written representations of industrialization.⁶⁶ The positive reception of the Filippov Family and Kalmykov photo-essays discussed above also reflect the impact of this change in policy. In *SSSR na stroike* these changes are apparent in the alteration of the representation of workers, peasants, engineers and managers. In the 1930 issue, no peasants--who at that time would be potential class enemies--are depicted, while the few workers and specialists shown are reduced to types. In contrast, the 1932 issue presents a broader and more detailed cross-section of the participants of Dneprostroi.

A two page spread entitled "The Best of the Best" recognizes the "top 53 workers" (fig. 76). They are presented in numbered cameo photographs with a key that

⁶⁵ Lotman and Uspenskii: 5.

identifies their names.⁶⁷ Many of the individuals appear to be managers or technical specialists, an assumption based on clothing, hairstyles, and beardlessness.⁶⁸ The sub-text here implies that peasants are included, but they will not rise into the upper echelons of labor unless they transform themselves into industrial workers.⁶⁹ Opposite the "top 53 workers" are larger ovals of prominent Dneprostroi management, engineering and Party members and a photograph of "the 'Triangle' of Dneprostroi" which depicts: Leibenzon, the Secretary of the District Party Committee; Brovko, the Chairman of the Trade Union Committee of the Construction; and A.V. Winter, the Director of Dneprostroi. This "troika" represents the new power base and leadership of industrial construction: Party, the trade unions, and technology. Among the figures represented are four women, but no

⁶⁶ Hubertus Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship, 1931-1932," in *John Heartfield*, eds. Peter Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992): 270-71.

⁶⁷ A similar spread of head and shoulder shots of twenty-four builders who received awards for their contribution was published in *Prozhektor*, 1932, no. 19 (October 15): 8. The *Prozhektor* spread includes a combination of technical specialists (including Colonel Cooper) and workers. All but three of these individuals are also included in the *SSSR na stroike* spread.

⁶⁸ Since the time of Peter the Great, who ordered men to shave, beards have been associated in Russia with the Old Believers, an Orthodox schism that rejected the Western-looking reforms implemented by Peter. During the 1920s and 1930s, beards -- especially unkempt ones -- were associated with general backwardness and the peasantry. In "The Best of the Best" many of the men are wearing ties and jackets (which they do not look unnatural in) and several of the men have shaved heads, an ideological statement that indicates they are new Soviet men. Head shaving was considered both hygienic and a rejection of bourgeois concerns with fashion. Vladimir Maiakovskii, Osip Brik, Sergei Tret'iakov are just a few more well known individuals who shaved their heads.

⁶⁹ "Granite," an excerpt from Fyodor Gladkov's Dneprostroi novel *Energiia* makes exactly this point. See translated excerpt in : *VOKS Illustrated Almanac* 1934, nos. 7-8: 155-59.

peasants. However, in the foldout panorama inside "The Best of the Best," anonymous bearded peasants are included in a montage of workers.

This issue of *SSSR na stroike* also reflects profound changes in attitudes and official policy concerning culture, propaganda art, and photomontage. On a general level, the First Five-Year Plan's emphasis on quantity and mass involvement in cultural production gave way to renewed concern with artistic and literary quality.⁷⁰ In comparison to the earlier *Dneprostroi* issue, this number reflects a new concern with quality and reputation. This cultural change entailed a return to such concepts as genius, stature and oeuvre and is reflected in *SSSR na stroike* by the appearance of artists, photographers and writers with established reputations in Western Europe and the United States. While the credits for the 1930 issue identify only the artist and the editorial board, this issue contains an extensive list of credits for design, photography, text, and translation. Among these credits are many well known figures (see appendix H).

In his memoirs, Al'pert discussed the distinguishing characteristic of this issue of *SSSR na stroike*:

The distinction of this *fotocherk* from others consisted in that it widely employed the photomontage method in the presentation of the plot focal points of the theme. Page after page springs up the rigorous and heroic

⁷⁰ Katrina Clark mentions new slogans such as "For Artistic Quality!" in her essay "Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan", in *Cultural Revolution in Russian, 1928-1931*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978): 203. See, also: Katrina Clark, "Engineers of Human Souls in an Age of Industrialization: Changing Cultural Models, 1929-41," in *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*, eds. William Rosenburg and Lewis Siegelbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 248-264.

chronicle of the construction, one of the which was brought into existence by the Leninist "electrical utopia."⁷¹

The application of photomontage to the layout of the magazine was celebrated as a distinctive and successful solution to the design task. Extremely volatile contemporaneous debates about photomontage and propaganda probably affected the design of this number. In the beginning of 1931, all political poster production was put under the control of Izogiz, the State Fine Arts Press, after intense debates concerning the questionable quality and regulation of posters and mass agitation art.⁷² The same Central Committee resolution that gave Izogiz authority over poster production also gave instructions for the organization of debates on poster design. These debates took place on April 13 and May 4, 1931, followed by a series of related debates in the cultural press over the next several months. Photomontage emerged as a central issue in these debates, its place in agitational art being hotly contested. Ivan Matsa argued that photomontage's de facto use in Soviet art was inappropriate, as it was visually unintelligible to a large part of the Soviet population.⁷³ As these debates continued, vanguard photomontage was increasingly attacked for its visual fragmentation. In some of these exchanges the work of German monteur John Heartfield, who was in Moscow at the time, was juxtaposed to that of Klucis and Oktiabr' artists as the preferred alternative.⁷⁴ While Klucis' work was

⁷¹ Al'pert: 54.

⁷² Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship": 257. *SSSR na stroike* became a publication of Izogiz in January 1931.

⁷³ "Kommunisticheskaia akademiia o plakata," *Brigada khudozhnikov*, 1931, no. 2-3: 4.

⁷⁴ Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship": 262-64. For material related to the debates, see: D. Moor, "Oformleniiu plakata nado uchit'sia," *Brigada khudozhnikov*,

criticized for its visual fragmentation, Heartfield's was praised for its clarity and simplicity of means.

These debates undoubtedly had some impact on *SSSR na stroike*, a prestigious and high profile publication of Izogiz. In April 1933, Khalatov wrote to Gor'kii about a meeting of the editorial board where the use of photomontage in the magazine was extensively discussed:

Recently a meeting of the editorial board of *SSSR na stroike* took place here with the participation of comrades Piatakov, Kalmanovich, Uritskii and others, which went on with great animation and activity. We critically evaluated our work during 1932 and the start of the current year, and also reviewed the plan of upcoming issues.

At the initiative of comrade Piatakov, the next issue of the magazine will be devoted to the theme "Soviet Volga" [1933, no. 3] and, judging from the maquette, it promises to be very interesting.

In the plan of publication of the magazine for the second half of the year the issues "Soviet Arctic" [1933, no. 9], "Kamchatka" [1933, no. 6], "The White Sea Canal" [1933, no. 12], and "Central Asia" [1933, no. 10] have special significance.

We painstakingly discussed the issues of the magazine devoted to Dneprostroi and the Red Army, the design of which broadly used the method of photomontage. According to the general opinion of the editorial board their design is, without argument, successful, but we declared it necessary not over use photomontage, in order that the magazine not lose its simplicity and naturalness...⁷⁵

According to Khalatov, the editors considered Lissitzky's montages for both the Dneprostroi and Red Army (1933, no. 2) issues successful, but they were wary of freely

1931, no. 4: 10-16; "Formiruiushcheesia iskusstvo fotomontazha. Diskussia v Komakademii," *Brigada khudozhnikov*, 1931, no. 5-6: 17-18; *Za bol'shevistskii plakat* (Moscow: Izogiz, 1932); P. Riabinkin, "Protiv chuzhdykh teorii o plakate," *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*, 1932, no. 5: 2-4; P. Riabinkin, "Za sozdanie podlinno proletarskogo plakata," *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*, 1932, no. 6: 2-4; I.K. "Izogiz v realizatsii postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) o kartino-plakatnoi agitatsii," *Za proletarskoe iskusstvo*, 1932, no. 7-8: 32.

⁷⁵ Khalatov to Gor'kii, Moscow, 2 April 1933, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*, book 1: 282.

endorsing the controversial medium. Despite this, several of the future issues discussed at this meeting would also make use of similar montage techniques, the issues devoted to the Soviet arctic (1933, no. 9; designed by El Lissitzky) and the White Sea Canal (1933, no. 12; with photographs and design by Rodchenko). The remaining issues, all designed by Troshin, also made use of more daring layouts and some incorporated extensive facsimile reproductions.

Hubertus Gassner has argued that the combination of Stalin's new policy towards labor after June 1931 and the debates over photomontage and poster art led to the rejection of fragmented montage and the insistence on smooth, seamless composite images better suited to the depiction of the "Stalinist world of life and labor."⁷⁶ In his 1932 Dneprostroi montages, Lissitzky appears to have tailored his practice to suit the 1931 decrees and the ensuing debates. An artist with an established career of state propaganda commissions, Lissitzky turned away from fragmented images to the composition of more cohesive, integrated ones which were closer to the work of John Heartfield than to earlier Soviet montages by himself, Klucis, or Rodchenko.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Gassner, "Heartfield's Moscow Apprenticeship": 271. I am not convinced that this argument can really be applied already in 1932. Much of Gassner's article seems to look ahead to developments later in the decade.

⁷⁷ Differences in media need to be more thoroughly examined in considering Soviet photomontage. The debates were specifically addressed to the issue of poster production and not to magazine or book design. These two areas were creatively and institutionally distinct during this period. There were separate creative organizations for artists working in various media, such as the Union of Workers of the Revolutionary Poster (Ob'edinenie rabotnikov revoliutsionnogo plakata, 1930-32) and the Society of Artists of the Book (Obshchestvo khudozhnikov knigi, 1931-32). However, recent scholarship has tended to lump together all types of photomontage into a single category. Also, it should be noted that already in 1928 Stepanova had championed Rodchenko's pursuit of a more cohesive

Comparison of the *Pressa* frieze (figs. 6, 7, 8) to the Dneprostroi photomontages reveals the greater cohesion of Lissitzky's later work.

Despite the decreased fragmentation of the montages, Lissitzky's work indicates continued vanguard visual exploration. For example, in one sequence of the issue Lissitzky draws upon three distinct visual techniques to describe "where the current goes." First, we encounter a fairly conventional set of photographs that depict the construction of various factories near Dneprostroi (fig. 77). The following page ideographically diagrams the dispersal of electricity from Dneprostroi to the four cardinal points of the compass--North to Dnepropetrovsk, East to the Donbass, South to the Nikopol manganese mines, and west to Krivoy-Rog (fig.78). In this ideogram, Dneprostroi is represented by a circular close-up of a power grid, while the regional industrial projects and factories are represented by photographs that depict the different applications of electricity at these locations, such as farming at Nikopol. On the next page, a map is studded with circular inset photographs marking Krivoy-Rog and Dnepropetrovsk, being details of the images on the previous page (fig. 79). This map expands to depict an additional result of Dneprostroi, the development of the transportation potential of the Dnieper, the third largest river in Europe. The map includes photomontage arrows of a boat showing the course of the Dnieper as it winds its way through Ukraine. In this sequence, Lissitzky explores different means of visual presentation--from veristic photography to ideogram to map--whereby suggesting a continuation of experimental visual exploration. In particular, the visual diagramming

image through his exploration of photography. Stepanova, "Photomontage" (1928), in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. Christopher Phillips: 236.

recalls earlier book designs by Lissitzky, such as *Dlia Golosa* (1923) or *The Four Arithmetical Functions* (1928). According to Alan Birnholz, during the 1930s Lissitzky was interested in the International System of Typographical Picture Education (ISOTYPE) developed by Otto Neurath. During the early 1930s, Neurath and other Austrians affiliated with the development of Isotype served as technical specialists for Izostat, the Institute for Visual Statistics, in Moscow.⁷⁸ The Isotype system

"...shows connexions between facts instead of discussing them." The illustrations did not serve merely to attract and entertain the reader's eye, but rather "they are parts of the explanations themselves. The reader may not understand the contents by reading the text only; he must read the pictures as carefully as the text."⁷⁹

Figure 80 shows an Izostat graphic that was published in the book *Aviatsiia i vozduchnoplavanie* ("Aviation and aeronautics") in 1934. This image visually demonstrates how new technologies have progressively decreased the travel time between Europe and the United States. Each wave represents one day; as the travel time diminishes, the distance between the continents also decreases. In a similar manner, Lissitzky visually diagrams "where the power goes." Strictly speaking, this issue of *SSSR na stroike* does not contain visual statistics presented in the manner advocated by Otto

⁷⁸ For a recent debate about Neurath's work in the Soviet Union, see: Clive Chizlett, "Damned Lies, and Statistics. Otto Neurath and Soviet Propaganda in the 1930s," *Visible Language* 26 (Summer/Autumn 1992): 298-321; and Robin Kinross, "Blind Eyes, Innuendo and the Politics of Design: A Reply to Clive Chizlett," *Visible Language* 28 (Winter 1994): 68-78. An article about Izostat that was published in *Prozhektor* in 1934 mentions that the new visual statistic methods were employed in exhibitions at Park Kultury. It is possible that Lissitzky became interested in Isotype through his work as exhibition designer at the Park. Vsevolod Vasil'evskii, "Izobrazitel'naia statistika," *Prozhektor*, 1934, No. 7: 18-19. See the following issues of *SSSR na stroike* that incorporate either Isotype or similar visual statistics: 1932, no. 8; 1934, no. 6; 1935, no. 5; 1935, no. 6.

Neurath in his Isotype system. However, the montages do require a similar close reading for full comprehension.

Another link to the 1920s avant-garde is discernable in the extensive use of historical documentary material in the montages. Lissitzky's montages include the following facsimile material: a page from H.G. Wells's *Russia in the Shadows*, Lenin's *Electrification Plan* (1920), a GOELRO map of the Electrification Plan (1920), a handwritten note from Stalin to Lenin concerning the plan (1921), the elaborately inscribed foundation stone of Dneprostoi (1927), a telegram from Colonel Cooper on the occasion of the completion of concrete pouring (1932), charts of the excavation competition (January 1931), and the Council of Peoples' Commissars and Central Committee decree "On the Construction of Power Stations on the Volga" (March 1932). While the facsimile documents reproduced in "Giant and Builder" were employed to create a convincing representation of the everyday reality of the Soviet worker, the documents reproduced in this issue of *SSSR na stroike* were more historical in nature. They sought to convincingly convey the historical events that lead to the realization of Dneprostoi. According to Al'pert, these materials were obtained with the assistance of the editorial board.⁸⁰ The particular choice of materials may also have been influenced by earlier publications about Dneprostoi. For example, Stalin's letter to Lenin about GOELRO had already been published in full in *Dneprostoi: The Biggest Dam in the*

⁷⁹ Alan Birnholz, *El Lissitzky* (Ph.D., Yale University, 1973): 417-18.

⁸⁰ Al'pert: 53.

World, the booklet for foreign workers that was published earlier in 1932.⁸¹ The facsimile reproduction of documents reflects the influence of the literature of fact, a production model for cultural workers that was advanced by Sergei Tret'iakov and other writers affiliated with *Novyi Lef*. In place of retardataire Realism and its slavish attempts to reproduce reality, the *faktovki* endorsed the use of found factual material in cultural production. In addition to the facsimile reproduction of documents, the *fotocherk* also features many photographs documenting historic occasions: H.G. Wells's visit to Russia (1920), the presentation of the Electrification Plan at the Bolshoi Theater (1920), the Kickhas bridge after its destruction in the Civil War, German troops in Kiev during the Civil War, the laying of the foundation stone at the construction site (1927), the pouring of the last bucket of concrete (March 1932), and the opening ceremony (October 1932).

Vanguard graphic exploration is also evident in the visual plays with fragments of text in several montages. On the last page a complex montage image features a banner with the text "*Net takikh krepostei kotorikh bol'sheviki ni mogli by vziat*" ("There are no fortresses that the Bolsheviks cannot storm") above an image of a crowd (fig. 81).

Although it is not indicated in the text of *SSSR na stroike*, this slogan is, in fact, a quote from Stalin.⁸² The same banner is repeated in the photograph of the crowd, but the text is

⁸¹ D. Zaslavskii, ed., *Dneprostoi: The Biggest Dam in the World*: 32-34.

⁸² The slogan is taken from the conclusion of Stalin's speech "About the Tasks of Industrial Managers" delivered at the First All-Union Conference of Leading Personnel of Socialist Construction on 4 February 1931. I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1951): 41. An earlier variant of this slogan appeared in Stalin's speech "About the work of the April Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission," 13 April 1928. The variant is: "Net v mire takikh krepostei, kotorikh ne mogli by vziat' trudiashshiesia, bol'sheviki."

not clear. Dividing the enlarged banner and the crowd is the word "*bol'sheviki*." This word appears to have been taken from a photograph of another large banner of the same quote that was displayed at the opening ceremony on October 12, 1932 and which is visible in another photograph several pages earlier. This slogan continues a military metaphor for industrial achievement established earlier in the issue with the transformation from the Civil War's devastation of the region, including the destruction of the original Kichkas bridge, to the productive offensive to build Dneprostroi: "And the war began between the working class and nature, a war worthy of the two powerful opponents."⁸³

Reviews of this issue did not appear in the central press until March 1933, a delay of several months that suggests reluctance to pass judgement on this innovative issue of *SSSR na stroike*. On March 17th a review of the issue by David Zaslavskii appeared in *Pravda*. Zaslavskii's review was highly positive and celebrated the highly visual narrative told by the issue:

Page after page the issue of *SSSR na stroike* unfolds the history of Dneprostroi. It is visible how the piers of the bridge grow, how the technology grows, how the people grow. It is visible, how together with this our artistic-illustrated industry, our publishing business, our photo mastery also grew. The issue is excellently done. The photographs illustrating the political and technical side of construction are very successfully montaged.⁸⁴

I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1949): 58.

⁸³ *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 10.

⁸⁴ David Zaslavskii, "Dva raza 'Gud-bai'. (*SSSR na stroike* o Dneprostroe)," *Pravda*, 17 March 1933. Not coincidentally, Zaslavskii was also the editor of the pamphlet on Dneprostroi published for foreign workers, *Dneprostroi: The Biggest Dam in the World*.

In conclusion, Zaslavskii praises the magazine for successfully and expressively telling the heroic history of Dneprostoi predominantly by visual means, without relying extensively on written articles or sketches. Published in *Pravda*, this review clearly approved of the use of extensive photomontage layouts. Shortly afterwards, another positive review was published in *Proletarskoe foto*.⁸⁵ While primarily descriptive, this review quotes Zaslavskii's evaluation of the magazine, indicating the importance of *Pravda* in validating the use of extensive photomontage layouts.

The acceptance of Lissitzky's photomontage method is indicated by his further work for the magazine and on a variety of other illustrated albums. Several of these publications, completed shortly after his first issue of *SSSR na stroike*, also feature material related to Dneprostoi. Also published by Izogiz and designed by El Lissitzky, the illustrated album *SSSR stroit sotsializm (The USSR Builds Socialism)* includes many photographs that also appeared in issues of *SSSR na stroike*. Like the magazine, this album was created for both Soviet foreign and readers and featured captions in Russian, German, French, and English. Largely completed at about the same time as the Dneprostoi issue,⁸⁶ the publication of the album was delayed until after the start of January 1933, as Stalin's speech "Itogi pervoi piatiletki", delivered at the joint plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission on 7 January 1933, is included at the very start of the album. As a complement to Stalin's speech, the album provides an

⁸⁵ S[emen] E[vgenov], "Dneprostoi i krasnaia armiiia v *SSSR na stroike*." *Proletarskoe foto*, 1933, no. 3: 23-25

⁸⁶ The credit page notes that the text and statistical information were completed in August 1932, and that the copy was registered for printing on 10 September 1932. *SSSR stroit sotsializm* (Moscow: Izogiz, 1933): credit page.

inventory of the industrial and agricultural achievements of the Soviet Union through a combination of visual images and facts. The first facet of the new Soviet economy to be featured is electrification, and this section is introduced by a complex photomontage composition (fig. 82). The presence of Lissitzky's photomontages as an accompaniment to Stalin's speech indicates that by 1933 photomontage was a viable and acceptable method.

1933, no. 2: Fifteenth Anniversary of the Red Army

Dneprostroi was in a spread of the next issue of *SSSR na stroike* designed by El Lissitzky and dedicated to the Red Army. As with the earlier Dneprostroi issue, Lissitzky collaborated with a prominent photographer of the recently dissolved ROPF, Semen Fridliand. In this issue, Fridliand and Lissitzky attempted to create a *fotocherk* with the most minimal intervention and reliance upon captions or text, a goal similar to Dziga Vertov's efforts to create documentary films without the use of intertitles.⁸⁷ In a two-page spread that highlights the role of former Red Army soldiers in the industrialization of the Soviet union, the monumental heads of four workers appear against the backdrop of Dneprostroi and Magnitostroi (fig. 83).⁸⁸ The particular choice of these two building sites further affirms their emergence as prototypical models of socialist construction and of Soviet industrial achievement. The heads are monumentalized, they are transformed into worker-soldier giants that people the construction sites of these giants of industry. A

⁸⁷ Semen Fridliand, "Zametki o tvorcheskoi praktike," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1933, no. 3: 28.

variant of this montage subsequently appeared in the deluxe album *RKKI (The Worker and Peasant Red Army)*, also designed by Lissitzky and published in 1934 (fig. 84). The use of such dramatic photomontage layout in deluxe publications with military subjects again suggests the general approval of this graphic design technique. Since the early 1920s, the Red Army had played an important role in the patronage of the arts and various artistic groups had sought to cultivate the favor of the military in order to gain its patronage. Unlike *SSSR na stroike*, the deluxe album was not published for foreign consumption, but only for a domestic audience.

1934, no. 3: "Dnieper Combinat"⁸⁹

This issue celebrates the realization of the Dnieper Combine, an industrial complex that included the dam, the power station, and a variety of plants and factories. This issue was also designed by Nikolai Troshin, whose growth as a lay-out artist since the 1930 issue is remarkable. The most striking visual feature of this issue is the use of the motif of electrical transmission via power-lines to visually link the various pages and subjects. This motif appears first on the front and back covers: a canted angle close-up of a power-line leading off from an electrical field (fig. 85). On the first page, the pole of a power line protrudes onto the white of the page, its lines leading to edge of the page, urging the viewer on into the issue. A map of the "Dnieper Combinat Electric Supply Scheme" then

⁸⁸ The Magnitogorsk workers are none other than Shaikhutdinov and Gailliulin, the Tatar shockworkers discussed above in chapter five. The *Dneprostroy* workers are identified as Yukhnik and Zakharov.

⁸⁹ "Combinat" is an anglicized version of the German word "Kombinat," which should properly be translated as "combine" or "industrial combine."

traces out the actual path of the power generated by the dam to various plants of the industrial combine. This motif is followed on subsequent pages by horizontal bands of power-lines across a flat landscape with a cloudy background, which are incorporated into every two-page spread until the very end. This device serves to effectively integrate the various subjects under the broader theme of the transmission of power. This theme is further embellished by the witty use of photographs that include power-lines in them. For example, a power-line crosses above an image of a boat in the lock (fig. 86), and photographs of power-lines are montaged to create a radically receding perspective diagonally dissect a spread on the electrification of agriculture (fig. 87). This device may have been borrowed from Lissitzky's issue, in which electrical grid images are playfully used in several montages (figs. 71, 77, 78, 81). This motif also visually expresses the metaphor of electricity as a central "current" of Marxist thought—an image suggested in the text of the 1932 issue.⁹⁰

The power-line motif strings together a less cohesive narrative presentation of Dneprostroi. In this issue, the historical account of the project is reduced to a few pages (fig. 86). Over an image of the rapids which rendered the Dnieper river impassable to boats is a photograph of a hand holding a pencil in the act of sketching the plans for a lock and dam over the landscape. This surreal image is accompanied by a reproduction of

⁹⁰ In one two page spread, a electrical zap links together the images and names of various hydroelectric stations. This image is accompanied by a text that provides a historical overview of Marxist ideas about electricity. The conclusion reads as follows: "The bid made eighty years ago by advanced communism for the mastery of the electron is being fulfilled. A single, high-tension network of Marxist thought whose one end rests in the middle of the last century, in the modest London flat of Karl Marx, has planted its other end in 1932 in the DHES. The red banner of communism floats over the dam, that set of

the cover of the 19th century satirical magazine *Budilnik* which features a cartoon of a conversation between the Dnieper river and some bargemen, which recall Ilya Repin's painting *The Volga Boat Haulers*.⁹¹ The provided translation of this conversation is as follows:

THE DNEPER: Ignored and forgotten,
I grow thin and weak. [sic]
Yet I entertain the hope
That soon no rapids will block my way
And ships will grace my breast.

THE BARGEMEN: Old man, give up your empty dream,
The rapids will be there as ever,
Decades and centuries you have waited,
Another five hundred years will pass,
Projects there will be galore,
But you, old man, will still be waiting.

In addition to providing the reader with a translation of the conversation, the accompanying text also provides the following interpretive frame:

The magazine was clearly inclined to trust the bargemen rather than the Dnieper. Of course, under tsarism 500 years appeared to be the necessary period...The Dnieper has been made navigable. It took the Bolsheviks five years to solve the age-old problem of navigation on this river.

The references to both tsarism and time are significant. As Anne Rassweiler has noted in her history of the construction site, Dneprostroi was like many other Soviet industrial

teeth that has been fixed in the giant's jaw of the *Dnepr*, to masticate water and power." *USSR in Construction*, 1932, no. 10: 44-45.

⁹¹ This caricature and the accompanying lines were also reproduced in an issue of *Prozhektor* published in conjunction with the opening of the dam.. They were printed with a historical essay about the project. S. Iantarov, "Velikoe istoricheskoe stroitel'stvo," *Prozhektor*, 1932, no. 19 (15 October): 9-10.

construction projects in that its planning had strong imperial precedents and heritage.⁹²

This was due in part to the overlap of engineers who had worked or trained in the pre-Revolutionary period and who "carried" their projects and concerns with them. The stress on time is also significant. In an investigation of the literature of the First Five Year Plan, Katrina Clark argues that one characteristic of this literature is an "emphasis on rapid and radical change" in which centuries are collapsed into years.⁹³ Radical, rapid change, which could not be accomplished by the Tsars, is emphasized here--but by what agency did it occur?

The drawing hand is cropped by a photograph of power-lines crossing over the completed lock in use. The power-lines correspond with the cuff of the sleeve and visually continue it. This power-line/sleeve leads the viewer on to the next page, where its probable owner is represented (fig. 88). A paternal, smiling bust of Stalin looks out at the reader. Opposite him are photographs of the various Dnieper Combine plants, cut into the shapes of inter-locking cog wheels. The text accompanying this montage discusses the major role of Dneprostroi and the Dnieper Combine as the largest project of both the First and Second Five Year Plans and outlines

the great tasks which the workers of the Dnieper project and of the plants already in operation must carry out during the Second Five-Year Plan under the leadership of the Party and of Stalin, its leader.

⁹² Rassweiler: 5. The other projects which Rassweiler mentions are the Turk-Sib Railroad, the Volga-Don Canal, Magnitostroi, and Kuznetskstroï.

⁹³ Clark, "Little Heroes and Big Deeds": 191.

Stalin's central role in the realization of Dneprostoi is thus established at the very outset. Lenin has been eclipsed. Both text and image further the shift in ideological significance of Dneprostoi already apparent in 1932:

The Bolsheviks under Stalin's leadership are carrying into effect Lenin's electrification plan. Dnieprostoi has shown the whole world what the Bolsheviks are capable of[,] what the proletariat under the leadership of its Party is capable of accomplishing.

Technology no longer accomplishes great deeds in the Soviet Union: the leadership guiding the Proletariat does. Troshin has borrowed both conceptually and visually from Lissitzky's "The Current is Switched On" (fig. 70). The device of pairing hands and heads is employed by both artists. Used in conjunction with the portrait of Stalin, the hands suggest the leader's active role in the planning and realization of Dneprostoi.

Significantly, Troshin used the same Stalin portrait as Lissitzky, although the quality of reproduction is different and the image has been reversed.

While advancing the Stalin cult, this issue also presents a diverse cross section of leadership, specialists and workers. However now the managerial elite is relegated to a more secondary position. The Stalin spread is followed by a head-and-shoulders photograph of "Brigadier Karulin, one of the best shock workers of the construction". Karulin is accompanied by a montage of a group of workers, identified as "Karulin's brigade", against a photograph of the Zaporozhstal steel plant. The next several pages present images of workers, construction, production processes, and products of the various new plants. It is not until almost two-thirds of the way through the magazine that non-workers are identified in a two-page spread celebrating the first production of Soviet aluminum. Aside from this, the only other figures named appear in a layout devoted to significant visiting dignitaries at the end of the issue. This spread includes Kaganovich,

Molotov, Kalinin, Ordzhonikidze, Kossior, Petrovskii, Chubar, Maksim Gor'kii, and "Edouard Herriot, the former head of the French Government, who expressed his admiration at the wonderful structures." By 1934 it had become a trope to conclude an issue of *SSSR na stroike* with visiting dignitaries, especially Maksim Gor'kii, viewing the results of socialist construction--"Time to wheel out Gor'kii."⁹⁴

Despite this descent into formulaic models, this issue contains some surprisingly original visual passages. Many of the photographs are close-ups of industrial materials such as aluminum ingots, steel rods, iron bars, and electrodes that recall both Aleksandr Rodchenko and Neue Sachlichkeit photographs of industrial products. These photographs create rational and bountiful images by means of serially ordered industrial materials, especially when contrasted to the often chaotic views of construction sites and industrial plants. One montage, which utilizes two of these photographs, evokes a surprisingly sophisticated level of abstraction and perspectival play (fig. 89). Two "serial image" photographs of lozenge shaped objects (kilns and electrodes) create abstract tilted planes below a "one-point perspective" photograph of the interior of a plant which has been cropped into a pentagram whose bottom edges parallel the lozenge patterns. This image is flanked on either side by the one inch bands of the power-line. At the top of the photograph of the plant, a catwalk in the foreground visually echoes the image of the transmission line. This montage reveals a very sophisticated understanding of the visual construction of space and is playing with different models of perspectival illusionism and geometric formalism. The symmetrical arrangement of these regular geometric shapes is

⁹⁴ Gor'kii appears in the following issues: 1931, no. 9; 1933, no. 3; 1933, no. 9; 1933, no. 12; 1934, no. 4; 1934, no. 9; 1935, no. 1; 1935, no. 6.

reminiscent of Constructivist graphic design of the 1920s and may be a late reflection of Troshin's Vkhutemas training.

Conclusion

Over the course of five years, the representation of Dneprostoi in *SSSR na stroike* underwent considerable change. The ideological underpinnings of the representations altered most dramatically, from an emphasis on technology independent of the Party to the legacy of Lenin's electrification plan and its realization by Stalin to the Augustan elevation of Stalin to the supreme deity in the Socialist cosmos. The representation of workers also underwent a dramatic change from mere ciphers to the central protagonists of construction, under Stalin's leadership.

While the changes in the representation of Stalin and workers are not especially surprising, the visual changes in the issues are. The dramatic development in Troshin's lay-outs is particularly remarkable. The visual and thematic links between different issues suggest that later designers and editors were conscious of the coverage of Dneprostoi in earlier issues. A surprising amount of visual exploration and experiment is evident in both Lissitzky's montages of 1932 and in Troshin's work in 1934.⁹⁵ Another surprising element of the representation of Dneprostoi is the prominent American presence in the earlier issues, while American technology and consultants were featured in the first issue.

⁹⁵ Before assessing the changes taking place in photo-montage practice in the early 1930s, we need better of the primary sources on these debates, as well as of representative photo-montages from this period. Too often montages from the 1930s are compared exclusively to works of the 1920s--a major methodological flaw. Given the significant and almost immediate creative impact of policy statements, such as the

American photographers contributed to the next several issues. American technology and specialists were employed both by the construction project and by the magazine. However, by 1934 there was no longer an American presence, a change that reflected both growing Soviet self-reliance and the outright absorption of American technique both at the construction site and in the magazine.

While debates over the use of photomontage in poster production may have inhibited the application of this method in 1931, the positive reception of the *fotocherki* that made use of this method in 1932 led to its further exploitation in *SSSR na stroike*. By 1935, the emergence of Socialist Realism affected Soviet photographic practice. During the Class War at the start of the decade, photojournalism and the amateur photography movement were celebrated by the Soviet photographic establishment, while artistic photographers were shunned as threatening bourgeois elements. The mounting of the exhibition “Masters of Soviet Photo Art” in 1935 marked a reversal in cultural values around photography. Both “art” and “mastery” were celebrated as paramount values. Notably, this exhibition showcased photomontages from the 1932 *Dneprostroi* issue of *SSSR na stroike*. The catalogue provides detailed descriptive entries for seven photomontages, presented as the work of Lissitzky and Al’pert and identified as the series “Lenin and Wells”⁹⁶ The exhibition of these photomontages indicates that the vanguard visual strategies employed by Lissitzky in 1932 were not only acceptable to the cultural

Central Committee's Resolution on Poster Art and Propaganda, a more careful survey of works and texts is in order.

⁹⁶ G.M. Boltianskii, et. al., *Vystavka rabot masterov sovetskogo foto iskusstva* (Moscow: 1935): 20. Special display prints of the photomontages were made for the exhibition, several of which are preserved in Boltianskii's papers at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. RGALI, f. 2057, op. 1, d. 141.

establishment in 1935, but that this *fotooчерk* had found its place in the canon of Soviet photography. Despite the central role of Stalin in its narrative, the 1932 series continued to serve as an exemplary *fotooчерk* in the post-Stalin period. Lissitzky's collage "The Current is Switched On" was reproduced in *Khudozhestvennoe konstruirovaniie i oformlenie knigi* (The Artistic Construction and Design of the Book) a manual for book design published in 1971 (fig. 90). This montage accompanies a discussion of the use of visual material in agit-prop publications. The caption to Lissitzky's image reads "A photomontage actively working upon the viewer." Curiously, the image represents only a fragment of the montage: the hand pulling the switch. Stalin is not present, nor is the general subject of the photomontage identified.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ A.D. Goncharova, ed., *Khudozhestvennoe konstruirovaniie i oformlenie knigi* (Moscow: Kniga, 1971): 209.

CHAPTER 5
MODERNISM'S WILLING EXECUTIONER?
ALEKSANDR RODCHENKO AT THE WHITE SEA CANAL

In December 1933, the first issue of *SSSR na stroike* designed by Rodchenko was published (figs. 91 a-q).¹ By the time the magazine ceased publication in June 1941, Aleksandr Rodchenko had designed twelve issues, eleven in collaboration with Varvara Stepanova. The couple designed issues devoted to subjects such as Parachuting, Soviet Timber Exports, Gold Mining, The Moscow-Volga Canal, Collective Farming, and the poet Vladimir Maiakovskii. It is, however, this first issue, devoted to the construction of the Baltic White Sea Canal (Belomorstroi),² that has received more scholarly attention than any other number of the magazine. In part this is because Rodchenko also took the photographs for this issue--he designed subsequent issues using photographs supplied by other photographers. However, the overwhelming notoriety of this volume is due to its subject: a Stalinist forced labor construction project.

Belomorstroi was a prison labor project administered by the Soviet secret police, the United State Political Administration (*Ob'edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*; hereafter OGPU). Rodchenko photographed Belomorstroi extensively,

¹ While an extensive selection of the photomontages from this issue of *USSR in Construction* are reproduced here, they are not complete.

² Belomorstroi is the acronym for "*Stroitel'stvo Belomorsko-baltiiskogo kanala*" (Construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal).

which time he must have witnessed the daily horrors of this labor camp, where many thousands of prisoners are believed to have perished. While Sergei Tret'iakov, Boris Kushner and other avant-gardists later died in the camps or at the hands of the secret police, Rodchenko became part of an apparatus which aestheticized and glorified the State Administration of Correctional Labor Camps of the OGPU (*Gosudarstvennoe Upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovymi lageriami OGPU*, hereafter GULag) in slickly designed propaganda. The work of Soviet avant-garde artists after April 1932, when all independent cultural organizations were forcibly dissolved by the Central Committee Resolution on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations, is often dismissed as compromised or symptomatic of a repudiation of the progressive visionary projects articulated during the twenties. Rodchenko's work at Belomorstroi has often been singled out as definitive proof of the abandonment of the Soviet avant-garde project.³ However, a close study of Rodchenko's work at Belomorstroi suggests that it was in accordance with Soviet avant-garde principles, that it was consciously and deliberately undertaken, and that it reveals clear connections between avant-garde practice and Socialist Realism.

Drawing upon newly available published and archival sources, as well as upon recent scholarship on the literary and dramatic activity connected with Belomorstroi, I will reconsider Rodchenko's work at the White Sea Canal. This chapter will review the events leading up to his work at the canal and consider the nature of his experiences at the camp itself. In addition to reconsidering the photo-essay in *SSSR na stroike*, I will examine the

³ Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30 (Fall 1984): 117. Leah Dickerman, "The Propagandizing of Things," *Aleksandr Rodchenko*, exhibition catalogue

widespread distribution of Rodchenko's photographs throughout the Soviet press. Identifying this issue of the magazine as evidence of the end of the progressive avant-garde project, much recent scholarship has analyzed the photo-essay predominantly in terms of rupture, elaborating the ways that it broke with earlier vanguard practice and diagnosing it as symptomatic of a shift in cultural production. In contrast, my analysis will examine the photo-essay in terms of continuities, tracing connections between elements of Rodchenko's vanguard photographic practice and the emergence of a Socialist Realist photographic practice. I will also evaluate further developments in Rodchenko's career in the wake of the publication of his photographs of the White Sea Canal. In conclusion, the ethical implications of Rodchenko's work at the White Sea Canal will be considered.

The Origins of the White Sea Canal Construction Project

To understand how it came to be that the White Sea Canal was built by prison labor, an overview of Soviet penal history is in order.⁴ In the wake of the Revolution, the Bolsheviks prophesied the disappearance of crime with the dissolution of the capitalist

(New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998): 89-96.

⁴ The pioneering work on forced labor in the Soviet Union is David Dallin and Boris Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947). For a more recent study of this topic, see Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the Gulag: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993). Also see Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's literary exploration of this topic and his extensive commentary on Belomorstroi in *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation III-IV* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975): 71-102. For recent Russian publications about Belomorstroi, see V.G. Makurov, ed. *GULAG v Karelii: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov, 1930-1941* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skii nauchnyi tsentr RAN, 1992); Ivan Chukhin, *Kanaloarmeitsy* (Petrozavodsk: Karelia, 1990). Cynthia Ruder, *Making History for Stalin: The Story of the Belomor Canal* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998).

order. The ills of capitalist society were responsible for the existence of crime; the individual criminal was a victim of the corrupt nature of that society. Anticipating the disappearance of crime, the Soviet justice system was accordingly reformed. Prison sentences were reduced, parole was instituted, and the education and reform of prisoners was emphasized. Despite such optimistic hopes, crime rates actually rose to surpass pre-Revolutionary levels in the 1920s, and the prison population quickly swelled. Simultaneously, concentration camps were created to contain counter-revolutionary elements and other political opponents to the new order. With the institution of the First Five-Year Plan, the penal system was vastly expanded to contain the displaced Nepmen and kulaks during this period of economic and social upheaval. While labor at reduced pay had been proposed as a part of the reform of criminals, forced labor was not seriously considered until 1928. By 1931, the idealist, progressive penal reforms of the post-revolutionary period were adapted to bolster a ruthless system of exploitative forced labor. The labor camps were filled with kulaks, Nepmen, political prisoners, members of ethnic groups that Stalin sought to "neutralize," a few true criminals, and scores of hapless individuals who found themselves imprisoned for no rational reason.

The forced labor system was motivated by both political and economic factors. With the introduction of the First Five-Year Plan, the end of NEP, and the forced collectivization of agriculture, large sectors of the population were in opposition to the government and needed to be effectively neutralized. A reign of terror emerged, and the economic potential of forced labor became one of the factors behind the "colossal

construction now taking place in the Soviet Union.”⁵ Forced labor simultaneously offered a solution to the labor shortage, the capital shortage, and the penal crisis. With the end of NEP, all workers became state employees. The upkeep of a forced laborer cost the government far less than the wages of a paid, free worker. Furthermore, there was a chronic labor shortage that was compounded by a dearth of consumer goods. This system of penal labor did not limit itself to skilled and unskilled workers; engineers, scientists, and experienced administrators were also a vital part of this system of coercive work. Another aspect of this system was the forced resettlement to the new industrial centers that were set up frequently in less than desirable climates. The shortage of capital also made forced labor extremely attractive. Forced labor was utilized in a broad variety of sectors of the economy from mining, lumbering and oil production to the construction of roads, dams, canals and new industrial centers. With an underdeveloped industrial and technological base large amounts of human labor could be used to do jobs which would have been more efficiently executed by machinery. Unsavory, difficult work could be accomplished at low cost, and high capital return was promised in sectors which produced commodities which could be sold abroad, such as petroleum, timber and gold. All of these economic sectors and types of projects, as well as collectivized agriculture, are prominently featured in *SSSR na stroike*.

Other major construction sites, such as Dneprostroi and Magnitostroi, also employed prisoners, but the Soviet government generally suppressed knowledge of the use of forced labor. While the widespread utilization of forced labor and resettlement were

⁵ “From the Editors,” *USSR in Construction*, 1930, no. 1: 3.

practices that the Soviet government did not make publicly known, the White Sea Canal project was an exception. This project was internationally publicized and promoted to foreign tourists as a demonstration of the progressive practices of the Soviet penal system.⁶ Through work on construction projects, non-productive and anti-social individuals were transformed into productive, skilled, contributing members of society, and useful public projects were executed. Belomorstroi was initially conceived in 1930 with the intent of strategically connecting the Baltic and the White Sea, giving the Russian Navy easy access to the Baltic in case of war and creating a useful transportation route through the wilds of Karelia. Blueprints were drawn by April of 1931, and construction began in November.

Most of the major construction projects of the early 1930s were administered by the branch of government directly responsible for industrialization, the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. The OGPU, on the other hand, was exclusively a police organ that lacked adequate engineering knowledge and technical resources. At other construction sites that made use of prison labor, engineering needs took priority and forced labor was primarily a supplement to the work of young enthusiasts and experienced workers.⁷ In contrast, Belomorstroi employed a veritable "army" of forced labor.⁸ The

⁶ Maksim Gor'kii, Leopold Averbakh, and Semen Firin, eds., *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the Great Canal between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, Inc., 1935). Nikolai Pogodin, *The Aristocrats: A Comedy in Four Acts*, published in: *Four Soviet Plays*, Ben Blake, ed. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1937): 179-304. Intourist, "The Aristocrats," pamphlet for play at the Vakhtangov Theater. *The Baltic-White Sea Canal* (Moscow: Intourist, n.d.).

⁷ For a discussion of the Magnitogorsk Corrective Labor Commune, see Kotkin, *The Magnetic Mountain*: 134-135, 230-235

channel of the canal was cleared by the laborers, employing technology not much more advanced than that used in the construction of the Egyptian pyramids.⁹ The canal was built with virtually no labor saving, capital-intensive equipment or materials. The locks were primarily made not of metal but of wood, a plentifully available local resource. The canal was completed in less than two years in August 1933. Its completion was celebrated nationally and publicized internationally, the canal was named in honor of Stalin, and thousands of prisoners were amnestied. However, the majority of the prisoners were not released but transferred to work on other projects, an action that met with futile resistance on their part. Ultimately, the canal was of minor strategic importance. The wooden construction led to the need for constant maintenance, and a chain of labor camps was instituted along the canal to provide for its upkeep.

Prelude to Rodchenko's Trip to the Canal

After being accused of plagiarism of Western modernist photographers in 1928, Rodchenko's sensitivity to Soviet subject matter was heightened, and he actively sought work as a photojournalist. He successfully procured photojournalism assignments and began to publish spreads of photographs in illustrated magazines, such as *Daesh!* and

⁸ Military metaphors abounded at the construction site. The prisoners were the canal's army: "The joining of the Russian word *kanal* with a noun derived from the word *armii* (army)--*armeets* (one who is part of the army)--produced the sobriquet *canalarmyists* (*kanaloarmeitsy*), which was first coined by Lazar Kogan, head of the Belomor construction project." Ruder: 34.

⁹ "No, it would be unjust, most unjust, unfair, to compare this most savage construction project to the twentieth century, this continental canal built "with wheelbarrows and pick,"

Radio slushatel'.¹⁰ Rodchenko became active in Oktiabr', the avant-garde association devoted to proletarian cultural revolution, and he helped found its photography section in 1930. The program of the Photo Section stressed the importance of photography to the revolution and outlined a program for Oktiabr' photographers to follow. In the discussion of photography's role in socialist culture, the program emphasized the fixation of facts, and criticized the distorted, simplistic staged images of realist painting. Oktiabr' rejected so-called artistic photography while adulating technical aspects of the medium as vital to the cultural revolution and the formation of a proletarian culture. All of these elements of the Program of the Photo Section may be linked to earlier positions taken by Rodchenko: The emphasis on fact, the adulation of technology, and the opposition to artistic photography. The statement also charges Oktiabr' with the task of organizing proletarian photographic workers and established the following requirements for member photographers:

Anyone who joins the October Photo Section must be linked to production, i.e., should work in printing or be involved in newspapers, magazines, etc. ... Further, every member of the Photo Section should be linked with a factory or collective farm circle and supervise it. If he's not, his photographic work will acquire the form of studio photography or will degenerate into a nice little technical-aesthetic school interested only in formal goals. For the photo-worker, only concrete participation in industrial production guarantees the social significance of the work.¹¹

with the Egyptian pyramids; after all, the pyramids were built with the *contemporary* technology!! We used the technology of forty centuries earlier!" Solzhenitsyn: 91.

¹⁰ Rodchenko contributed regularly to the popular magazine *Daesh'* in 1929. He and Stepanova collaborated on several issues of the magazine *Radio slushatel'* that same year.

¹¹ "Programma fotosektsii obedineniia "Oktiabr' ", " *Izofront. Klassovaia bor'ba na front prostranstvennykh iskusstv* (Moscow/Leningrad: Ogiz-Izogiz, 1931): 150. Translation John Bowlt, *Photography in the Modern Era*: 284.

Although it was disbanded in 1932, Rodchenko's work at the White Sea Canal Construction Project may be seen as a fulfillment of the directives of Oktiabr', with its commitment to the "class struggle of the proletariat for the new communist culture." In 1931, the Oktiabr' photographers were accused of formalism and distortion of Socialist reality.¹² In these attacks, Rodchenko was singled out for criticism, and, he was subsequently expelled from the group in January 1932.¹³ The precise effect of these events upon Rodchenko's activities at that time is difficult to determine. While it is usually asserted that he suffered professionally in the wake of his expulsion, this is, in fact, how Rodchenko himself chose to portray his circumstances in the text "Reconstruction of the Artist." Issued in 1936, this source is problematic. Published at the time of his ascendance to the heights of the Soviet photography establishment, Rodchenko tells his story in a manner calculated to have a particular effect. Furthermore, the chronology of events that Rodchenko relates in this text is patently incorrect--another indication of his shaping of the events to his own ends.¹⁴ While the precise impact of his expulsion from Oktiabr' remains debatable, Rodchenko continued to find work, and his career was far from over. The April Resolution of the Central Committee mitigated the cultural climate that had fueled the bitter feuding between Oktiabr' and ROPF, and Rodchenko's photographs continued to

¹² The attacks on Oktiabr' took place primarily within the pages of *Proletarskoe foto*. For the start of the assault, see Lev Mezhericher, "Segodniashnii den' sovetskogo fotoreportazha," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 1: 9-12; Semen Fridliand, "Za proletarskuiu fotografiiu," *Proletarskoe foto*, 1931, no. 1: 13-16.

¹³ Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy Rodchenko* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1992): 167. *Proletarskoe foto*, no. 3, 1932: 27.

¹⁴ Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," *Sovetskoe foto*, 1936, no. 5-6: 19-21.

appear in prominent publications. His photographs of Moscow were included in the album *From Merchant Moscow to Socialist Moscow (Ot Moskvvy kupecheskoi k Moskve sotsialisticheskoi)* as visual complements to citations from Lazar Kaganovich's report "For the Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and the Cities of the USSR," delivered at a plenum of the Central Committee in June 1931. Not only did Rodchenko manage to stay in print, but also his photographs were deemed suitable as illustrations to a speech by a prominent member of the Central Committee.¹⁵ Varvara Stepanova, who worked on a variety of highly political publications during this period, designed the album. In 1932 Rodchenko's work was published in *Bor'ba klassov* (Class Struggle), a popular political monthly magazine that regularly featured articles by Stalin and whose editorial board included Lev Mekhlis, the chief editor of *Pravda* and a client of Stalin.¹⁶ By early 1933, Stepanova was working as a designer for this magazine. Both Rodchenko and Stepanova sought out highly political publication commissions. From 1933 to 1934, Stepanova worked as the art editor at Partizdat, the Communist Party Publishing House. In 1933, she designed *Itogi pervoi piatiletki*, a speech delivered by Stalin at a joint plenum of the

¹⁵ Lazar Kaganovich, *Ot Moskvvy kupecheskoi k Moskve sotsialisticheskoi* (Moscow: Ogiz-Izogiz, 1932). This album was designed by Varvara Stepanova. It also included photographs by Soiuzfoto, Savel'ev, Kazachinskii, Langman, and Boris Ignatovich, as well as photographs from the collections of the Museum of the Revolution and the Communal Museum.

¹⁶ According to Lavrent'ev, the photograph "Demonstration on Miasnitskaia" was published in *Bor'ba klassov*, 1932, no. 11-12. Lavrent'ev, *Alexander Rodchenko: Photography, 1924-1954* (Cologne: Könemann, 1995): 337.

Central Committee and the Central Control Commission on 7 January 1933.¹⁷ While these designs are included in recent publications about Rodchenko and Stepanova, no significant discussion is given to the nature of these publications and their authors.¹⁸ The couple's solicitation of such work was not symptomatic of a break from their earlier practice or a co-optation to power. Already in 1925-1926 Rodchenko had designed a series of posters dedicated to the history of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). In 1927 this series of posters was heralded in *Novyi LEF*, along with the fact that it was commissioned by the Communist Academy and the Museum of the Revolution.¹⁹

In April 1932, just a few months after his expulsion from *Oktiabr'*, Rodchenko signed a one-year contract to work as a photo-reporter for Izogiz, the State Publishing House of Fine Arts. According to Aleksandr Lavrent'ev, the family archive contains a copy of a contract that engaged Rodchenko as a photo-reporter to produce no less than forty negatives a month, for which Izogiz would have unlimited rights to reproduction.²⁰ Extrapolating from the existence of this contract, it has been assumed that Rodchenko was sent to the White Sea Canal Construction Project on commission from Izogiz, the

¹⁷ I. Stalin, *Itogi pervoi piatiletki* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1933). For information on Rodchenko and Stepanova's publication design work, see Aleksandr Lavrent'ev, et al., *A.M. Rodchenko. V.F. Stepanova. Masterov sovetskogo knizhnogo iskusstva* (Moscow: Kniga, 1989): 146-152.

¹⁸ See, for example, the discussion in Lavrent'ev, *A.M. Rodchenko. V.F. Stepanova. Masterov sovetskogo knizhnogo iskusstva*: 116.

¹⁹ "Tekushchie dela," *Novyi LEF*, 1927, no. 1: 47. Reproduction of two posters from the series, *Novyi LEF*, 1927, no. 3: opposite 17. Rodchenko, "Zapisnaia knizhka Lefa," *Novyi LEF*, 1927, no. 6: 4.

²⁰ Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 169.

publisher of *SSSR na stroike*.²¹ Yet Rodchenko, like other Soviet photojournalists, did not work exclusively for a single publication or agency. At the start of 1933, Rodchenko began to work as a photojournalist for the Moscow office of Worker's International Relief (*Internationale Arbeiter Hilfe*, hereafter IAH), which gathered Soviet materials for use in its publications, regularly forwarding texts and photographs to its Berlin headquarters. These materials were then incorporated into books and magazines, such as *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*. On 21 January 1933, the Moscow office sent Babette Gross 12 photographs by Rodchenko and a copy of an agreement with the photographer that stated that he would receive five marks for each image published.²² Employment with the IAH's Moscow office clearly had much to offer Soviet photographers: payment in hard currency and access to Western European photographic supplies and goods, including the highly prized Leica camera.²³ Rodchenko may have been engaged by IAH through his colleague Sergei Tret'iakov, who was a regular contributor to the organization's publications and had established a prominent reputation among German Leftists.²⁴ Rodchenko and

²¹ Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 170. Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Opyty dlia budushchego* (Moscow: Granta, 1996): 311 n. 12.

²² Moscow Office of the IAH to Babette Gross, 21 January 1933. Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii (RTsKhIDNI), f. 538, op. 3, d. 158, ll. 22-23.

²³ In the same package that included Rodchenko's photographs and contracts, a Leica belonging to the photographer Schneiderov was sent for refurbishment. RTsKhIDNI, f. 583, op. 3, d. 158, l. 22.

²⁴ Tret'iakov was close to John Heartfield, Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, Hanns Eisler and many other prominent German cultural figures. In 1939, after learning of Tret'iakov's execution as a spy, Bertolt Brecht began his poem "Ist das Volk unfehlbar" ("Are the people infallible") as follows: "Mein Lehrer Tretjakow/Der große, freundliche,/Ist

Schneuer, another photographer who began to work for the IAH around the same time, initially had some difficulty adjusting to the demands of their new employer. In a letter dated 10 February 1933 from the Moscow office to Gross, an anonymous correspondent wrote:

The photo material is a perfect catastrophe. We have no magnesium whatsoever, and, as you will see yourself, the photographic paper is so bad that the pictures suffer horribly from it. The two photographers Rodchenko and Schneuer haven't especially proven themselves yet. They are both filled with artistic intentions and, despite plentiful advice, they again and again forget the political moment. Furthermore, they work too slowly. Perhaps it should be seen whether one of the candidates named by you could come.²⁵

In addition to the material problems hindering the production of photographs in Moscow, this letter reveals that Rodchenko's work was found to be somewhat deficient of the qualities desirable of photojournalism. From the point of view of the letter's author, a publishing professional engaged in the production of illustrated propaganda for international distribution, Rodchenko's work lacked two qualities that the IAH expected of a photojournalist: the ability to capture "the political moment" and a quick turn around time. Despite these apprehensions about his performance as a photojournalist, the IAH dispatched Rodchenko to photograph the construction of the White Sea Canal. On 19 February 1933 the Moscow office informed Gross that "Rodchenko has gone to Karelia for us."²⁶

erschossen worden...." (My Teacher Tret'iakov/The big, friendly one,/ Has been shot...)" Sergei Tret'iakov, *Gesichter der Avantgarde: Porträts, Essays, Briefe*, Fritz Mierau, ed. (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1991): 449.

²⁵ RTsKhIDNI, f. 538, op. 3, d. 158, l. 59.

²⁶ RTsKhIDNI, f. 538, op. 3., d. 158, l. 76.

This correspondence indicates that Rodchenko was initially sent to Belomorstroi by the IAH and not, as is usually asserted, by Izogiz. This is significant for a number of reasons. Strictly speaking, Rodchenko was not sent to the canal by either the Soviet government or a Soviet organization. An international organization that was ostensibly non-partisan yet closely tied to the Comintern, the IAH was largely operated by Germans and functioned autonomously. This complicates any assertions about Rodchenko's motivation for going to the canal that are based upon assumptions about governmental coercion. At the same time, however, the IAH was arguably a more overtly political organization than Izogiz, a fine arts publishing house. The international nature of the IAH's publishing activities also problematizes the possibility that Rodchenko went to Belomorstroi in order to revitalize his career and improve his tarnished reputation. The IAH's mass press contained extensive coverage of developments in the Soviet Union, but this propaganda was not produced for internal consumption. Furthermore, as much of the material published by the IAH remained anonymous, Rodchenko could not count on recognition for any work completed at the labor camp. When Rodchenko initially departed for Belomorstroi on assignment for the IAH, he was not planning on spending an extended period of time at the construction site.²⁷ However, having begun work at the construction site, Rodchenko realized the immense opportunity that he had happened upon. His

²⁷ Rodchenko to Stepanova, 8 May 1933, *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 273. In this letter, Rodchenko notes that he will need to come back in the spring. This suggests that he had not initially reckoned on making more than one trip to the canal.

documentation of Belomorstroi was then transformed into a major project, independent of the IAH.²⁸

There were avant-garde precedents for the factographic documentation of and participation in socialist construction. In 1928 Tret'iakov began to regularly visit the Communist Beacon (*Kommunisticheskii maiak*) collective farm in the Caucasus. In 1930 he became a member of the collective farm and spent half a year there as a teacher and newspaper editor. Afterwards, he actively propagandized his first-hand experience of collectivization in both the Soviet Union and Germany. His book *The Challenge: Kolkhoz Sketches* (*Vyzov. Kolkhoznye ocherki*), initially published in 1930, was so successful that a second expanded edition appeared two years later. In 1931 Tret'iakov published *A Month in the Country (June-July 1930): Operative Sketches* (*Mesiats v derevne (iiun'-iiul' 1930 g.). Operativnye ocherki*), another book based upon his work at the commune.²⁹ Both of these books are illustrated by Tret'iakov's own photographs of the collective farm. In 1931, Tret'iakov traveled to Germany and Austria, where he gave a series of illustrated lectures on collectivization.³⁰ Tret'iakov's writings about collectivization were also published in German translations, and his work as an operative writer made a profound

²⁸ These conclusions are based upon the fact that no further discussion of Rodchenko appeared in the IAH correspondence after February 1933 and the contents of Rodchenko and Stepanova's correspondence, discussed in detail below.

²⁹ Sergei Tret'iakov, *Vyzov. Kolkhoznye ocherki* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1930). The photographs were omitted from the second, expanded edition of 1932. Tret'iakov, *Mesiats v derevne (iiun'-iiul' 1930 g.). Operativnye ocherki* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1931).

impression on Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and John Heartfield.³¹ By 1933 a number of Soviet photographers had already produced highly acclaimed photographs of construction projects, while other avant-gardists had begun to receive recognition for their work as designers and writers for *SSSR na stroike*. When Rodchenko departed for the canal in February 1933, El Lissitzky had already designed the critically acclaimed issues of *SSSR na stroike* dedicated to Dneprostroi and the Red Army (1932, no. 10; 1933, no. 3), and an issue written by Sergei Tret'iakov was in the final stages of publication ("Soviet Volga," 1933, no. 3). Aleksandr Lavrent'ev, the artist's grandson, has noted that "Rodchenko also dreamt of showing in his own way some grandiose construction site. Therefore he considered the trip to Belomorstroi as honorable, necessary and socially justified work."³²

Rodchenko at the White Sea Canal

During 1933, Rodchenko made a series of trips to the White Sea Canal construction site and corrective labor camp. While the exact number of trips cannot be verified from the information available, Rodchenko clearly spent a significant amount of time at this

³⁰ Fritz Mierau, "Tretjakow in Berlin," in *Berliner Begegnungen. Ausländische Künstler in Berlin 1918 bis 1933* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1987): 206-211. GARF, f. 5283, op. 6, d. 60, l. 188; f. 5283, op. 6, d. 77, l. 48.

³¹ For Tret'iakov's biography and a discussion of the reception of his work in Germany, see Heiner Boehncke's afterwords to Sergei Tret'iakov, *Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers "Aufsätze Reportagen Porträts"* (Hamburg: Rowolt, 1972): 188-213.

³² Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 170.

construction site.³³ A tentative chronology may be assembled with the recently published correspondence of Rodchenko and Stepanova, newly available archival materials, texts by Lavrent'ev that are based upon documents in the family archives, and established events in the history of the construction project.³⁴ Rodchenko's first visit began in February and lasted until early March. After a brief return to Moscow, Rodchenko was back at the construction site from mid-March until some time in June. He returned again in July to shoot the opening of the canal. During his residence at Belomorstroi, Rodchenko produced at least two thousand negatives, an enormous body of work.³⁵ Unlike short term guests of the OGPU, who were escorted through the camp and presented with a sanitized version of conditions there, Rodchenko spent an extended period of time at Belomorstroi and must have developed a better understanding of the day to day operations of both the construction site and the corrective labor camp.

Recently published correspondence between Rodchenko and Stepanova during his sojourn at the canal provide previously unavailable details about the photographer's trip,

³³ In 1936 Rodchenko stated that he made three trips, however the text in which this claim is made is full of factual inaccuracies and is not a reliable source. Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika": 19.

³⁴ According to Lavrent'ev, official documents from these trips are extant in the family archives. A certificate on *SSSR na stroike* stationery attests that he has been commissioned by the editors of the magazine for the organization and shooting of a special issue of the magazine dedicated to Belomorstroi. Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 170.

³⁵ Rodchenko himself states that he took 2,000 photographs in an article published in *Sovetskoe foto* in 1935. However, Lavrent'ev has provided figures ranging from 2,250 to 4,000. Given these enormous quantities of images, the exact number of photographs is irrelevant. Rodchenko, "Master i kritika," *Sovetskoe foto*, no. 9, 1935: 4. Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 170. Lavrent'ev, *Rodchenko Photographs*: 337, 340.

the surrounding context for it, his motivation, and the rewards he received for his work.³⁶ From Rodchenko's first letter to Stepanova, dated 23 February 1933, we learn that permits were required to send mail and that the start of his work had been delayed, probably due to the need to obtain the appropriate authorization. This letter also reveals Rodchenko's secrecy; at the conclusion of the letter he instructs Stepanova: "Don't tell anyone superfluous that I am at Belomorstroi."³⁷ The letters also indicate that Rodchenko's photographs were subject to censorship. At the construction site, Rodchenko was required to make control prints from his negatives. These regulations may explain Rodchenko's brief return to Moscow in March 1933; perhaps he needed to collect photographic equipment and materials to develop and print his photographs at the construction site. On 24 April 1933, Rodchenko informed Stepanova that he had begun to work in a newly established darkroom.³⁸ The control prints were submitted to an OGPU censor, who removed objectionable images. In May 1933 Stepanova finally received the first set of approved photographs and then sought their placement in publications. Strict censorship initially thwarted her attempts to circulate Rodchenko's work in the press:

I just now received your photos, 40 pieces, not a single photograph of the dam or canal was delivered... It is forbidden to print anything concerning the construction and the dam, where it is possible to understand the

³⁶ Varvara Stepanova, *Chelovek ne mozhet zhit' bez chuda* (Moscow: Sfera, 1994): 271-279. Rodchenko, *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 272-277. This correspondence is not complete. In addition to ellipses in the texts, there are references to letters that are not included in either of these anthologies. Lavrent'ev cites Stepanova's diary from 1933 as a source of information about his work at Belomorstroi, however this diary has not been published. Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 169.

³⁷ Rodchenko to Stepanova, 23 February 1933, *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 272.

³⁸ Rodchenko to Stepanova, 24 April 1933, *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 273.

construction or to see the proportions, sizes, and so on. So, no covers, no layouts can be made out of anything. Permission has been refused to print the construction itself, the group photos, and the houses. So they won't go to either *Ogonek* or *Prozhektor*.

There remained only the winter landscape of Karelia, I will go to Petreikova [an editor at Izogiz], but I am afraid that in the summer, the wintry motifs will not excite the mood of the customer³⁹

This letter reveals that Stepanova was actively seeking to place the photographs in a variety of Soviet illustrated publications. As none of the images of the construction itself had been approved, she ruled out the possibility of placing photographs in *Prozhektor* and *Ogonek*. Izogiz, however, remained a possible "customer." This letter also provides an insight into Stepanova's careful courting of and negotiation with *SSSR na stroike*. She gives advice to Rodchenko about how to photograph and tells him of her strategy in approaching Petr Krasnov, the managing editor of *SSSR na stroike*:

It is necessary to shoot the canal for the press only in a finished state and neutrally, already filled with water, so that nothing can be comprehended about its engineering. Of course, I will not tell Krasnov that all were suppressed, but I will say that you have no money to return, that you have no money to live on, and that you still have not sent any photographs ... If you could print here, then this would all be cleared up more quickly. I don't know, do all of the controls need to be printed 6 by 9 [cm]? It is essential to know which photos may be printed, so that Krasnov can more quickly ascertain whether they will give him a special issue of the magazine.

No engineers, not even leading workers, were allowed. For the moment in general nothing is allowed, they even regard landscape with suspicion.⁴⁰

³⁹ Stepanova to Rodchenko, 25 May 1933, *Chelovek*: 276.

⁴⁰ Stepanova to Rodchenko, 25 May 1933, *Chelovek*: 276. In her recent discussion of Rodchenko's White Sea Canal photographs, Leah Dickerman has interpreted Stepanova's instructions as a warning not to photograph close-ups or details. However, Dickerman fails to note that photographs of the unfinished locks and abundant technical detail were eventually published in *SSSR na stroike* and elsewhere. I propose that the issue here was

The editorial board of *SSSR na stroike* had been considering the publication of an issue devoted to the White Sea Canal since at least March 1933.⁴¹ But it is not clear when Rodchenko was engaged to work on this issue or when the issue received final approval. Furthermore, it was not uncommon that proposed issues were not realized. From Stepanova's letters, it seems that the decision about the White Sea Canal issue was still pending in June and that the quality of the photographic material was an important factor in the final decision of the editors.

Rodchenko's trip was a gamble. When he first went to the canal, Rodchenko had no guarantee of a special issue of *SSSR na stroike* devoted to Belomorstroï. Stepanova's next letter, written the following day on 26 May 1933, indicates that the gamble had begun to pay off. Having just visited the editorial offices of *SSSR na stroike*, she reports on the outcome of her meeting:

Krasnov without a murmur ordered to send you 500 rubles... They were shocked that you did not make an agreement with anyone for pictures of the canal, that you have sat there for three months, that you do not do business in photographs, that you do not serve in the GPU and that they pay you nothing.⁴²

Rodchenko had sought to find a niche within the magazine by devoting long hours of hard work in severe conditions to document a prominent construction project. Now, it seemed

less a matter of the suppression of a particular type of photographic vision than pragmatic accommodation to the demands of photojournalism. Dickerman: 91.

⁴¹ On 2 April 1933 Artemii Khalatov wrote Gor'kii about a recent meeting of the editorial board meeting, noting that "In the plan of publication of the magazine for the second half of the year the issues "Soviet Arctic," "Kamchatka," "The White Sea Canal", and "Central Asia" will have special significance." Khalatov to Gor'kii, 2 April 1933, *M. Gor'kii i sovetskaia pechat'*: 282.

⁴² Stepanova to Rodchenko, 26 May 1933, *Chelovek*: 277.

Rodchenko's perseverance had earned him much respect, possibly even the offer of a commission for another major project. Several days after this letter, Izogiz telegraphed Rodchenko, inviting him to work on an album dedicated to the Red Army. This six-month contract offered to make him the brigadier of a group of thirteen photographers for a grandiose album, a profitable and prestigious commission. A brigade of artists comprised of Lissitzky, Gustav Klucis, and Nikolai Troshin would design the album.⁴³ While I have not yet found any further proof of Rodchenko's collaboration on it, this album was published in 1934 and designed by El Lissitzky.⁴⁴ Regardless of whether Rodchenko was involved with this album, the invitation to make him the head photographer for an album devoted to the Red Army indicates that by mid 1933, he was not being shunned as a formalist pariah.

Stepanova's letters also detail developments in the artistic life of the capital during Rodchenko's absence. In 1933, Moscow artistic circles were rife with squabbles between "realists" and "formalists," and factionalism amongst former Constructivists. No doubt, these conflicts were fueled by the organization of the exhibition "15 Years of Soviet Art," which opened in Moscow on 27 June 1933, while Rodchenko was at Belomorstroi. Although distressed by these feuds, Stepanova viewed both Rodchenko and herself as distanced from them, in part due to her husband's work at the canal:

Both you and I are removed from this, the so-called artistic life of the Moscow Branch of the Soviet Artists' Union. We do not receive from there any sort of support, we do not take part in this strange fight, and all the "benefits" pass us by, but you really don't work more poorly for that,

⁴³ Stepanova to Rodchenko, 6 June 1933, *Chelovek*: 278.

⁴⁴ *Raboche Krest'ianskaia Krasnaia Armiia* (Moscow: Izogiz, 1934).

do you? You really don't feel yourself torn off from the life that is being built? Just the opposite, you stand firm, you know exactly what must be done. You are indispensable, you are needed. Your trip to the canal -- how it has elevated you -- is an unusual confirmation of this. This trip has put you and me on our feet...I believe in you, and I have never doubted you, and I know, that you will do much in your trip to the canal ...⁴⁵

Separating themselves from the constraints and conflicts of the Moscow Artists Union, Rodchenko and Stepanova pursued their own activities, cultivating work opportunities and patronage where they saw fit. This strategy, while insulating them from the squabble, also removed them from the material benefits and financial security that the Union could offer. While distant from the artistic quarrels, Stepanova and Rodchenko were experiencing financial difficulties. Rodchenko went to the White Sea Canal with little financial resources. Stepanova's letters are full of anxiety over money, her efforts to arrange payments for Rodchenko, and the meager budget which the family subsisted on during his absence. Despite these difficulties, Stepanova clearly saw Rodchenko's work at the canal as "elevating." Material sacrifices were endured in the hopes of a long-term improvement of their situation.

The Publication of Rodchenko's Photographs

By August, the obstacles posed by the censors were somehow overcome, and Rodchenko's photographs, including those of subjects not deemed acceptable earlier that year, began to appear in numerous Soviet publications. In one letter, Stepanova mentions that she will take some photographs to Mikhail Kol'tsov, an editor of *SSSR na stroike* and director of the Magazine and Newspaper Trust: "He, of course, will be able to receive

⁴⁵ Stepanova to Rodchenko, 29 April 1933, *Chelovek*: 275.

authorization for them."⁴⁶ Appearing in most major Soviet newspapers and illustrated magazines, Rodchenko's photographs of Belomorstroi were widely published in the Soviet Union. In residence at the canal and accustomed to the working conditions there, Rodchenko had an advantage over other photojournalists who arrived to cover the opening of the canal. Rodchenko outlined his plans for shooting this major event in a letter to Stepanova:

They say that a steamship is coming on the 25th, not along the entire canal but only to the second sector. But this will probably be the opening. Otherwise nothing else is interesting. Soon I will be able to take to my heels Now here's what is happening. On the 25th the steamship Marx will arrive with 500 workers. On board will be photographers, they will probably arrive at Povenets at the start of the canal, travel along the Povenets canal to lake Vola and return to Medvezhka. And perhaps, from here they will travel by automobile to other sectors.

I am thinking of doing a trick: I shoot the arrival and departure of the steamship, immediately develop and print the photographs, and send them to you earlier [than the other photographers]. You will immediately sell them to the newspapers. Together with Zhen'ka [Evgeniia Lemberg], you will disperse them in an instant. This will be great, won't it?⁴⁷

In this instance, Rodchenko may well have "gotten the scoop" ahead of the other photojournalists travelling the site to cover the canal's official opening, which eventually took place on 2 August 1933. Rodchenko's photograph of the first caravan of ships

⁴⁶ Stepanova to Rodchenko, 26 May 1933, *Chelovek*: 277.

⁴⁷ Rodchenko to Stepanova, 18 August 1933 [?], *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 277. This letter is published with the date 18 August 1933, but the events that Rodchenko describes occurred in July. Furthermore, Rodchenko is alleged to have photographed Gor'kii at the rally of the shock-workers of Belomorstroi at the Moscow-Volga Canal, which took place in Dmitrov on 25 August 1933. The letter was probably written one month earlier, on 18 July 1933. Four photographs of Gor'kii during his appearance at the rally in Dmitrov are credited to Rodchenko in the Gor'kii Museum's photograph collection inventory. L.P. Bykovtseva and L.N. Iokar, eds., *A.M. Gor'kii i ego sovremenniki. Fotodokumenty. Opisaniie* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1997): 341.

passing through a lock was published in *Pravda* on 5 August as part of the celebration of the official opening of the canal.⁴⁸ Rodchenko's photographs soon appeared in numerous publications, often with his authorship prominently indicated, such as on the cover of the August issue of *Prozhektor* (fig. 92).⁴⁹ His photographs were also featured in the 20 September 1933 issue of *Ogonek*; a photograph of the first ship entering the canal appears on the first page, above a poem by the Futurist poet Nikolai Aseev, "Our Path. The Song of the BBVP [Belomor Baltic Waterway]" (fig. 93). A two-page spread of Rodchenko's photographs was published in the October issue of *Nashi dostizheniia* (fig. 94).⁵⁰ These are just a few prominent examples of the widespread diffusion of Rodchenko's photographs in the Soviet popular press.

Rodchenko's photographs would also illustrate a written history of Belomorstroï that was produced by the OGPU under the auspices of Gor'kii's publishing project "The History of the Factories and Plants." In August 1933, a delegation of Soviet writers visited the labor camp for a few days as guests of the OGPU. Following this visit, thirty-five writers collaborated on the deluxe illustrated volume *The Stalin White Sea-Baltic Canal: History of the Construction (Belomorsko-baltiskii Kanal imeni Stalina: istoriia stroitel'stva)* (fig. 95). Following the frenetic tempo of construction, the book was

⁴⁸ *Pravda*, 5 August 1933. This photograph was also published in *SSSR na stroike*.

⁴⁹ Rodchenko is also credited for the photographs that accompany an article on the canal in this issue of the magazine. "Belomorskii kanal," *Prozhektor*, 1933, no. 12 (August): cover, 9-12. The *Prozhektor* spread includes the following photographs: The First caravan of boats in the chamber of a lock; Comrades Stalin, Voroshilov, and Kirov at the White Sea-Baltic Canal; chamber of a lock (also in *SSSR na stroike*), River of Karelia.

completed in a few months, published in four weeks, and translated into English almost simultaneously. In compiling the book, the writers utilized observations from their brief visit, documents provided to them by the camp administration, and government decrees on the project. Rodchenko was one of the collective of artists who worked on the deluxe edition of the book, and he later claimed authorship for three-quarters of the anonymously published photographs.⁵¹

The White Sea Canal issue of *SSSR na stroike* was published one month before *The History of the Construction*, and its appearance was used as advanced publicity for the book. On 23 November 1933 *Literaturnaia gazeta* published extensive coverage on the work of the brigade of writers on *The History of the Construction*, due to be published in time for the Seventeenth Party Congress in January 1934. Six photomontages by Rodchenko were scattered throughout this issue of the newspaper, along with a notice about the upcoming publication of a special issue of *SSSR na stroike*:

The editors of *SSSR na stroike* will soon publish an issue specially dedicated to Belomorstroi. The issue takes the form of a photographic film about the grandiose construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal with the methods of socialist construction, which have re-educated tens of thousands of "former people." The photo-film is made from the montage of photographs taken by A. Rodchenko, who spent several months at Belomorstroi. L. Slavin did the detailed explanatory captions to these photomontages. Separated from the photographs, the explanatory captions

⁵⁰ His photographs also illustrated an the article "Pisateli rasskazyvaiut o Belomorstroia," *Ogonek*, 20 September 1933: 4-5.

⁵¹ Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," *Sovetskoe foto*, 1936, no. 5-6: 19. This book came out in several editions. The first edition, published in time for the 17th Party Congress, is larger, higher quality album with mezzotint plates. The second edition, published subsequently in two separate printings, is smaller in format and features fewer photographs. The second edition was reissued in Russia in 1998. For a discussion of the various editions and printings, see Ruder: 86-87.

serve as a kind of scheme for the essay and give a conception of the development of the construction from the moment of its origins to its last days.⁵²

Taking the form of a “photographic film,” Rodchenko’s Belomorstroi photo-essay was distinct from any of his earlier series of published photographs. This issue of *SSSR na stroike* takes the form of an extended photo-observation, the model for the documentation of socialist construction put forth by Sergei Tret’iakov in 1931, during the critical discussions of “24 Hours in the Life of a Moscow Worker Family.” Most of Rodchenko’s earlier published photographic series, such as the AMO automobile factory series that appeared in *Daesh’* in 1929, presented images of a single enterprise at a specific moment in time. In contrast, this series showed the dramatic transformations taking place at a major construction site over an extended period of time. While the atomization and fragmentation of the subject might be appropriate for a series that illuminated individual aspects of the production process at a plant, such fragmentation would be contrary to the broader presentation of transformation over time. Comparison of the AMO and Belomorstroi series reveal another significant ontological differences: the relative importance of image versus text. The AMO photographs accompany and illustrate a text about the factory. Their presentation is inextricably tied to the presence of that text; the meaning of the photographs is contingent upon the accompanying text. In contrast, the

⁵² *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 23 November 1933. Lev Slavin was a member of the writer’s brigade that traveled to the canal in August 1933; he also contributed to *The History of the Construction*.

SSSR na stroike essay is predominantly visual. The story is told by means of images, supplemented by brief captions.⁵³

The narrative of the Belomorstroi issue begins with the conception of the project by Stalin, progresses through various stages and aspects of construction, and ends with the opening of the canal and the leader's visit to it (fig. 91 a-q). In the course of the magazine the achievements of the Socialist society -- the establishment of a new transportation route, the innovative use of materials, and the reform of prisoners into productive members of society through a progressive penal system -- are celebrated and heroicized. Distinct aspects of the construction project, such as its inclusion of women and the educational work being conducted to facilitate the reform of prisoners, are also inventoried through the story of the canal. Rodchenko's photographs and compositions vividly propel the narrative onward. A strong forward progression is visually created by a variety of devices that lead the reader from the left to the right. The varied diagonals and other tactics employed keep this forward progression from growing monotonous.

Comparison of the "photographic film" in *SSSR na stroike* to the photographs published in the text of *The History of the Construction* reveals just how dynamic the magazine series is. While the brigade of writers made extensive use of montage technique in compiling the text, the accompanying photographs are devoid of it. Rectangular, single frame photographs appear within the text and as mezzotint frontispieces to each chapter (figs. 96, 97). Two fold outs are reminiscent of the fold out spread of *SSSR na stroike*, but

⁵³ Lissitzky and Fridliand similarly sought to produce a visual narrative independent of accompanying captions in the Red Army issue. *SSSR na stroike*, 1933, no. 3.

even here the placement of the photographs on the blank page mitigates the sense of abrupt transition that is present in the magazine (figs. 91-p, 98). Some photographs, such as a shot of the Povenets Agit Brigade, appear full frame in both publications (figs. 91-n, 99). Once again, the montage juxtaposition of images adds a sense of dynamism to the magazine's photo-essay that the isolated photographs in the book lack. Several photographs that Rodchenko incorporated into the magazine photomontages are printed full-frame in the book. Photographs of a wooden derrick and rock blasting that were published in the book also served as raw material for a photomontage (figs. 100, 101, 91-f). Captioned "The attack on the land took place with spades and explosives, iron and fire!", this spread presents a densely montaged landscape of construction as a military battle. The integration and juxtaposition of fragments from numerous photographs creates an image with multiple, shifting perspectives that evokes the constant state of transformation at the construction site.

As proposed earlier, Rodchenko's work at the White Sea Canal fulfilled the program of the Oktiabr' Photo Section and aspects of the *SSSR na stroike* issue closely follow Rodchenko's Constructivist photographic practice as defined in the course of the 1920s. A wealth of facts -- newspapers, maps, documents, statistics, snapshots, and biographical information about the workers -- are presented to make concrete the achievement of Belomorstroi. Factography, a practice not concerned with truth, is well suited to the aims of propaganda. Some facts are incorrect, while other assertions are blatantly suspect, such as the claim that "For the first time they [the laborers] became conscious of the poetry of labor, the romance of construction work. They worked to the music of their own orchestras." Here factography merges on revolutionary romanticism.

The transformative gaze of the camera is abundantly present. The narrative is interwoven with themes of transformation occurring at a variety of levels: the change in the landscape of Karelia in the course of the project, the passing of seasons from winter to summer, the conversion of the natural materials of the forest into useful technical products, the replacement of primitive means of transportation by refined, technological ones, and the rebirth of destructive, anti-social individuals as honest workers, productive members of society. Individual spreads present transformation by means of the juxtaposition of images. The crude ambling paths and wooden trails of Karelia that seem suited only for pedestrian and animal traffic are supplanted by a paved road, replete with automobile, that leads directly into the horizon (fig. 91-e). One spread includes a photograph of a pine tree that strongly resembles Rodchenko's series of pine trees that were published in *Novyi LEF* in 1927.⁵⁴ One of these photographs was included in the illustrated letter to the editor of *Sovetskoe foto* in 1928 (fig. 102). Responding to the anonymous letter in 1928, Rodchenko wrote:

A. Renger-Patzsch's *Chimney* and my *Tree*, both taken from below, are very similar, but don't the "Photographer" and the publishers see that I made them similar on purpose?

For hundreds of years painters kept on doing the same old tree "from the belly button." Then photographers followed them. When I present a tree taken from below, like an industrial object--such as a chimney--this creates a revolution in the eyes of the philistine and the old-style connoisseur of landscapes.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Rodchenko, "Pushkino," five photographs, *Novyi LEF*, 1927, no. 7: following 16.

⁵⁵ Rodchenko, "Ignorance or a Mean Trick?" *Novyi LEF*, 1928, no. 4 (April), in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era*, John Bowlt, tr.: 247.

The inclusion of this particular subject in *SSSR na stroike* reasserts Rodchenko's claims about the transformation of vision that could be achieved through photography. The next spread, captioned "Mighty dams sprang up where there had formerly been forest," depicts a nearly finished dam rising above the boulder-strewn, barely traversable Karelian forest (fig. 91-g). At the bottom left, a tall pine rises out of the forest and continues up into the realm of the dam above, integrating the two images. This image presents the transformation of the inhospitable terrain into a refined technological landscape. The pine that spans both realms reinforces the fact that the canal was built from the natural resources of the area; the unruly forests literally became a work of engineering.

There is an additional hidden transformation behind the story of Belomorstroi. No foreign exchange funds were provided to its builders to purchase excavation or building machinery, such as the American steam shovels and cranes employed at Magnitostroi and Dneprostroi. Men had to be used instead of machines. Through the same shifting displacement by which trees become smokestacks, the forced laborers of the White Sea Canal became machines, the industrial capital behind this engineering project. This is the hidden transformation behind Belomorstroi, a transformation made concrete through the lens of the camera. Looking carefully through *SSSR na stroike*, the attentive reader will note that there is practically no advanced excavation or construction equipment visible. Pneumatic drills are featured prominently in several of the images, but in the panoramic images of the construction site, only hammers, shovels, handmade wheel barrels, and wooden derricks are visible (fig. 91-f). Rodchenko's boulder strewn vistas of raw Karelian landscape suggest that the digging of the canal was no easy task. The severity of the climate and difficulty of the task suggest that the cost in human lives was great. While the

private slave owner has a capital investment that encourages concern for the continued physical well being of the slave, forced labor in a state controlled economy does not require a major capital investment. There was no motive for providing the exploited laborer with minimum care or laborsaving equipment, as an almost endless supply of labor was at the disposal of the state. Many thousands of prisoners died at this camp and were buried at the construction site. Rodchenko, no doubt, witnessed more than this photo-essay reveals.⁵⁶

Despite the hidden atrocities and the factual distortions of the White Sea Canal issue, the subject was not entirely romanticized. Practically none of the prisoners seem to be particularly happy about their situation, even the agit-prop troop seems quite morose and frightened (fig. 91-n). The bitter cold and harsh nature of the environment is made abundantly evident, as is the contrast between the rich winter garb of the Red Army soldiers to the meager garments of the prisoners (fig. 91-h). The guards are present in many photographs, and guns are also visible (fig. 91-l). This is, after all, a penal colony. As an active participant in the struggle for a new proletarian society, Rodchenko presents an idealized vision of Belomorstroi as a progressive penal institution. This is a utopian

⁵⁶ There are widely varying estimates of the number of prisoners and local residents who died during the construction of the canal. For moral reasons I will not engage in the “numbers game.” Instead, I prefer to quote Solzhenitsyn’s discussion of the *History of the Construction*: “The collective authors do not simply keep silent about the deaths on the Belomor Canal during construction. They do not follow the cowardly recipe of *half-truths*. Instead they write directly (page 190) that *no one* died during construction. (They probably calculated it this way: One hundred thousand started the canal and one hundred thousand finished. And that meant they were all alive. They simply forgot about the prisoner transports devoured by the construction in two fierce winters....)” Solzhenitsyn: 85.

projection of the transformations that would take place through the enactment of the state's policies. The utopian aspirations of this propaganda may be traced back to avant-garde beliefs from the post-revolutionary period, when the Constructivists saw their visionary role as shaping the form of the future classless society's culture and environment. Careful examination of Brik's and Rodchenko's earlier texts on photography and the Program of the Oktiabr' Photo Section reveal that Rodchenko did not compromise his Constructivist ideals. Inherent in his approach to photography is a belief in its ability to transfigure reality. By the late 1920s the concern for truth to materials of the early Constructivist period had been replaced by the disregard for truth inherent in factography. Factography casts aside truth; emphasis is given to the factual, regardless of its historical validity. This distortion of facts was made in the utopian belief that it would aid in the realization of a future classless society, free of the ills plaguing both the Capitalist world and post-revolutionary Russia. The utopian transfiguration of the White Sea Canal Project from a nightmarish forced labor camp to a progressive penal colony through the medium of photography was well within Rodchenko's Constructivist aspirations. Far from abandoning the vanguard project, Rodchenko utilized the design of this issue of *SSSR na stroike* as an opportunity to continue the visionary work that he had begun in the 1920s.

Aftermath of the White Sea Canal Photographs

In 1935 Rodchenko was included in the exhibition "Masters of Soviet Photographic Art," the first major photography exhibition in Moscow since 1928 (fig. 103). Rodchenko's inclusion in the exhibition indicates the prominent position that he had obtained in Soviet

photography by that time. Furthermore, the inclusion of compositionally challenging works by other vanguard photographers, such as Eliazar Langman and Boris Ignatovich, reveals that the cultural climate had changed since the bitter debates between ROPF and 'Oktiabr' in 1931-1932. Of the 24 works Rodchenko that exhibited, six were from the Belomorstroï series: three photos of the canal, a winter landscape of Karelia, and two group shots of uniformed military figures (fig. 104).⁵⁷ Comparison of this display with the published catalogue checklist reveals that the photograph on the lower right was substituted for a portrait of his mother. The photograph above it shows Genrikh Iagoda, who had become chief of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (*Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del*; NKVD, formerly OGPU) in 1934, and Lazar Kaganovich, a member of Stalin's inner circle who played a prominent role in the forced collectivization of agriculture (fig. 105). This photograph was the only image by Rodchenko that was reproduced in the exhibition catalogue.⁵⁸ I have not yet located a more legible image of the substituted photograph, but I believe that it depicts either Stalin's visit to the White Sea Canal or Iagoda and Kaganovich's visit to the Moscow-Volga Canal. According to Lavren'tev, "The photographs on the wall were placed by

⁵⁷ The photograph of the lock had appeared on the cover of *SSSR na stroike*, while the Karelian landscape and the image of musicians performing at the site had been published in *The History of the Construction*

⁵⁸ G.M. Boltianskii, M.A. Grinberg, L.P. Mezhericher, *Vysatvka rabot masterov sovetskogo foto iskusstva* (Moscow: Glavnoe upravlenie kinofotopromyshlennosti TsK soiuza fotokinoiurabotnikov, 1935): 99. This photograph also appeared in *Sovetskoe foto*, no. 7, 1935.

Rodchenko himself"--raising the prospect that Rodchenko himself was responsible for the substitution.⁵⁹

Rodchenko's photograph of a Pioneer (1930) was also exhibited. In 1931 this photograph had been attacked for distorting socialist reality, and it is the image associated with his expulsion from the Oktiabr' Photo Section. As a member of the exhibition selection committee for "Masters of Soviet Photographic Art," Rodchenko exerted some control on the selection and display of his photographs. By exhibiting controversial works alongside images of Belomorstroi and portraits of secret police and Party functionaries, Rodchenko sought to assert the overall validity and political loyalty of his work--another continuity with the Constructivist enterprise. This hypothesis finds further proof in Rodchenko's contribution to critical debates that took place in conjunction with the exhibition. Rodchenko objected to criticism that treated his work as equal to that of art photographer Iuri Eremin, who exhibited works such as "Street in Old Bukhara" (fig. 106).

In thematic relations, the rightist Eremin and the leftist Rodchenko are not one and the same! The lyric striving of Eremin for the old and by gone and my delight for all that is Soviet, new, cheerful and joyful, are not one and the same! To lump all of this together is photographic illiteracy and political vulgarity.

I photographed the Stalin White Sea-Baltic Canal. 2,000 photographs of the canal served practically the entire Soviet press. I have a list of the editorial offices to which I gave photos.... For [the critic] Zbinevich, it was advantageous not to speak about this, building his criticism on the invalid comparison that the right and the left in politics are the same as right and left in photography... Well, how is one to want and to burn for work if the leader of our photo organ [*Sovetskoe foto*] considers the shooting of the Belomor Canal, printed in all Party and Soviet

⁵⁹ Lavrent'ev, *Rodchenko Photography* : 37.

publications, and the shooting of the departing East as one and the same thematically and politically?⁶⁰

Rodchenko cites his work at the White Sea Canal and its widespread publication as proof that his work had followed and was following the correct political line of the Party and of the Soviet Union. Rodchenko rejects the equation of “left” photography with “left” (i.e., Trotskyite) politics, pointing out the vulgarity of critics who would make such simplistic equations between photography and politics. Rodchenko also defended the potential of formal techniques, such as the use of unusual perspectives, to add to the thematic content of photography:

Comrade Mezhericher says that my photograph “Work with the Orchestra at the Canal” [fig. 107] does not show joy, but humiliation due to the angle of shooting. I want to explain this: it was deliberately shot like that in order to show that the orchestra is in production, that they are workers, and that this is not a celebration, but the usual working condition.⁶¹

Notably, this analogy recalls the post-revolutionary equation of art and work that led to the formulation of Russian Constructivism. Of course, in the context of forced labor this analogy may be interpreted ironically. Regardless, Rodchenko’s arguments were persuasive. In a subsequent series of public debates the following year, Eremin was

⁶⁰ Rodchenko, “Master i kritika”: 4.

⁶¹ Rodchenko, “Master i kritika”: 4. Rodchenko produced a variety of photographs with this theme. One appears in *SSSR na stroike*, with the caption “For the first time they became conscious of the poetry of labor, the romance of construction work. They worked to the music of their own orchestras” (fig. 91-i). Four photographs with this theme, including one similar to that criticized by Mezhericher, appeared in *The History of the Construction* (fig. 97).

attacked as a reactionary photographer caught in the pre-Revolutionary past, while Rodchenko was presented as an example of reconstruction in the service of the state.⁶²

One year later, in 1936, Rodchenko's statement "Reconstruction of the Artist" (*Perestroika khudozhnika*) was published in *Sovetskoe foto*. This text is an excerpt from Rodchenko's contribution to a series of public debates on the question of formalism and naturalism in photographic art that took place in spring 1936 at the Moscow House of Cinema. In this text Rodchenko outlines his creative development, tracing his route from abstract painting to photography. Rodchenko does not reject his exploration of extreme angles. Rather, he argues that it was necessary and had enormous impact on Soviet photography. In this statement Rodchenko relates the story of his trip to the White Sea Canal and what he experienced there:

1929-1930. I went to the Belomor Canal in a very bad state of mind.. In *Sovetskoe foto* it had become the fashion to persecute me in each issue. I photographed sports. Without, it seems, any kind of trickery. Photographs--as is now evident--that were good, were ours [Soviet]. But...the label had stuck, and it became unbearable for me to work creatively in Moscow. [...]
It would have been possible to quit photography and work in other areas, but it was impossible to simply surrender. And I went. It was a salvation, it was a road to life [*putevka v zhizn*]. From this a goal became clear, not terrible cursing, all persecution faded away. ...A gigantic will gathered the dregs of the past here at the canal. And this will was able to rouse among the people such enthusiasm, as I had not seen in Moscow. People burned to sacrifice themselves, heroically overcoming all difficulties. People, whose lives it seemed were finished, showed that life begins again, full of uncommon interest and struggle. They took gigantic rocks and boulders by storm. It was the war of a person against wild nature. A person came and conquered, conquered and reconstructed. He arrived downcast, punished and embittered, but he left with a proudly raised head, with a medal on the breast, with a road to life. And it opened to him the entire beauty of the

⁶² P. Bliakhin, "Sovetskoe fotoiskusstva--peredovoe v mire," *Sovetskoe foto*, 1936, no. 5-6: 16-17.

present heroic creative work.

I was taken back, amazed. This enthusiasm seized me. It was all so close to me; it all became clear. I forgot about all my creative grievances. I took pictures simply, not thinking of Formalism. The sensitivity and wisdom with which the re-education of people was accomplished shook me. There they were able to find an individual approach with each person. At that time we still did not have this sensitive attitude towards the creative worker. For us, you know, it was: renounce Formalism and go to work. There, at the canal, it was not done like that. The bandits didn't sit down to work at the accountant's table, thieves didn't work on issuing papers, prostitutes didn't tidy up. The bandit was made a member of a demolition squad, a driver, a stormer, a member of an emergency brigade. They made the thief or embezzler the head of a club, a cafeteria, an agent for purchasing. And they produced wonders.⁶³

Rodchenko clearly connects the reform of the prisoners with his own reformation as an artist. The story that Rodchenko tells of his transformation follows the model of *perekovka* [reforging], the dominant ideological program and legitimizing rationale formulated by the OGPU administrators of the Belomor Camp. Rodchenko modified the program of *perekovka*, adapting it to the situation of the avant-garde artist in the early 1930s. Rodchenko's reconstruction took the form of cleansing his work of purely formal tendencies, and clarifying the Bolshevik principles underlying it. Rodchenko argued for an individual approach to the re-education of cultural producers, and for the need to make positive use of the resources of a given creative personality, instead of blind insistence on an outright rejection of Formalism. *The History of the Canal* describes in detail how Belomorstroi's OGPU officers used a similar personal, psychological approach to facilitate the reform of individual prisoners.

⁶³ Rodchenko, "Perestroika khudozhnika," *Sovetskoe foto*, No. 5-6, 1936: 19. Rodchenko's phrase "road to life" is clearly a reference to the first Soviet sound film, *Road to Life*, which detailed the foundation of a GPU Labor Commune that transformed

Like the prisoners who were decorated with awards for their work at the canal, Rodchenko also began to receive recognition and honors for his work. In conjunction with the 1935 exhibition, Rodchenko was awarded a Diploma of the First Degree, was made a member of the Organization Bureau of the Photo Workers Section of the Union of Cinema and Photo Workers, and was added to the editorial board of *Sovetskoe foto*.⁶⁴ In 1937 Rodchenko served on the exhibition committee for the First All-Union Exhibition of Photographic Art (*Pervaia Vsesoiuznaia Vystavka fotoiskusstva*) and received a Diploma of the First Class for his photographs of “multi-ethnic physical culture parades.”⁶⁵ Arguably, Rodchenko’s recognition by the Soviet photographic establishment reached its zenith in the mid-thirties.

Rodchenko concluded “The Reconstruction of the Artist” with the following statement:

I want to decisively refute giving first place to the formal resolution of a theme and second place to the ideological resolution, and, along with this, I want to search unceasingly for new riches of photographic language, so that I may create things standing at a high political and artistic level, things in which photographic language serves Socialist Realism entirely. Each of us, masters, should remember the words of Maiakovskii: “All my ringing power of poetry, I give to you, the attacking class.”⁶⁶

In this conclusion, Rodchenko proposed a model for Socialist Realist photographic practice that included the Soviet avant-garde’s search for “new riches of photographic

orphaned petty criminal street urchins into productive Soviet citizens. Nikolai Ekk, *Putevka v zhizn'* (Mezhrabpomfilm, 1931).

⁶⁴ “Diplomy i otzyvy,” *Sovetskoe foto*, 1935, no. 7 (July): 3.

⁶⁵ “Delo nashei chesti,” *Sovetskoe foto*, 1937, No. 5-6 (May-June): 8. “Komu prisuzhdeny diplomy,” *Sovetskoe foto*, 1938, no. 5-6 (May-June): 12.

language.” According to this model, the avant-garde search for new visual language would be placed entirely in the service of the primary ideological needs and aims of Stalinist culture. Rodchenko’s quotation of Maiakovskii in this context is significant. The dead Futurist poet had been elevated to a leading position in the Soviet cultural pantheon at the end of 1935, when Stalin declared him to be “the best and most talented” Soviet poet. Maiakovskii’s elevation clearly inspired this formulation of Socialist Realist photography and bolstered Rodchenko’s confidence in a bright future for avant-garde photography.

Rodchenko’s OGPU Patrons

Two photographs from an OGPU control album preserved in the collection of the Karelian Regional Museum in Petrozavodsk show Rodchenko with a group of OGPU officers (figs. 108, 109).⁶⁷ According to the captions in the album, these photographs were taken on 6 March 1933 and document Semen Firin’s visit to a rally in celebration of International Women’s Day. Firin was the head of the White Sea Baltic Labor Reform Camp and assistant head of GULag. Firin stands in the center, flanked by other OGPU officers in distinctive uniforms with ankle length coats. Rodchenko stands to the left, holding a Leica, which he aims at the photographer for whom they are posing. Rodchenko is with Firin in order to shoot the celebration of International Women’s Day. A spread in *SSSR na stroike* shows a group of women prisoners gathered before their barracks in the snow. In the background, a banner announces the celebration of Women’s Day (fig. 91-j). The text of

⁶⁶ Rodchenko, “Perestroika khudozhnika”: 21.

the banner on the left page reads “Make Way for Woman” (*Dorogu zhenshine*), a slogan of the period that celebrated and urged the inclusion of women in activities that had been earlier closed to them. At Firin’s initiative, this practice was also promoted at Belomorstroi, where women were integrated into the workforce of the labor camp. *The History of the Construction* details the special efforts that Firin took in the integration of both women and minority prisoners into the construction work, the improvement of their living conditions, and their inclusion in the educational-reform programs of the camp. Due to the special interest that he took in the situation of women prisoners, one of the women’s brigades was named in Firin’s honor. In 1933 Firin marked the celebration of Women’s Day by issuing the order “About the deficiencies of cultural-educational work among women and the necessary measures for the improvement of this work.”⁶⁸

Rodchenko’s monogram appears at the lower left of the *SSSR na stroike* spread that is devoted to women prisoners. As the monogram is not included on all spreads, it is curious that his authorship is made evident here. Was this, perhaps, intended for Firin’s benefit? Was it to commemorate the measures that Firin had enacted in conjunction with International Women’s Day? Another photograph of this same group of women serves as the frontispiece to the chapter of *The History of the Construction* that narrates Firin’s story and describes his efforts on behalf of women and minority prisoners (fig. 96).

⁶⁷ Karelskii gosudarstvennyi kraevedicheskii muzei, fototek, album B-1784, photographs 4769, 4770.

⁶⁸ Maksim Gor’kii, Leopold Averbakh, and Semen G. Firin, eds., *Belomorsko-Baltiskii Knal imeni Stalina: istoriia stroitel’stva* (Moscow: Istoriiia Fabrik i Zavodov, 1934), large format edition: 388-390. The entire text of the order is reproduced.

While at Belomorstroi, Rodchenko cultivated the patronage of the OGPU officers who ran the construction project and the labor camp. While the content of Stepanova's letters implies that Rodchenko did not work directly for the OGPU, his very presence at the construction site required the consent and support of its leadership.⁶⁹ Hence, good relations with the individuals who administered the camps were a significant factor in Rodchenko's efforts to document the site. While in residence at the camp Rodchenko lived in close proximity with the leadership. In a letter to Stepanova dated 24 April 1933, Rodchenko wrote that "My landlord, the head of the administration, lies ill and still hasn't recovered after the inflammation of his lungs."⁷⁰ Rodchenko was evidently in close contact with the top echelons of the Belomorstroi leadership; his knowledge of the nature of his host's physical maladies evokes a disturbing level of intimacy with the camp bosses. Rodchenko evidently developed their patronage in support of his work as a photographer.

Rodchenko would not be unique in currying good favor with the OGPU leadership; there are other examples of such patronage at Belomorstroi. Natalia Kuziakina's recently published study *Theatre in the Solovki Prison Camp* encompasses theater at Belomorstroi. Iakov D. Rapoport, assistant director of the canal construction project, was the patron of the Central Theater of the White Sea Baltic Canal. Staffed by prisoners, this was a "court theater" for the entertainment of the bosses, engineers, and

⁶⁹ According to Lavrent'ev one of the documents in the family archive is on the stationery of the Main Administration of the Belomor-Baltic Correctional Labor Camp. This document allowed Rodchenko "to conduct cinematic shoots of all sorts of work and structures of the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal and of individual processes of the life and everyday existence of the prisoners." Lavrent'ev, *Rakursy*: 170.

⁷⁰ Rodchenko to Stepanova, 24 April 1933, *Opyty dlia budushchego*: 273.

their families. Located in Medvezh'ia Gora, the administrative center of the camp, it was already functioning by 1932. The actors were prisoners, but their life conditions were far less severe than those working on the canal construction. In addition to this "court theater," there were also agitational theater groups operating at Belomorstroi.⁷¹ The preeminent agit-prop troupe was directed by Igor Terent'ev (1892-1937), a Futurist poet and one-time associate of *Lef* who worked at the camp under the patronage of Firin. Unlike Rodchenko, Terent'ev did not go to the camps voluntarily; he was there as a political prisoner. Terent'ev had been arrested in 1931 due to his social background; his father was the son of a Ukrainian gendarme colonel, while his mother was from a family of Prussian Barons. At Belomorstroi, Terent'ev organized an agitational brigade in Povenets that was named in honor of Firin.⁷² Terent'ev's propaganda brigade was not unique, but it was more professional and polished than others operating at the construction site. A photograph in the Karelian Regional Museum shows Firin and Terent'ev with the Agit Brigade; Terent'ev is the bald man in the back row, just behind and to the left of Firin (fig. 110). Arriving at Belomorstroi, Terent'ev began to write articles for the camp newspaper, organize amateur concerts, and assemble an agit brigade. As a reward for his activities, he was given his own room and his family was allowed to come and live with him.⁷³

⁷¹ Natalia Kuziakina, *Theatre of the Solovki Prison Camp* (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995): 108-111.

⁷² Kuziakina: 112-116.

⁷³ M. Terent'eva, "Moi otets Igor' Terent'ev," *Teatr GULAGa: Vospominaniia, ocherki* M. M. Korollov, ed. (Moscow: Memorial, 1995): 56.

At Belomorstroi Rodchenko may have been provided with guidance by Terent'ev, his former colleague. Rodchenko clearly had contact with the Povenets agit brigade, as it is featured in *SSSR na stroike* (fig. 91-n). A banner to the left identifies the players as "The Povenets Agit-Brigade named for Comrade Firin" (*Povenchanskaia agit brigada im. tov. Firina*). The photograph on the right page reveals that Rodchenko did not merely document the brigade in performance; he worked with them to carefully orchestrate a technically exceptional canted angle shot of the troupe.⁷⁴ The agit brigade is also featured in a section of *The History of the Construction* that describes a performance in detail and even identifies Terent'ev ("a talented director and himself a poet") as its leader.⁷⁵ Terent'ev was released upon the completion of the canal construction. Like other freed prisoners whose prospects as former convicts in Soviet society were not promising, he voluntarily went to work on the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal, a project that was also directed by Firin. By going to the Moscow-Volga Canal, Terent'ev could remain under the protection of Firin and was also closer to Moscow than a former prisoner might normally be permitted.⁷⁶

In his own way, Rodchenko also followed Firin to the Moscow-Volga Canal. In Dmitrov, the headquarters for the new project, Rodchenko organized an exhibition of his

⁷⁴ Terent'ev's family has a photograph by Rodchenko that depicts the brigade's performance at the rally for the shock-workers of Belomorstroi in Dmitrov, August 1933. Hence, the photographs of the brigade may have been taken in Dmitrov and not at Belomorstroi. Terent'eva: 56-57.

⁷⁵ *Istoriia*: 309-310.

photographs of the White Sea Canal, and possibly another devoted to the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal.⁷⁷ He also shot a series of photographs during the visit of Kaganovich and Genrikh Iagoda (head of the OGPU) to the Moscow-Volga Canal. In “Reconstruction of the Artist” Rodchenko described his work in 1934-35 as follows:

1934 -1935: During this time I did very little: a series of photographs, which showed the arrival of comrades Kaganovich and Iagoda at the Moscow-Volga Canal. I consider the photograph “Meeting at the canal with the participation of comrades Kaganovich and Iagoda” especially significant to me. The photograph is simple, unmediated, in it is a new composition, that I had never used before. But I didn’t work any further until the end of 1935.⁷⁸

In 1935 this photograph was published in both *Sovetskoe foto* and the exhibition catalogue for “Masters of Soviet Photographic Art” in 1935 (fig. 105).⁷⁹ The caption in *Sovetskoe foto* identifies the other individuals in the photograph as Firin, Kogan, and Zhuk (other top officials who worked at both the White Sea and Moscow-Volga Canals). On display at the “Masters of Soviet Photography Art” exhibition in 1935, Rodchenko’s photographs of Iagoda, Kaganovich, and Belomorstroi were not simply examples of his recent photojournalism work, but also demonstrated that he had powerful patrons in the top

⁷⁶ The administrative center for the Moscow-Volga canal was located in Dmitrov, 75 miles from the center of Moscow. Former prisoners were routinely prohibited from living in the vicinity of major urban centers, especially Moscow and Leningrad.

⁷⁷ In “Perestroika khudozhnika”, Rodchenko mentions his organization of an exhibition at Dmitrov in the context of his photographs of Belomorstroi. Rodchenko, “Perestroika khudozhnika”: 19. Lavrent’ev lists two exhibitions of photographs in Dmitrov that took place in 1933 and 1934, both dedicated to the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal. Lavrent’ev, *Rodchenko Photography*: 343.

⁷⁸ Rodchenko, “Perestroika khudozhnika”: 19-20.

echelons of the NKVD (formerly the OGPU). In addition to the photographs of Kaganovich and Iagoda, it is likely that Rodchenko also photographed the numerous portraits of the Belomorstroi camp administrators that appeared in both *SSSR na stroike* (fig. 91-o) and *The History of the Construction*. Several of the photographs in the book are shot at slightly canted angles (fig. 111) and two show Firin and Zhuk on the telephone (figs. 112, 113)--compositions similar to Rodchenko's photographs of Stepanova on the telephone from 1928 (fig. 114). These candid telephone portraits show the OGPU officers as hardworking administrators who make use of modern communications technology in their efficient conduct of the activities of the camp. The severity of some of these portraits is reminiscent of Rodchenko's portraits of Maiakovskii (fig. 115). Reproduced in Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* and other publications on forced labor and the brutality of the Soviet regime, it is not surprising that his family has acknowledged none of these images as Rodchenko's work.⁸⁰

While Rodchenko's cultivation of the patronage of top OGPU officers may have facilitated his return to a prominent position in Soviet photography, the protection offered

⁷⁹ *Vystavka rabot masterov sovetskogo foto iskusstva* (Moscow: 1935): 99. *Sovetskoe foto*, 1935, no. 7 (July): 19.

⁸⁰ Solzhenitsyn: 79. Jakobson: 7. Solzhenitsyn's utter moral condemnation of anyone voluntarily involved with the camps would make the martyrdom of Rodchenko problematic. Solzhenitsyn makes the following comment on figure 110: "Just picture this battlefield, with the Chekists "in long ashy-gray greatcoats or leather jackets." There were only thirty-seven of them for a hundred thousand prisoners, but they were loved by all, and this love caused Karelian boulders to move. Here they have paused for a moment... Comrade Frenkel points with his hand, and Comrade Firin chews on his lips, and comrade Uspensky says nothing (and is this that patricide? that same Solovki butcher?). And thereby were decided the fates of thousands of people during the frosty night or the whole of that arctic month." Solzhenitsyn: 89, 91.

by his affiliation with these individuals was only fleeting. In early May 1937, shortly before the official opening ceremony of the Moscow-Volga Canal, Firin was arrested.⁸¹

Terent'ev, working at the Moscow-Volga Canal as a free employee, was arrested shortly afterwards on 28 May 1937 and shot a few weeks later, on 17 June.⁸² Given his role in promoting Firin's work on both the White Sea and Moscow-Volga Canals, Rodchenko may well have been at risk. Proof of his precarious situation is suggested by installation photographs of the 1935 exhibition preserved in the Russian State Archive of Literature and the Arts. Rodchenko's photographs of both the Moscow-Volga Canal and Sergei Tret'iakov, another victim of the Terror, have been blotted out with ink.⁸³ Despite the demise of Firin, Rodchenko survived 1937. Indeed, he and Stepanova would design the

⁸¹ Walter Krivitsky, an NKVD agent who broke with the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, commented upon Firin's fall in his memoirs, published originally in 1939:

On April 30, 1937, I saw an immense photograph of Firin, the Chief OGPU canal builder, prominently displayed in the Red Square. Well, I thought to myself, there's one big man who hasn't been arrested! Two days later I ran into a colleague who had just been recalled from abroad. One of the first things he said, recovering from the shock of finding me still at large, was: 'You know, Firin is finished.'

I told him that was impossible, since Firin's photograph was still on display in the most important square in Moscow.

'I tell you Firin is finished,' he said. 'I was at the opening of the Moscow-Volga Canal today and he wasn't there.'

Late that night I received a phone call from a friend working on *Izvestia*. He told me that his office had been modified all photographs and biographical references to Firin, the great canal-builder of the OGPU...

W.G. Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's Secret Agent* (Cambridge, England: Ian Faulkner Publishing, 1992) [reprint of 1939 book]: 178.

⁸² Kuziakina: 116.

⁸³ RGALI, f. 2057, op. 1, d. 141, l. 7. Except for the blotted out images, this installation photograph is identical to figure 103.

issue of *SSSR na stroike* that commemorated the completion and opening of the Moscow-Volga Canal (1938, no. 2).

Conclusion

The title of this chapter--“Modernism’s Willing Executioner? Aleksandr Rodchenko at the White Sea canal”--makes reference to Daniel Goldhagen’s controversial book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*.⁸⁴ The terms of the phrase “Modernism’s willing executioner” are purposively ambiguous. Did Rodchenko function as an executioner on behalf of Modernism, employing modernist practice in propaganda that supported the violent Stalinist regime? Did he willingly execute, that is, make works of art for the Stalinist regime? Did his work lead to the extinction of the Modernist project in the Soviet Union? This chapter has presented evidence for all three of these possibilities. My citation of Goldhagen is intended to counteract the prevalent notion that Modernism was forcibly repressed in the Soviet Union by an antagonistic regime. On the contrary, elements of Socialist Realist aesthetics were derived from representational strategies that developed out of the avant-garde’s engagement with and dedication to the Soviet project.

⁸⁴ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

CONCLUSION

The reorganization and changes taking place in the economy are enormous. With difficulty we are speculatively mastering it; understandably, it is only with great effort that it can be encompassed visually, but it is precisely this task that the magazine places before itself. No one can say that it is not necessary to solve this task. But if it is necessary, then it is essential to begin work and, in the process, to reveal its shortcomings.

The editorial board hopes that the magazine will promote an even greater creative heightening of the energy of the masses. The editorial board is certain that the magazine will promote the eradication of all sorts of opportunism, pessimism and lack of faith, and will also facilitate the still more important matter of the greater solidification of the working class, and of the technical forces and organizers around the worker state. The editorial board places before itself the task of contributing to our socialist construction.

Maksim Gor'kii, editorial statement, *SSSR na stroike*, 1930, No. 1

From the time of its initial publication, *SSSR na stroike* assumed a key role in the articulation of the emergent culture and tenets of Socialist Realism. In the editorial introduction to the first issue, Gor'kii described the difficult but crucial task that the magazine placed before itself: active participation in and visual representation of socialist construction. This study has provided evidence indicating that the magazine succeeded in fulfilling this task. The heroic stories of construction sites and Soviet workers presented in its pages served as important models for inspiration and emulation. Individual issues provided images, stories and ideas for broader circulation both within the Soviet Union and abroad. In the context of *SSSR na stroike*, Socialist Realism is best understood as an

institutional practice and ideological imperative, and not as a style, aesthetic, or set of creative prescriptions. As such, Socialist Realism and avant-garde practice were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Socialist Realism made use of diverse means in the pursuit of desired objectives to be realized in particular contexts. The active contribution of such artists as Aleksandr Rodchenko and El Lissitzky to *SSSR na stroike* indicates that, by the mid-1930s, Stalinist cultural institutions had co-opted and even promoted the application of experimental avant-garde visual techniques in the fulfillment of such propaganda aims as the facilitation and representation of socialist construction.

Past attempts to posit an opposition between the Soviet avant-garde and Socialist Realism, far from being useful, have thwarted a more thorough analysis of Soviet visual culture of the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, the use of the term “avant-garde” in the Soviet context needs reconsideration. The terminology and critical apparatus inherited from discourse on the Western European avant-gardes do not translate neatly into the Soviet cultural setting. The particular cultural formation that took shape in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution was very different from the one within which Western European avant-garde artists had functioned during this period.

By staying close to my primary sources, I quickly realized that many of the standard chronologies employed in studies of Soviet art of this period require reconsideration. April 1932 has often been cited as the date of the forced end of the Soviet avant-garde project and is frequently used as the cut-off date for studies of this culture.¹ While Soviet visual culture after 1932 has often been dismissed as compromised

¹ For instance, the following prominent exhibitions conformed largely to this chronology: *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* (New York:

kitsch or characterized as a frozen monolith, these are superficial judgements. For instance, my analysis of developments in the field of photography after April 1932 indicates that the Central Committee's dissolution of all independent cultural organizations put an end to the fierce, unproductive pitched battles between competing groups, such as Oktiabr' and ROPF. The April Resolution brought an end to vicious attacks upon individuals and resulted in a period of cultural relaxation, a "thaw." El Lissitzky's collaboration with Maks Al'pert on the *fotocherk* "Lenin and Wells" would have been almost unthinkable before April 1932, while the Central Committee resolution also made Rodchenko's expulsion from Oktiabr' largely irrelevant. Similarly, the leaders of the cultural revolution were chastened and disarmed. Hence, April 1932 was an important date in Soviet culture, but full comprehension of its significance requires a fundamental reassessment of the manifold developments that occurred in its wake.

The chronology of Socialist Realism's imposition in the realm of visual culture must similarly be reexamined. While Socialist Realism was declared the fundamental method of Soviet literature and literary criticism at the Soviet Writers Congress in 1934, it remains unclear what precisely this meant for the visual arts at that time. While efforts to conceptually translate the literary dictates into ones appropriate for the other arts began immediately and were extensive, the results of this theoretical endeavor were inconclusive. Rather, Socialist Realism took shape only through the development of a working practice and this required a period of adaptation and experimentation. The

Guggenheim Museum, 1992), *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), and *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910-1930: New Perspectives*, Stephanie Barron and Maucice Tuchman, eds., (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980).

guidelines for implementing Socialist Realism were formulated through practical developments in the fulfillment of ideological directives in diverse venues and media. This dissertation has demonstrated the singular importance of the magazine *SSSR na stroike* in the testing and application of a discrete set of concepts and guidelines appropriated in part from the avant-garde legacy and marshalled to fulfill the needs of propaganda aims.

For several decades the Soviet avant-garde has been heroicized and mythologized in the United States and Western Europe. The political engagement of Soviet artists and their articulation of a corresponding revolution in vision and design have had an irresistible appeal. However, the heroicization of this culture was only possible due to the failure to interrogate the broader implications of this revolution and its later Stalinist manifestation. In my research, I have consciously sought to go beyond the perpetuation of adulatory myths and commemorative martyrology. After meeting Emilia Bakke, the widow of the executed worker Viktor Kalymkov, I was forced to confront the very real impact that issues of *SSSR na stroike* had upon the lives of individuals. Through Emilia, I was forced to acknowledge the personal, social, and political ramifications of the photo-essays printed in *SSSR na stroike*. Emilia's story compelled me to examine Rodchenko's plight from a different perspective.

While many human lives were claimed and ruined during the Terror, avant-garde artists were not singled out for special persecution. The role played by vanguard "martyrs" in the production of political propaganda for the Stalinist regime has long been overlooked or explained away in terms of coercion. Clearly, further inquiry into this problem is in order and the Modernist mythology needs to be problematized. Why did

some individuals, such as Igor Terent'ev, Sergei Tret'iakov, and Gustav Klucis, perish during the Terror, while Lissitzky and Rodchenko would survive to die of natural causes? The material and economic conditions of production also require further consideration. Given the numerous references to material, economic, medical, and domestic needs in the correspondence of Lissitzky, Lissitzky-Küppers, Rodchenko, and Stepanova, the material conditions of Soviet cultural producers during this period should be more thoroughly investigated.

Finally, I remain undecided about the level of engagement of the individuals examined in this dissertation to the Stalinist project. Was Aleksandr Rodchenko merely an opportunist? Or was he struggling for his very survival? Without further study of Soviet visual culture during the 1930s, it is difficult to competently answer these questions. For instance, how did the practice and engagement of Rodchenko and Lissitzky differ from that of Klucis, a member of the Communist Party and active participant in the events of the Bolshevik Revolution? Clearly, the political and cultural events of the twenties and thirties require that we set aside the idea of the monolithic artist of unswerving progression and steady development. Responding to the changing conditions and politics of the moment, the cultural producer of this period was by necessity dynamic, shifting, non-linear, and contradictory.

USSR IN CONSTRUCTION:
FROM AVANT-GARDE TO SOCIALIST REALIST PRACTICE

Volume 2

by

Erika Maria Wolf

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Doctoral Committee:

Assistant Professor Matthew Biro, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Anatole Senkevitch , Co-Chair
Professor Jane Burbank
Assistant Professor Howard Lay
Professor Christina Lodder, Saint Andrews University

FIGURES



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

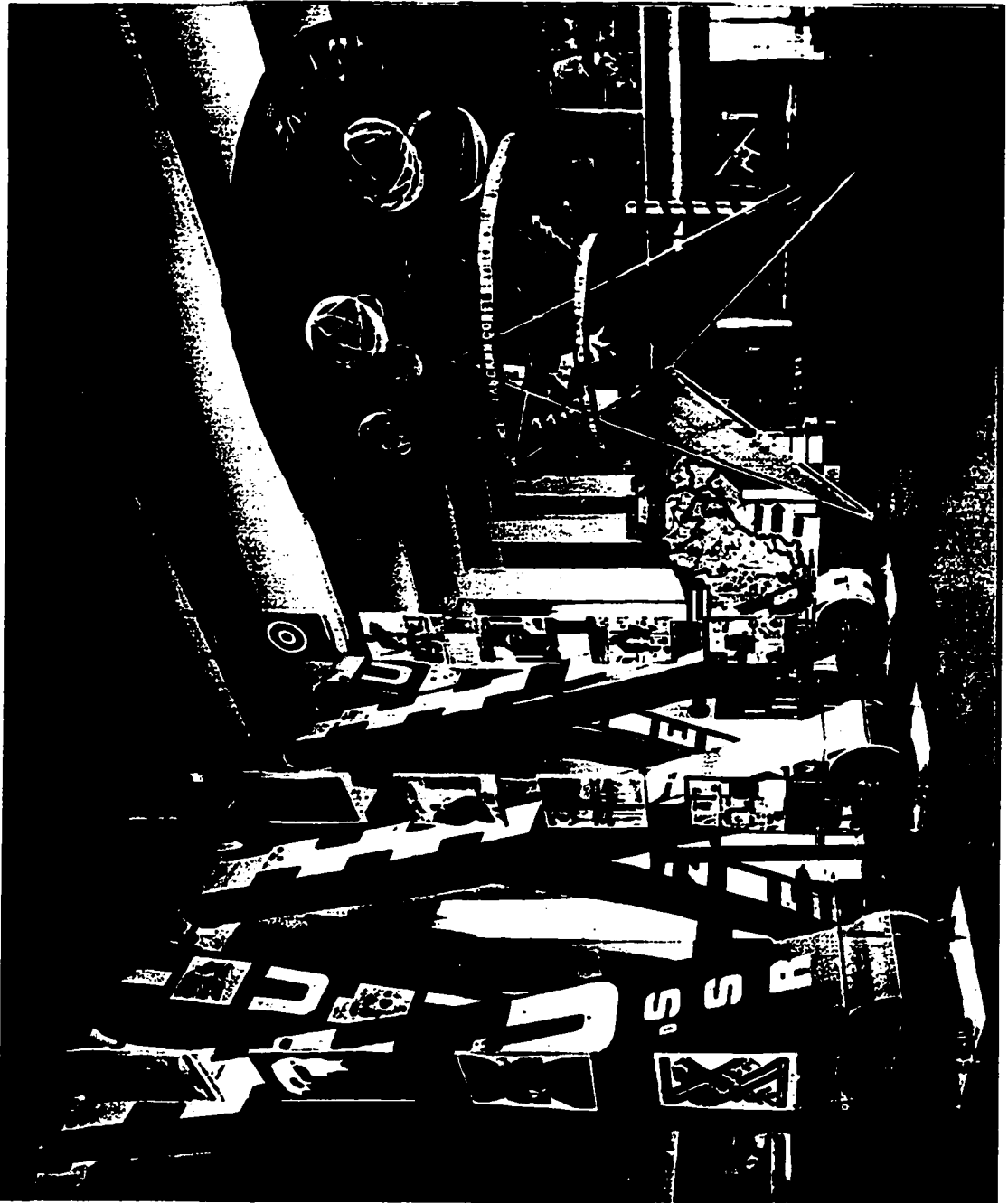


Figure 5

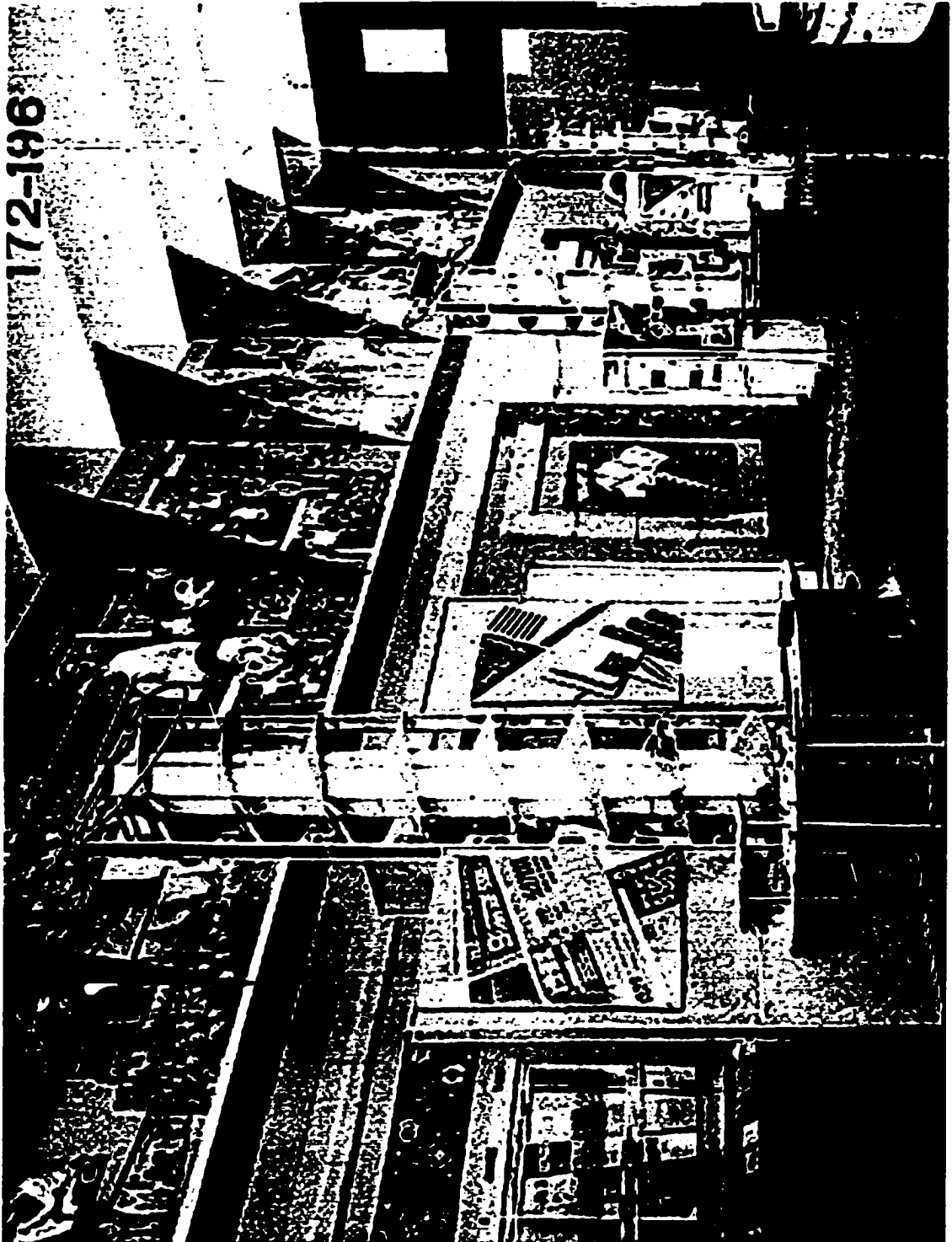


Figure 6



Figure 7

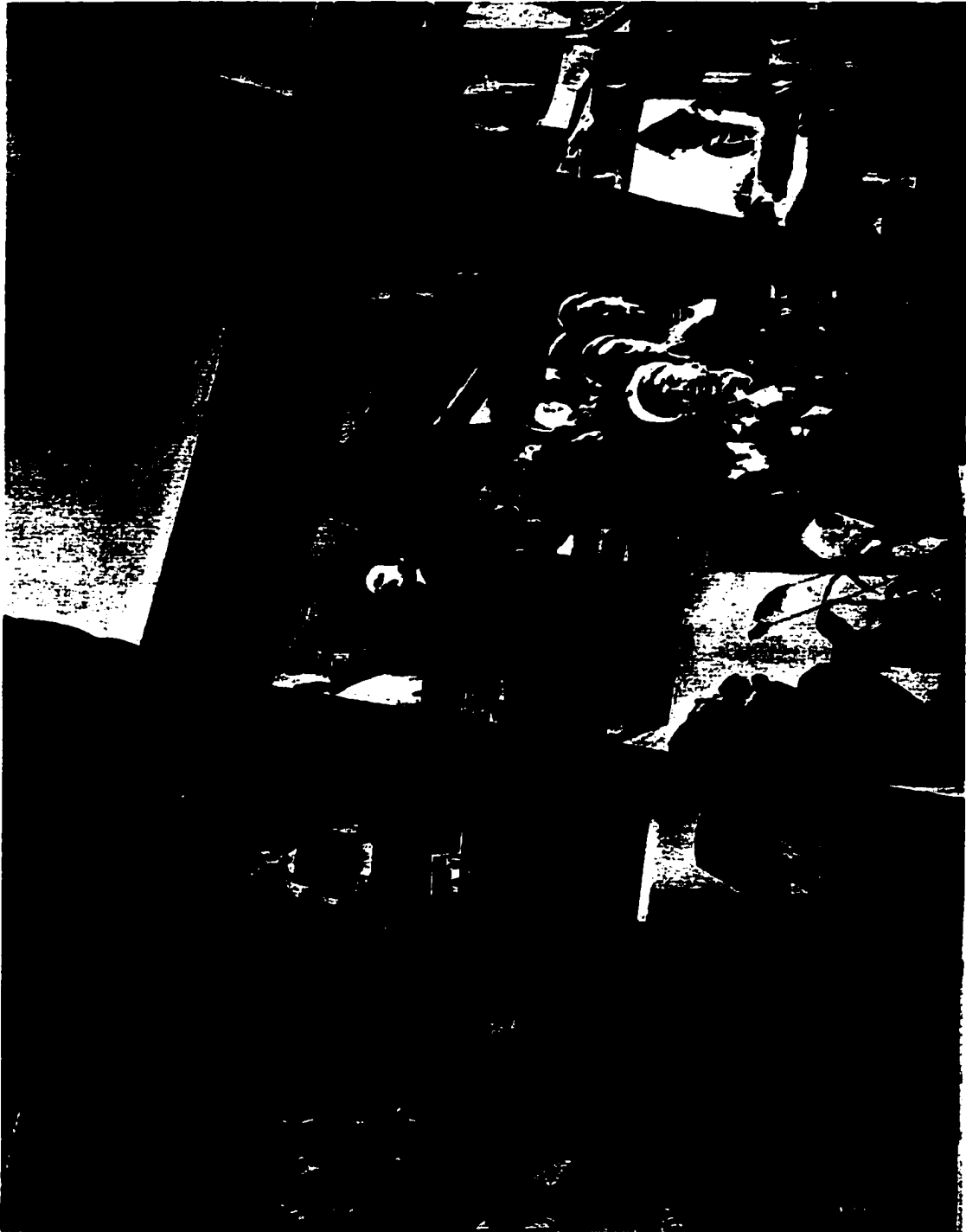


Figure 8

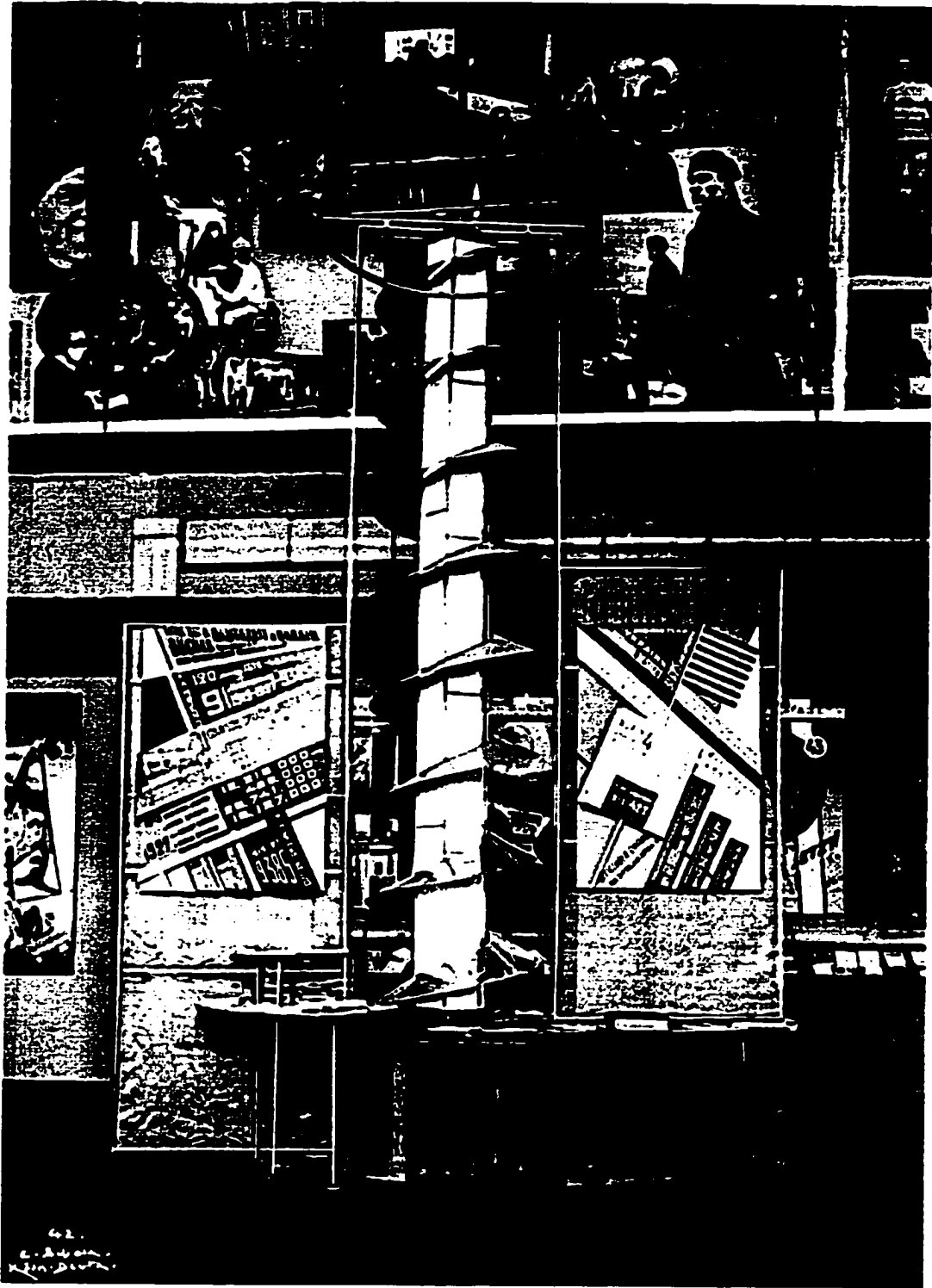


Figure 9



Figure 10

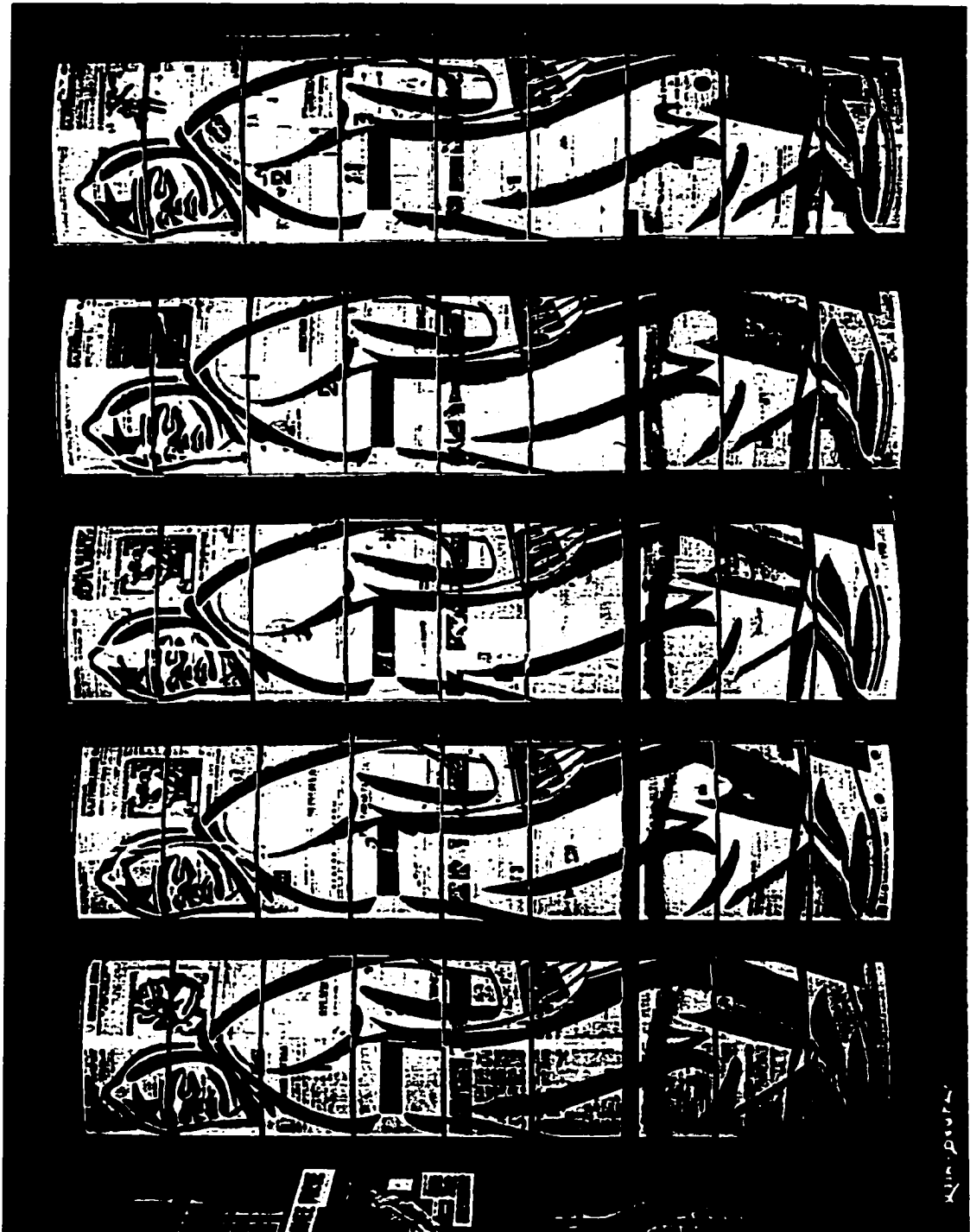


Figure 11

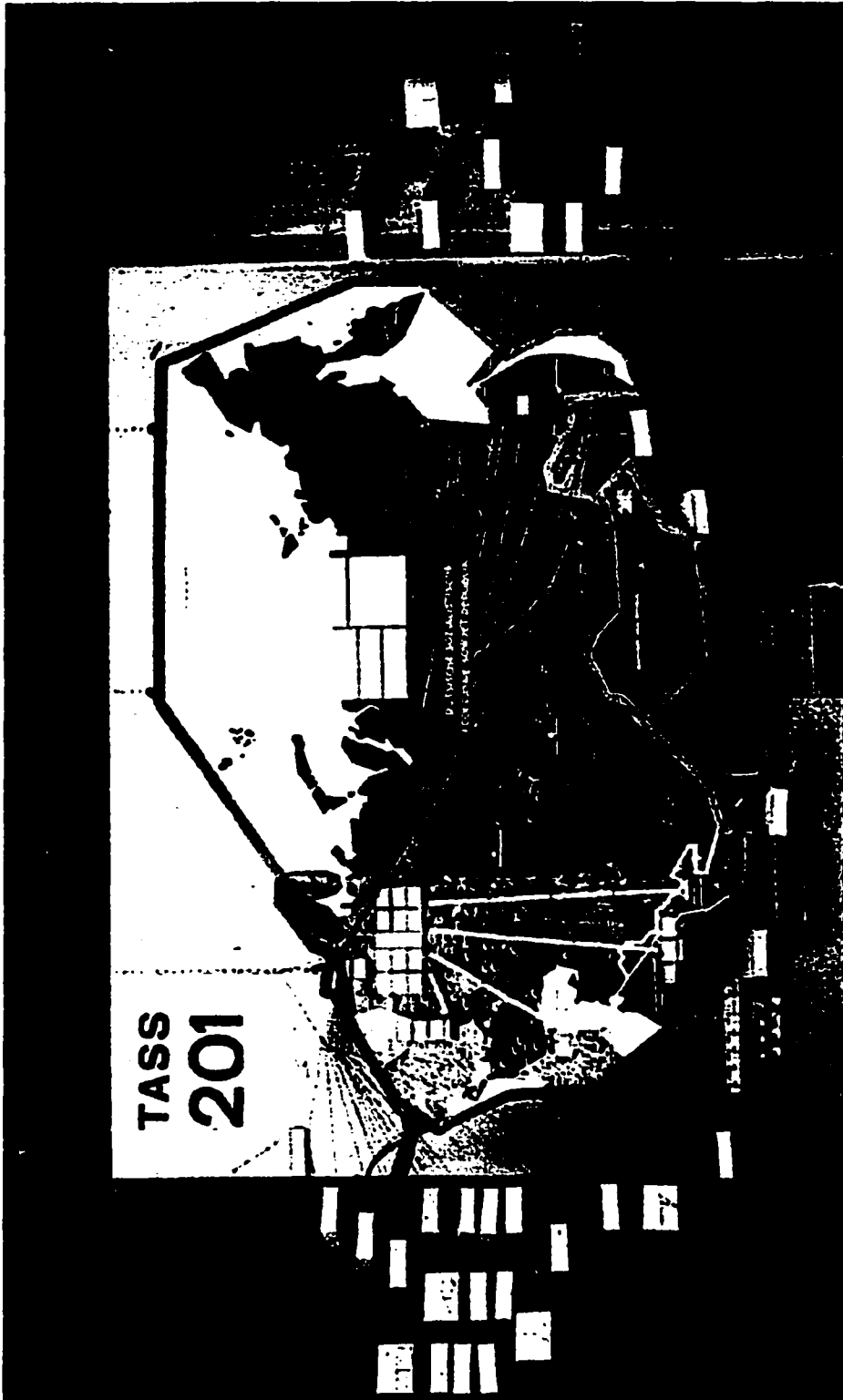


Figure12



Figure 13



Figure 14

MAXIM GORKI

im Sowjetpavillon der Kölner Pressa



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

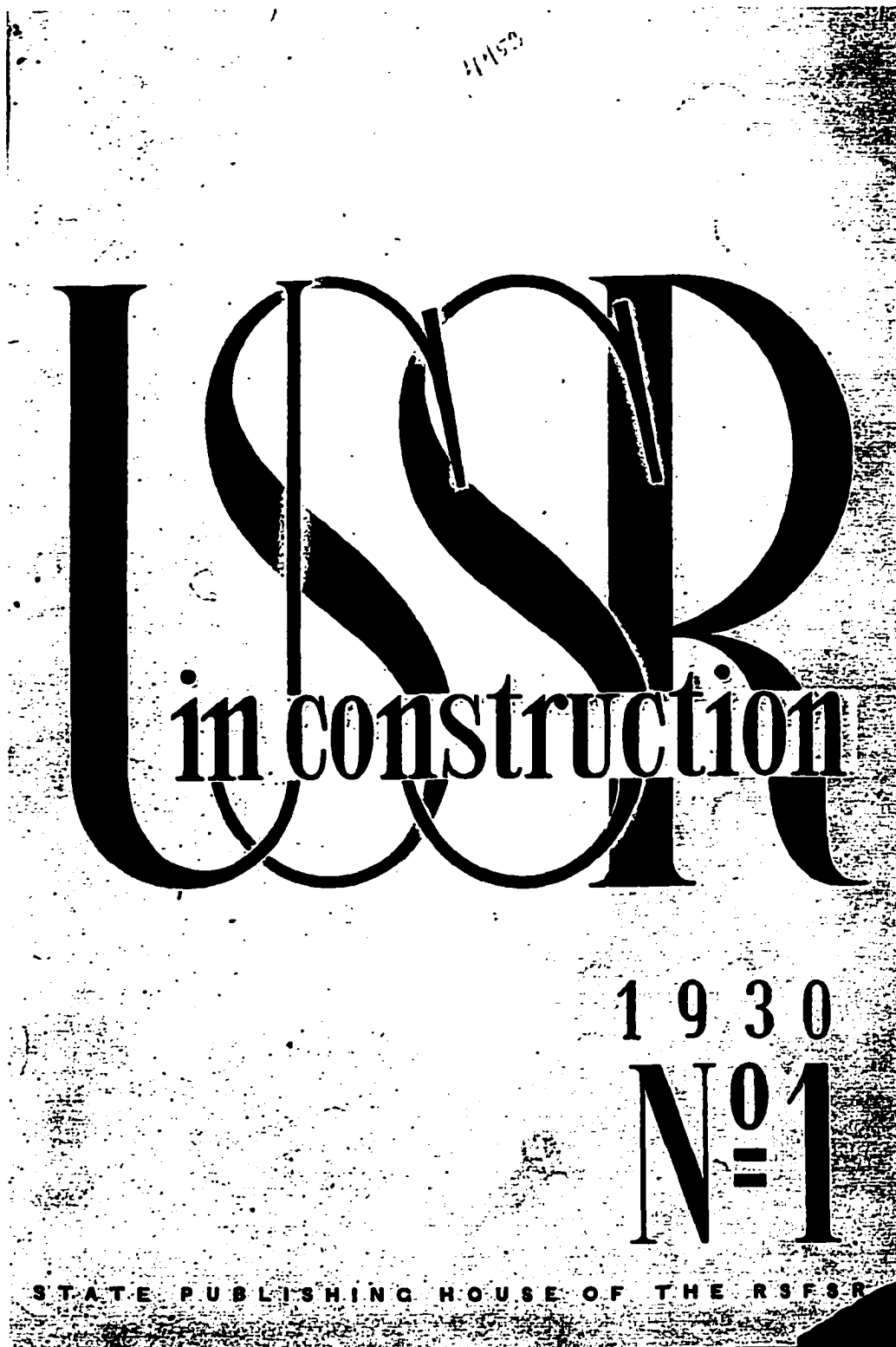


Figure 18



Figure 19

ОБЪЯВЛЕНИЯ

НЬУТОН ЧЕМБЕРС И КО, АНГЛИЯ

ФАБРИКАНТЫ:

ГАЗОГЕНЕРАТОРНЫХ ЗАВОДОВ,
УСТАНОВОК ХИМИЧЕСКИХ И
ПОБОЧНЫХ ПРОДУКТОВ,
ДОМЕННЫХ ПЕЧЕЙ,
СТАЛЕДЕЛАТЕЛЬНЫХ УСТАНОВОК,
ОБЩИХ ИНЖЕНЕРНЫХ ДЕЛ.

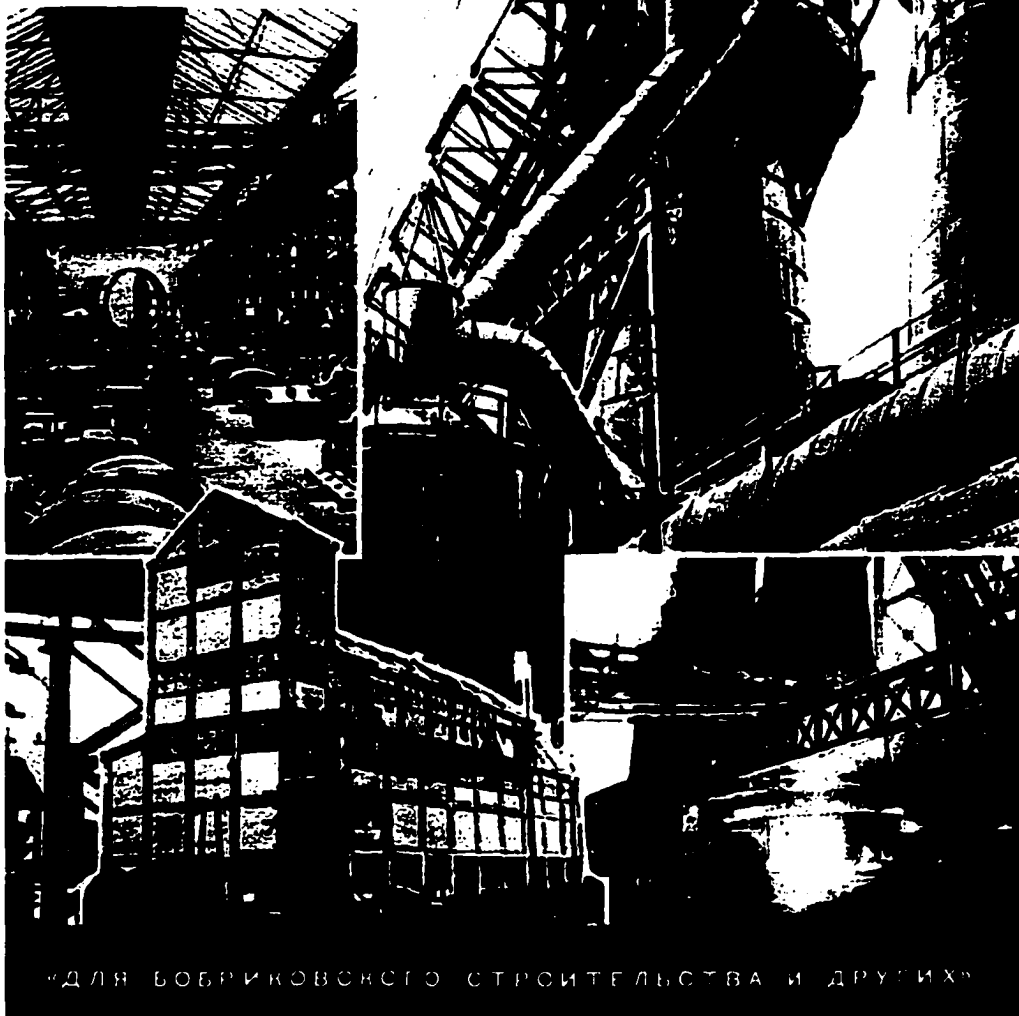


Figure 20

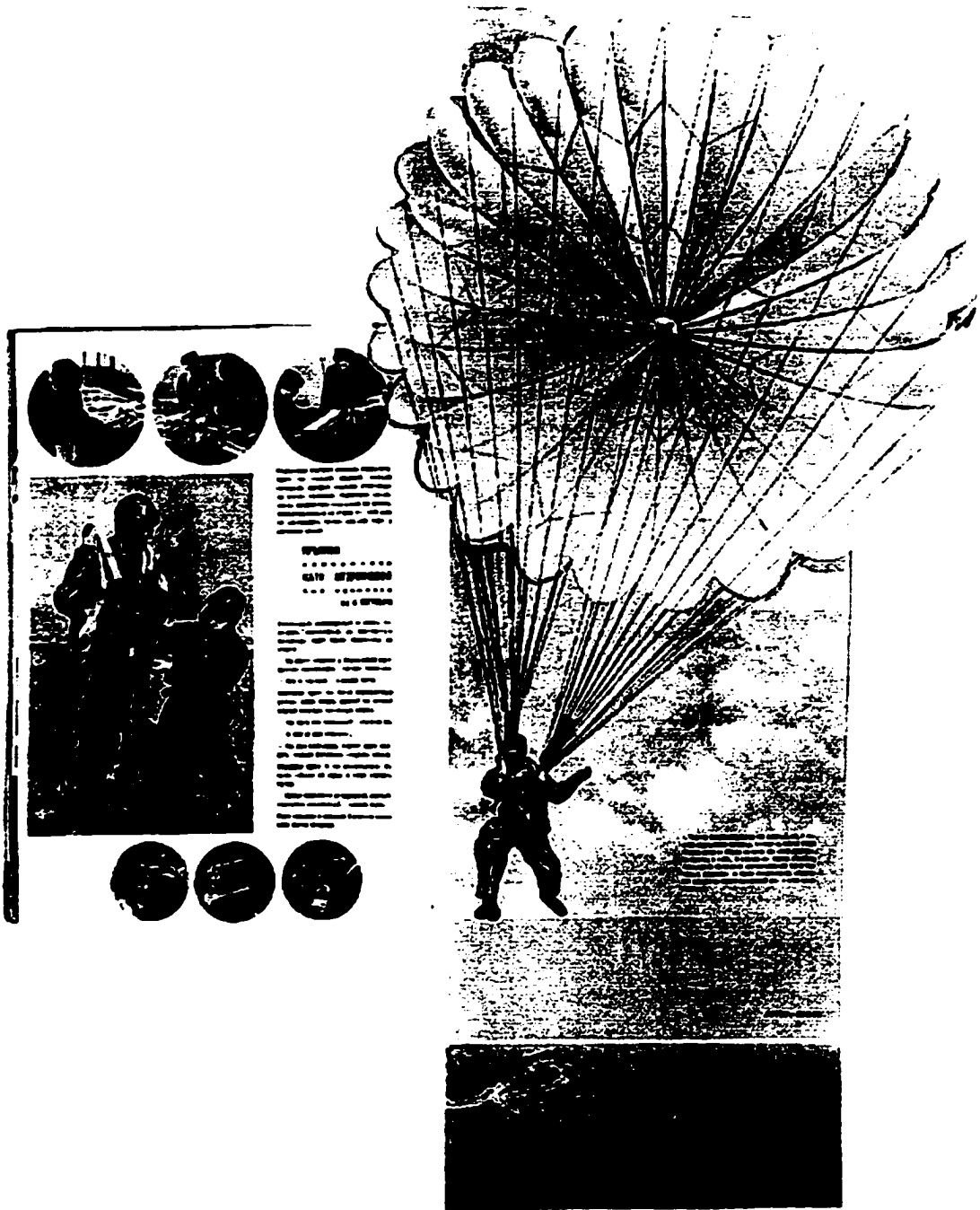


Figure 21



Figure 22

ФОТО-ОЧЕРК О НОВО-БРИДИНСКОЙ, ИМУНЕ ВЕАНКОЛУЦКОГО ОКРУГА.



Figure 23

A - J - Z

Abh. 15. 2
Nr. 28 221
Preis
30 Pf. B. 1. 50.
20 Gr. f. B. 5.
Neuer Deutscher
Verlag - Berlin W 8



Das sind Vera und Nadjedscha, die Töchter des Arbeiters Filippow aus Moskau, Donskajastraße 59. Wir erzählen in Bildern, wie diese Mädchen, ihre Eltern und Brüder heute leben. Es ist ein Bericht der Wirklichkeit, der so vielseitig und fesselnd ist, daß er für jeden außerhalb der Sowjet-Union Lebenden von besonderem Interesse sein wird.

Figure 24



Figure 25

Die A-J-Z sagt die Wahrheit! Deutsche Sozialdemokraten besuchen Filipinos

Leben Philippiner...
...in der SPD...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

Der 10. Oktober war ein schwarzer Tag für die SPD. Und heute waren wir...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

Wichtig hält der Chefred...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

Ein Teil der ersten Zuschriften...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

erhalten und liegt in den...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

Es lecht die ganze SPD-Delegation...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...



2. ...
3. ...
Hier nicht an. Es ist von Papp...
...die A-J-Z...
...die Wahrheit...
...die Sozialdemokraten...
...besuchen...
...Filipinos...

Figure 26



Zu Besuch! Die Rolle der SPD wird täglich klarer: Sie ist der linke Flügel des Faschismus. Wie wäre es sonst möglich, daß sie die Sowjetunion, in der der Sozialismus eine neue Welt aufbaut, täglich mit neuen Lügenfeldzügen bekämpft? Unser Bild enthüllt eine derartige Lüge, es zeigt den bekannten Künstler John Heartfield bei der Familie Filipow in Moskau, die von der SPD-Presse ganz einfach als garnicht existierend bezeichnet wurde. Warum? Sehr einfach: weil die *AJZ*, die bekannte Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung, welche laufend — neben ihrem sonstigen reichen Inhalt — in ausführlichen Bildreportagen über die Sowjetunion berichtet, das Leben dieser Familie Filipow dargestellt und dadurch den deutschen Werktätigen gezeigt hatte, wie groß heute schon, lange bevor der zweite Fünfjahrplan in Angriff genommen wurde, der Unterschied zwischen der Lage der Werktätigen in der UdSSR und dem faschisierten Deutschland ist.

Figure 27



НИКОЛАЙ ФЕДОТОВИЧ ФИЛИН ЗАВТРАКАЕТ

Права в жизни советских рабочих домов до шпалочек пролетариев, угнетенных капитализмом
(Николай Федотович Филин — слесарь-машинист завода „Красный пролетарий“. Ст. отори в Лд-ре).

Фот. А. Шайбота и М. Адаш-рта (Иван. группа РОПФ).

Figure 28



Figure 29

Wie Wolodja den Tag verbringt



Diese Bilder zeigen in dem Buch die jüngste Episode des großen Lebens der Wolodja, der eine Geschichte des neuen Lebens ist, das der kleine Mann in den Revolutionen erlebt. Wenn Wolodja mit seiner Mutter abgewandert und nach der Revolution wieder zurück an der Wand steht, die die Welt zeigt, so ist es ein Bild, das die Kinder glücklich machen kann, wenn sie im großen Rahmen der Revolution gezeugt und gezeugt sind. Und wenn die Revolution hat, dann sind die Jungen und Mädchen immer noch die gleichen, die das Leben herum und herum herum, bis es satt und schon gemacht ist. Das ist ein gutes Bild, das Wolodja zeigt, das jetzt Wolodja wieder frisch und munter, er setzt sich zu seiner Lieblingsbeschäftigung an den Tisch und malt mit bunten Farben. * ihm große Freude.



Figure 30



26



27



24

ВНУТРИ ДЕНЬ В ДЕТСКОМ САДУ



25

Figure 31

5 Пеллеина воскресенье. Питерова семья раскрывается у подъезда дома. Отец и двое сыновей — в шубах. Сона — в оленячьей. Где она будет продавать. Ара-Томе на весах.



6 У самого дома Шалопутный фото-аппарат. После окончания работы — вернутся в 42.

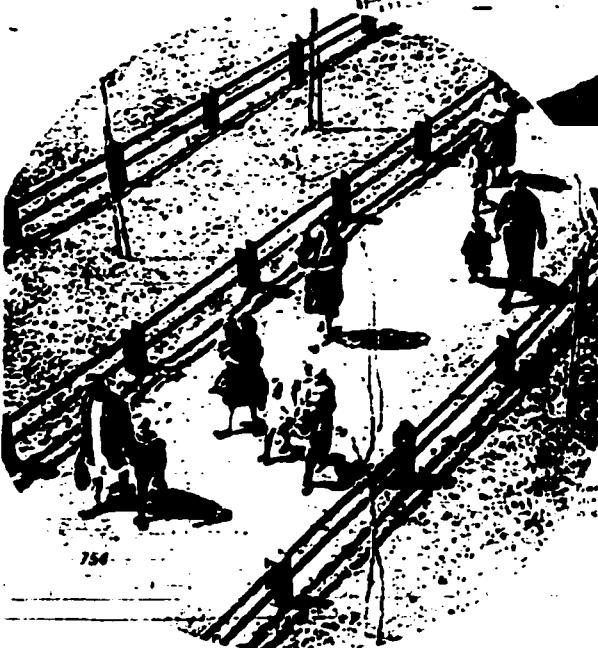


Figure 32

Die Frauen der Familie Filipow



Das Filipow-Paar wird durch im Betrieb
gefordert zu den Anforderungen, die
Mann und Frau in Haushalt an
ein stellen sie für Aufgabe ihrer Tätig-
keit übernehmen. Jetzt ist es eine ge-
wisse Fähigkeit an einem Festhalten
macht der höchsten Stufe. Das
Jüngsten, die mit den anderen Kindern
im Hause zu sein.



Was die kleine Tochter, die Tochter des
Halters. Sie ist die erste der Familie, die vor
Klein-Kindern beschützt und ermahnt wird.



Madame, die jüngere Tochter, ist besetzt mit dem Haus-
wesen. Aus dem Ansehen besteht sie die von Vater und
Geschwister 7 Stunden täglich und jeder Freitag Tag ist ein
Festtag.
Wenn Mutter ein gutes Zerkeln und Nachdenken hat, so ist es
nicht ein dem kleinen Mädchen, die die 8 Stunden der Arbeit
nicht die Familie zu sein, hat die 8 Stunden der Arbeit
und die Mutter des kleinen Kindes, die Mutter der kleinen
Kinder.

Figure 33



16 2000 20 feet, with a maximum height of 10 feet, and a width of 10 feet. The structure is made of wood and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building.



**ЖЕНЩИНЫ
СЕМЬИ
ФИЛИПОВЫХ**

13 2000 20 feet, with a maximum height of 10 feet, and a width of 10 feet. The structure is made of wood and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building.

14 2000 20 feet, with a maximum height of 10 feet, and a width of 10 feet. The structure is made of wood and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building.



15 2000 20 feet, with a maximum height of 10 feet, and a width of 10 feet. The structure is made of wood and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building. The structure is used for storage and is located in the area of the building.



Figure 34

39 Витя поступает в распоряжение руководителей детского городка.



Figure 35



Figure 36



30 Остается несколько минут, чтобы сравняться с соседом по станку в семо-дельные шашки.

Figure 37

DER ARBEITER-FOTOGRAPH

...entfalten, wenn die Augen der Kameraperson nicht ... auf das mit dem Objektiv ... die ...

Nachdem die ...

Genosse Mohl, Berlin, ...

Zum nächsten Referat „Das Arbeitsprogramm im kommenden Jahre“ spricht Koch, Hamburg. Das Grundlegende unserer Aufgaben ist in drei Referaten schon gesagt worden. Was müssen wir jetzt alles tun, um die bestehenden Gruppen und unsere Gesamtorganisation weiter auszubauen? Die erste Voraussetzung ist eine gute technische Heranbildung unserer Mitglieder. Die technischen Lehrkräfte der Gruppen müssen diese Arbeit nach einem bestimmten Leitplan durchföhren. Die zweite Aufgabe der Gruppe ist die Verbesserung des Wissens und die künstlerische Vervollkommnung der Mitglieder. Die dritte Aufgabe für uns muß eine großzügige Volksaufklärung durch eine ausgedehnte Bildberichterstattung sein. Unser technisches Können muß der gesamten Arbeiterklasse nutzbar gemacht werden. Ein weiteres Arbeitsgebiet eröffnet sich vor uns durch die interessantere Aus-

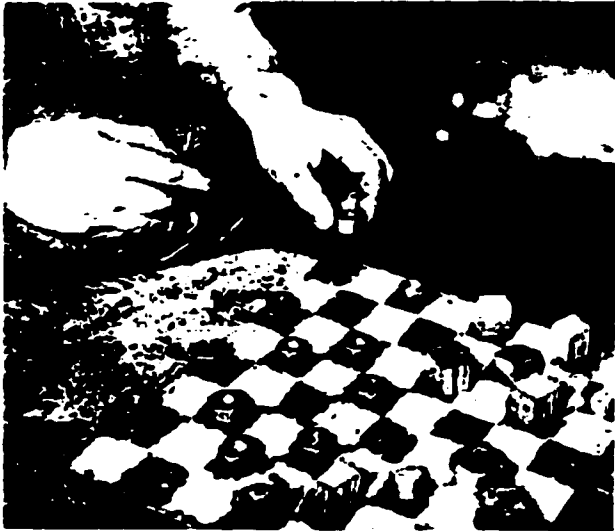
stattung der Versammlungen der Arbeiterorganisationen. Durch die Zusammenstellung geeigneter Lichtabbildungen, die in einer Zerkettelle des Reichsausschusses zusammengestellt werden können, diese der ...

...

Die Reichsleitung des Arbeitersport ...

Wir müssen die ...

... auch im Arbeiterfotograf besprochen werden. Durch das Fehlen eines geeigneten geblühigen Apparates von Mitarbeitern hat unsere Zeitung bisher verschiedene Mängel gezeigt. Aufgabe der Gruppen und der neuen Reichsleitung muß es sein, diese durch eine rege Mitarbeit abzustellen. Bis jetzt steht die Ortsgruppe Hamburg in ihrer technischen und proletarischen Erziehung ihrer Mitglieder an führender Stelle. Aufgabe der Delegierten ist es jetzt, in allen Gruppen für einen weiteren Ausbau derselben zu wirken und neue Gruppen in ihren Bezirken ins Leben zu rufen.



Beim Damenspiel

Foto-Haus Max Albrecht	Klappkamera 9121 K. Aplanat 35. Vergr. ...	R.Mk. 88.00
	Klappkamera 710 ...	R.Mk. 58.00
	Klappkamera Dopp.-A 1. 35. Vergr. ...	R.Mk. 75.00
	Klappkamera Dopp.-A 1. 63. Vergr. ...	R.Mk. 68.00
	Messingstativ 31 ...	R.Mk. 7.00
Malpla-Papier 912 ...	R.Mk. 15.00	
Malpla-Platt. 912 ...	R.Mk. 1.50 - 2.25	

**Berlin SO 36
Kottbuser Straße 3.
Liste C gratis**

Figure 38



Figure 39



The photograph shows a group of men
 standing in a line, possibly waiting for
 work. The men are wearing simple, heavy
 clothing, and the scene appears to be outdoors.
 The image is very dark and grainy, with
 many faces and figures appearing as bright
 shapes against a black background.



The photograph shows a group of men
 standing in a line, possibly waiting for
 work. The men are wearing simple, heavy
 clothing, and the scene appears to be outdoors.
 The image is very dark and grainy, with
 many faces and figures appearing as bright
 shapes against a black background.

Figure 41



Figure 42



These men, the strength and wisdom of the Soviet people, are the backbone of the Communist Party. They are the ones who are doing the heavy work of the Party. They are the ones who are building the new life of the Soviet Union.

ДОСКА СОСРЕДНОВАНИИ
ОКТИБРЬ

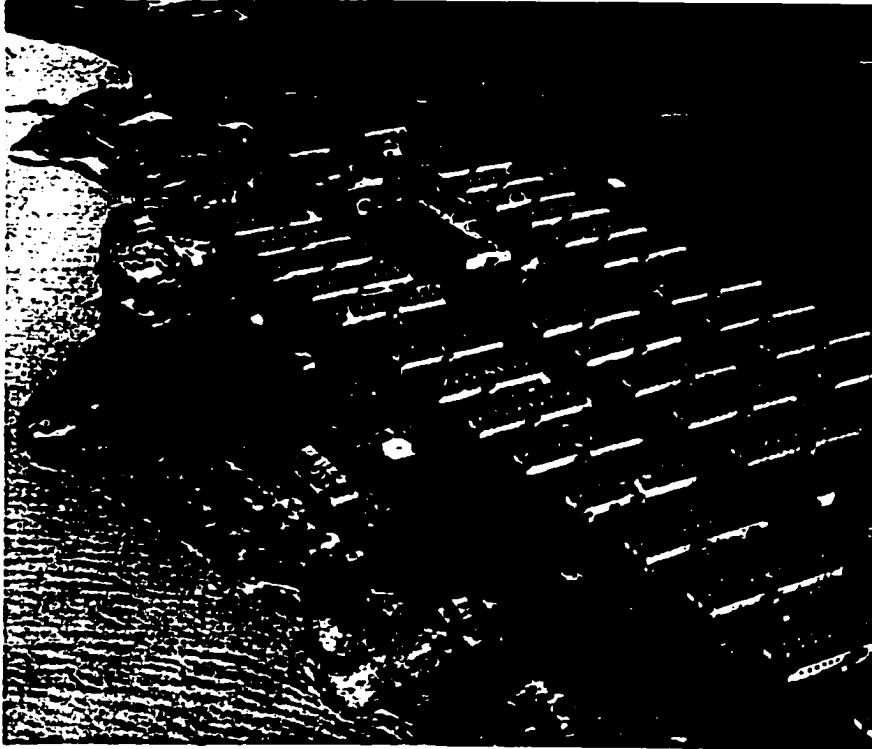
Бригада ЗАХАРОВА	98%
Бригада ЛЕВОЗКИНА	102%
Бригада КЛАМАНОВА	87%
Бригада ПИЛОНОВА	103%
Бригада МОРИЗОВА	95%

And in the future, when the Soviet people will be able to do even more, they will be able to do it because of the work of these men. They are the ones who are building the new life of the Soviet Union.

ДОСКА СОСРЕДНОВАНИИ
ОКТИБРЬ

Бригада ЗАХАРОВА	100%
Бригада ЛЕВОЗКИНА	105%
Бригада КОЛМЫКОВА	122%
Бригада ПИЛОСАРОВА	134%
Бригада МОРИЗОВА	90%

Figure 43



A roof with wooden beams takes the place of ceiling work.

Victor Kabanov is seen in a scene. In this he has the engine given to the old one



Figure 44

1. This is a small book, but it would contain a great deal of information...
Katharine had an eye for the eye of justice...
No matter how small the eye...
The eye of the eye...
The eye of the eye...

В отряды В.И.Л. Новороссийские
Лазаревский
От бригады...
Владимир Елизаров
Кавказ...
Заведующий
Будет...
Дорогие товарищи...
С уважением...
В. Е. Елизаров



Translation of Katharine's letter to the party member:
To the Communist Party Section
of Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk
From Vladimir Elyazarov for Katharine,
leader of mass struggle.
Application
I hereby request to be admitted to the
party in my district...
I have worked for 20 to 25 years...
I am a member of the party...
I am a member of the party...
I am a member of the party...
July 20, 1931. V. E. Elyazarov.

Figure 45



Figure 46

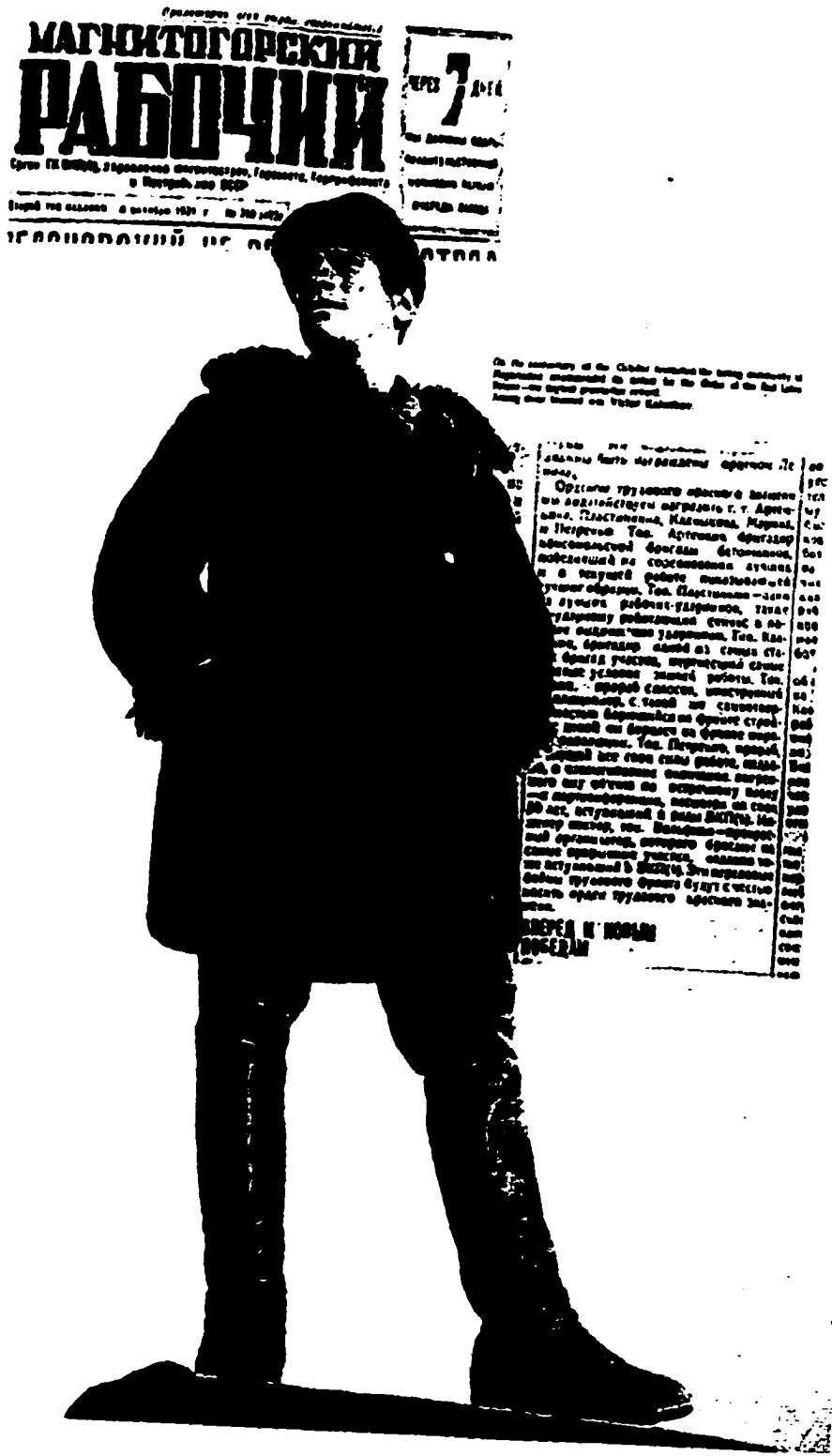


Figure 47

Успехи одной недели



● В Москве состоялось заседание Президиума Верховного Совета СССР, в котором обсуждались вопросы о выполнении плана на этот год. ● В Ленинграде открылся Международный фестиваль молодежи и студентов. ● В Праге состоялся съезд Коммунистической партии Чехословакии. ● В Берлине прошла конференция по восстановлению мира. ● В Нью-Йорке состоялось заседание Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН. ● В Пекине открылся съезд Коммунистической партии Китая. ● В Токио состоялось заседание кабинета министров Японии. ● В Вашингтоне состоялось заседание Конгресса США. ● В Лондоне состоялось заседание правительства Великобритании. ● В Париже состоялось заседание правительства Франции. ● В Брюсселе состоялось заседание Совета Европы. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации здравоохранения. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации труда. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации экономического сотрудничества и развития. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации образования, науки и культуры. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации туризма. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации метеорологии и климата. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации почтовой связи. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации гражданской авиации. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации здравоохранения. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации труда. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации экономического сотрудничества и развития. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации образования, науки и культуры. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации туризма. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации метеорологии и климата. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации почтовой связи. ● В Женеве состоялось заседание Всемирной организации гражданской авиации.



Figure 49

Тов. Смолян — специор Роста на Магнитострое

Смолян знает: он обязан своей информацией способствовать максимальному росту темпов стройки и максимально широкому развертыванию ударничества и соревнования.

При его непосредственном участии бригада магнитогорских землекопов Бузовцева поставила мировые рекорды, выкопав по 20 куб. метров земли на каждого. Рекорд бригады Бузовцева был повторен бригадой кузнецких землекопов Маскалева — 30 кубометров земли на каждого ударника, участника бригады.

По инициативе журналиста — работника Роста — темпы земляных работ на Магнитке и на основных крупнейших стройках неизменно ускорялись, весь мир узнал о неисчерпаемых ресурсах производственного энтузиазма строителей социализма в СССР, началось действительно социалистическое

соревнование между двумя гигантами.

Для Смоляна практическая борьба за рашпильные точилы — борьба за хорошую корреспонденцию, ибо Смолян уверен, что, чем скорее будут отточены лопаты у землекопов, тем больше кубометров земли выкопает ударника, тем сильнее будут выдвигаться вперед темпы стройки.

Тов. Смолян организует информацию, боюшу, действительную своим непосред-

ственным участием в процессе стройки, организационной разветвленной сети постовых и рабочих бригад. Собирая крупицы опыта, обобщая их, — он делает опыт действительно ударной работы достоянием всех трудящихся Советского Союза и в этом его неоспоримая заслуга.

Именно такой работой Магнитогорский корреспондент РОСТА заслужил оценку, которую дала ему сама стройка.



Очерк был опубликован РОСТА на стройке Магнитогорского Актонинского завода. Слева направо: тов. Бузовцев — бригадир монтажников на коксовых печах, тов. Смолян — спецкор РОСТА в Магнитогорске, тов. Волынский — начальник строительства завода.

12

МАГНИТКА
МАГНИТОГОРСКИЙ
КОРРЕСПОНДЕНТ

Figure 50



Figure 51



Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54



Figure 55

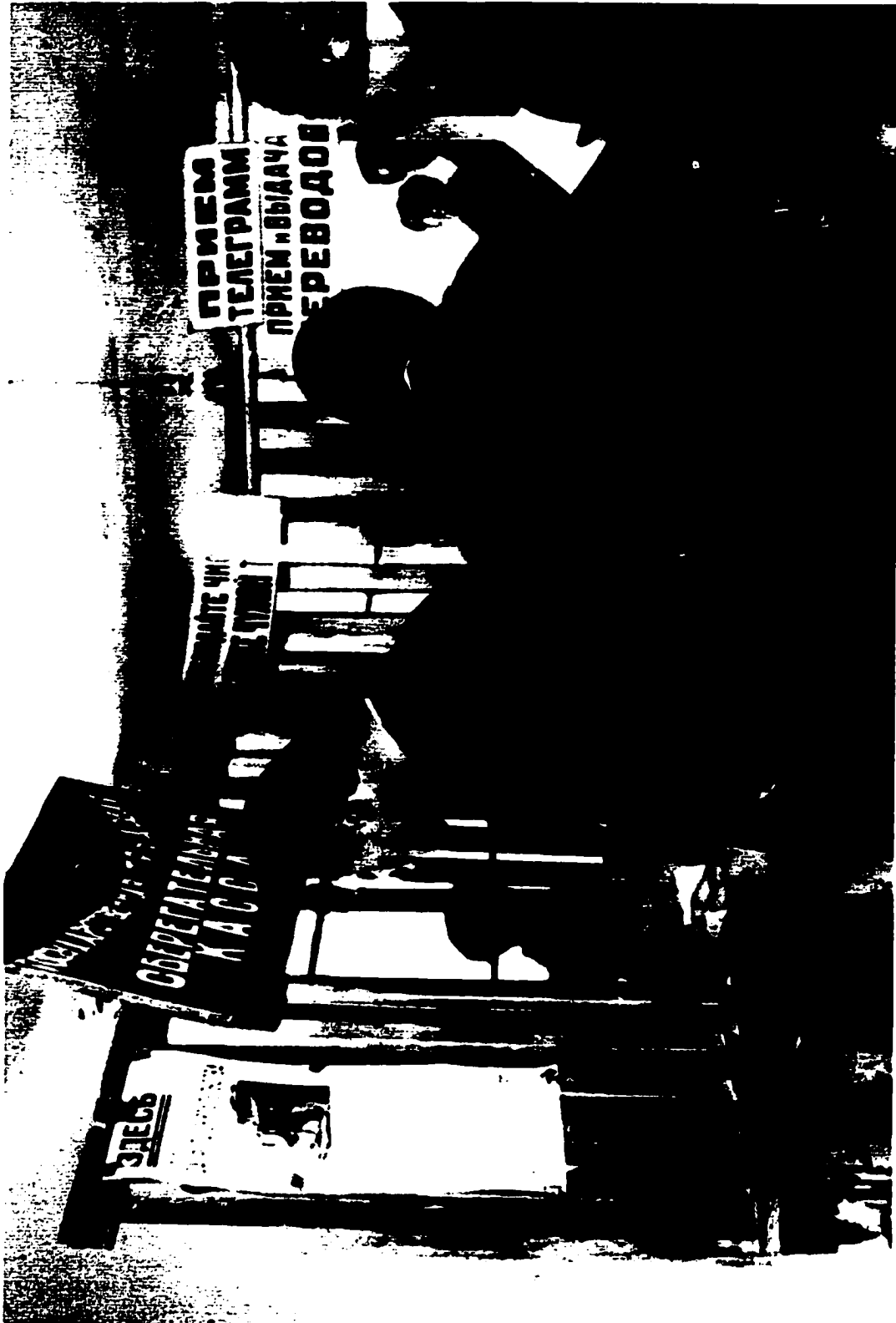


Figure 56

There is quite a large number of foreign consulates in Washington and many in New York, London, Geneva, Moscow, etc.

There are about 1000 consulates in the United States and many in the other countries of the world. The United States has the largest number of consulates in any country.



Foreign consulates in the United States.



Foreign consulates in New York.



Figure 57



Figure 58

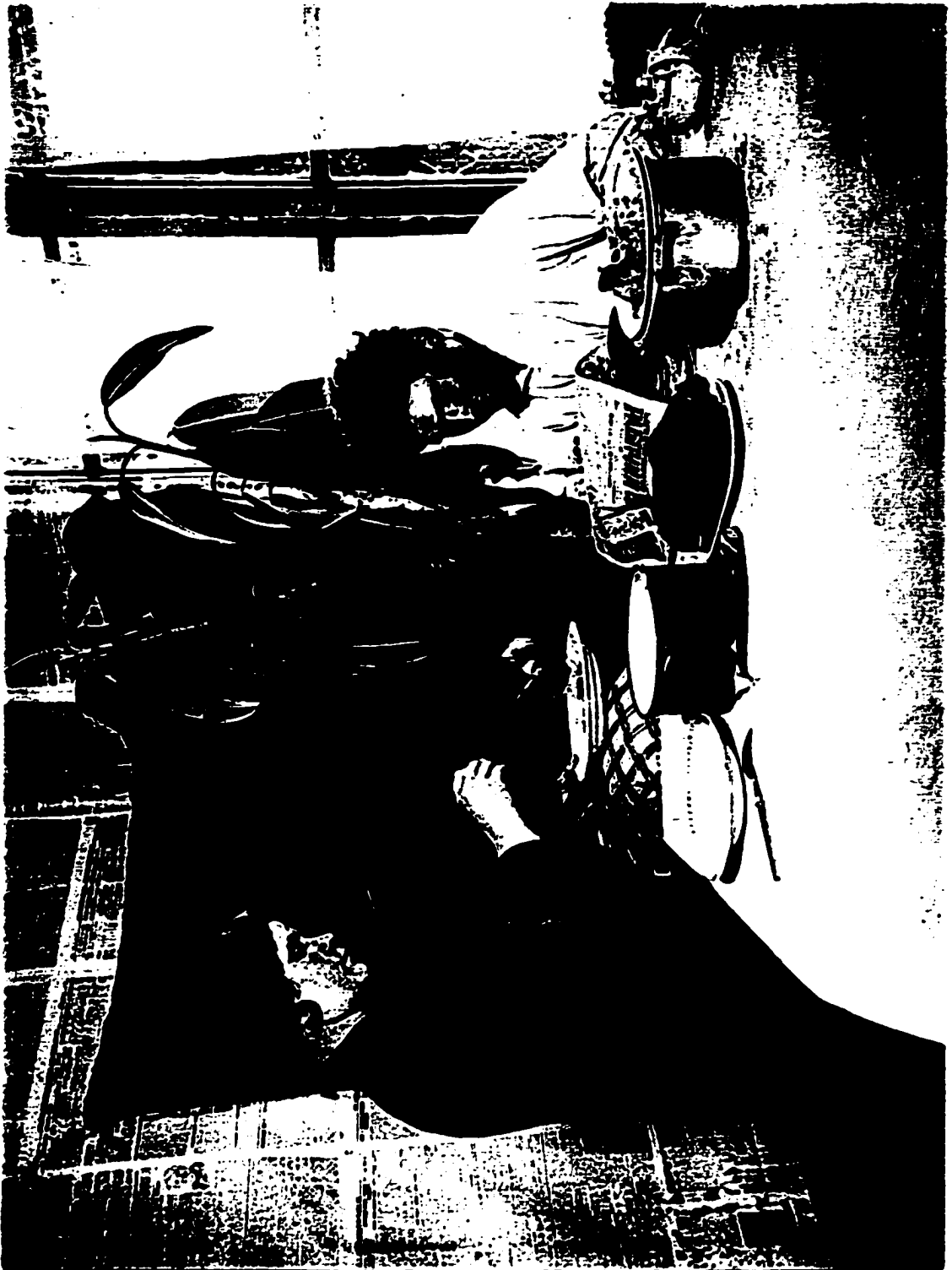


Figure 59

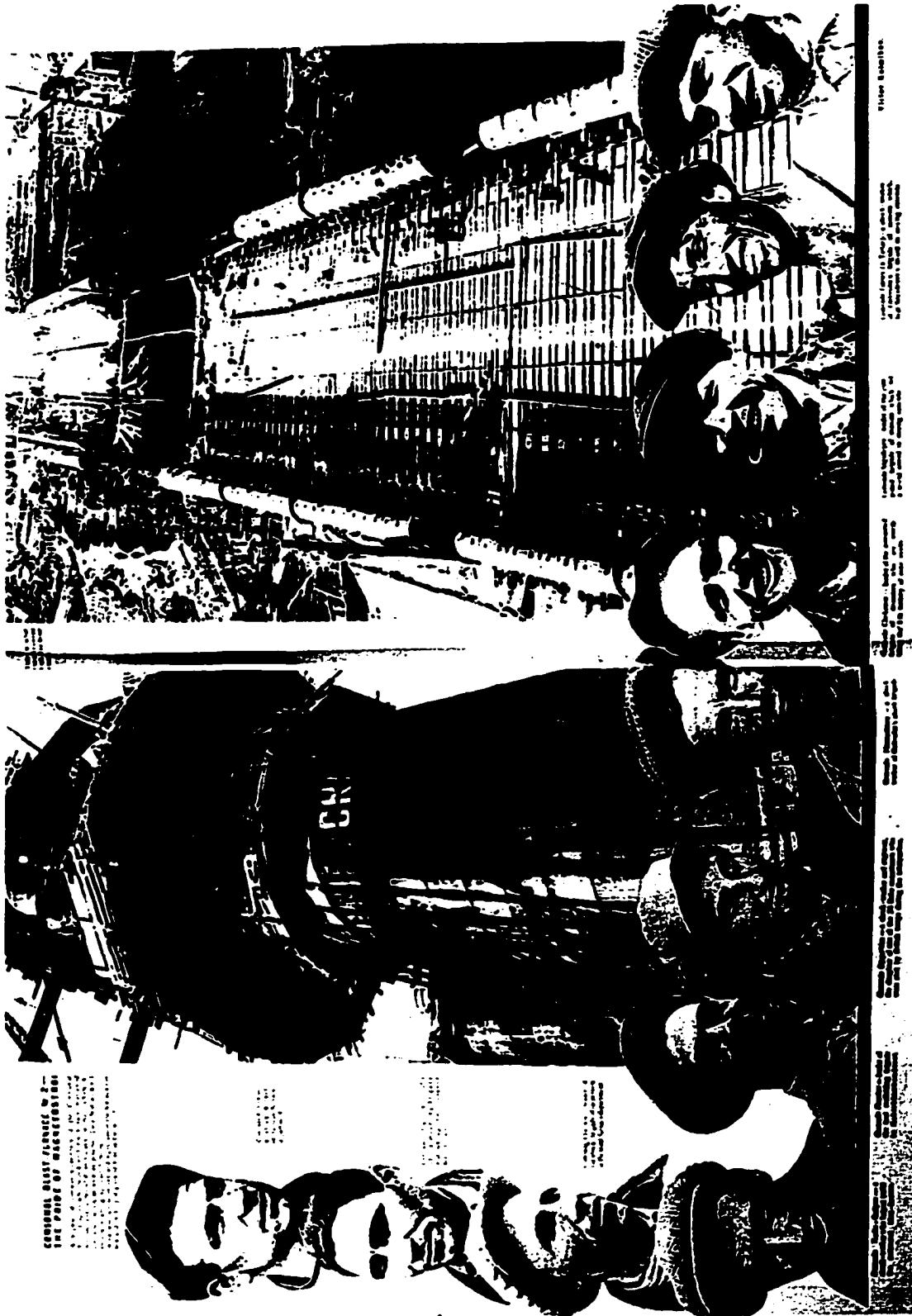


Figure 60



Figure 61

**МИНИСТЕРСТВО БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ**
Управление
по Челябинской области
21.10.92.г. № 5-118
г. Челябинск

455000, г.Магнитогорск,
ул.Комсомольская, д.29, кв.52
Бакке Эмилия Васильевна

Уважаемая Эмилия Васильевна!

Ваш муж - Калмыков Виктор Емельянович, 20 апреля 1910 года рождения, уроженец Центральной Черноземной области, Токаревского района Мамонтовского сельсовета дер.Калмыковка, был арестован 21 декабря 1937г. по обвинению в совершении преступлений, предусмотренных ст.ст.58-7, 58-8 и 58-II УК РСФСР (якобы являлся участником контрреволюционной организации).

На момент ареста работал бригадиром слесарей треста "Магнитострой" и проживал по адресу: г.Магнитогорск, I-й участок, ул. Кем, дом горсовета № 2, кв.8.

28 июля 1938 года Военная Коллегия Верховного Суда СССР приговорила Калмыкова В.И. к высшей мере наказания - расстрелу. Приговор приведен в исполнение 28 июля 1938г. в г.Челябинске. К сожалению, место захоронения не известно и установить не представляется возможным из-за отсутствия сведений в архивных материалах. Вполне возможно, что он захоронен в районе "Золотой горы", где обнаружено одно из захоронений периода массовых репрессий.

Свидетельство о смерти будет выслано в ЗАГС по месту Вашего жительства, где и сможете его получить.

Средсением Военной Коллегии Верховного Суда СССР от 30 ноября 1957г. приговор Военной Коллегии Верховного Суда СССР от 28 июля 1938г. в отношении Калмыкова Виктора Емельяновича отменен и он реабилитирован.

Вам, Эмилия Васильевна, было предъявлено обвинение по ст.58-12 УК РСФСР (якобы укрывали контрреволюционную деятельность своего мужа). 4 октября 1938 года к Вам была применена мера пресечения в виде подписки о невыезде за пределы г.Магнитогорска. В январе 1939г. следственное дело по обвинению Вас за недостаточность состава преступления производством прекращено и от подписки Вы освобождены.

Примите наши соболезнования по поводу незаконной репрессии Вас и Вашего мужа - Калмыкова Виктора Емельяновича.

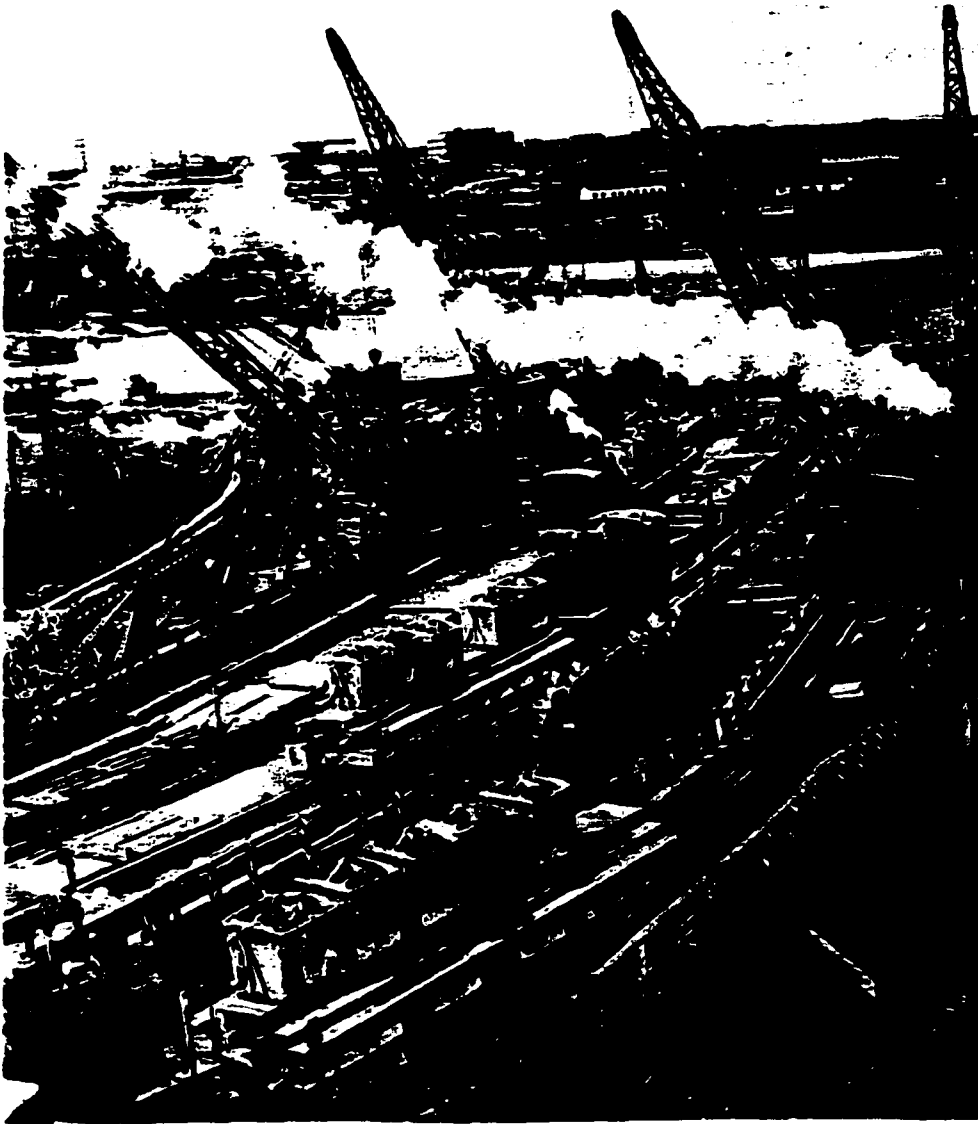
Начальник подразделения

В.С.Ковшов



Figure 62

THE USSR IN CONSTRUCTION



No. 4

1930

Figure 63

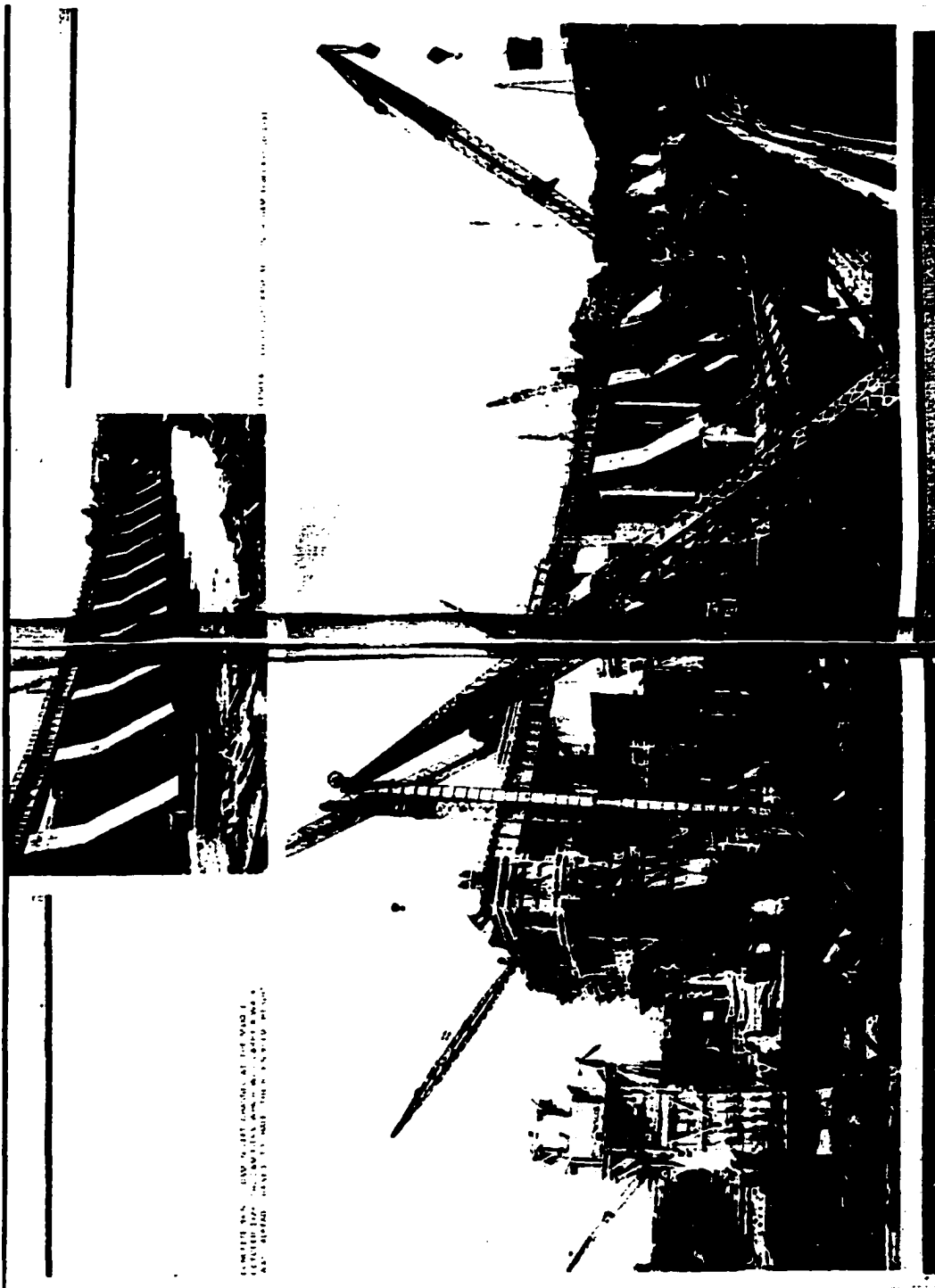


Figure 64

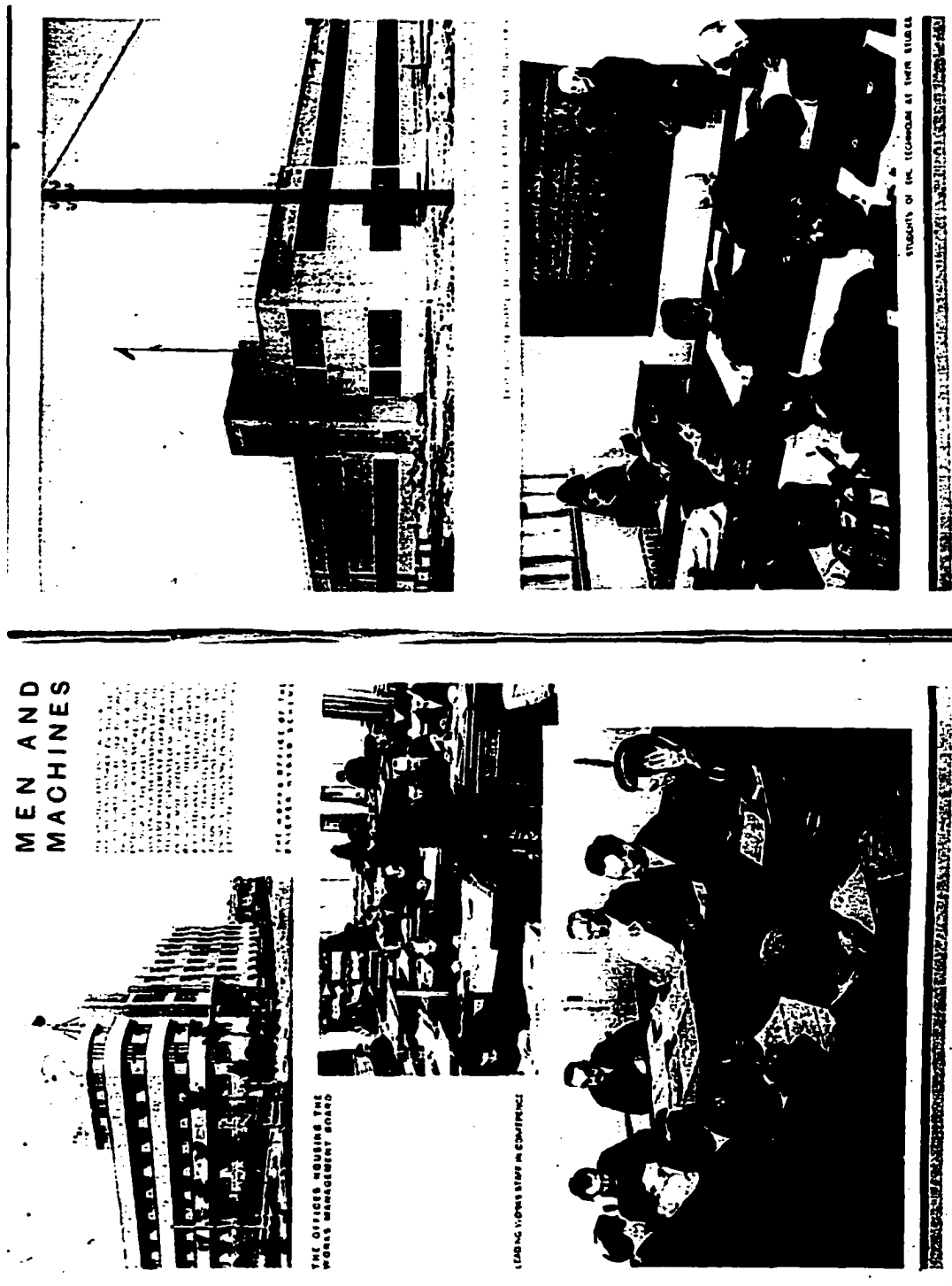
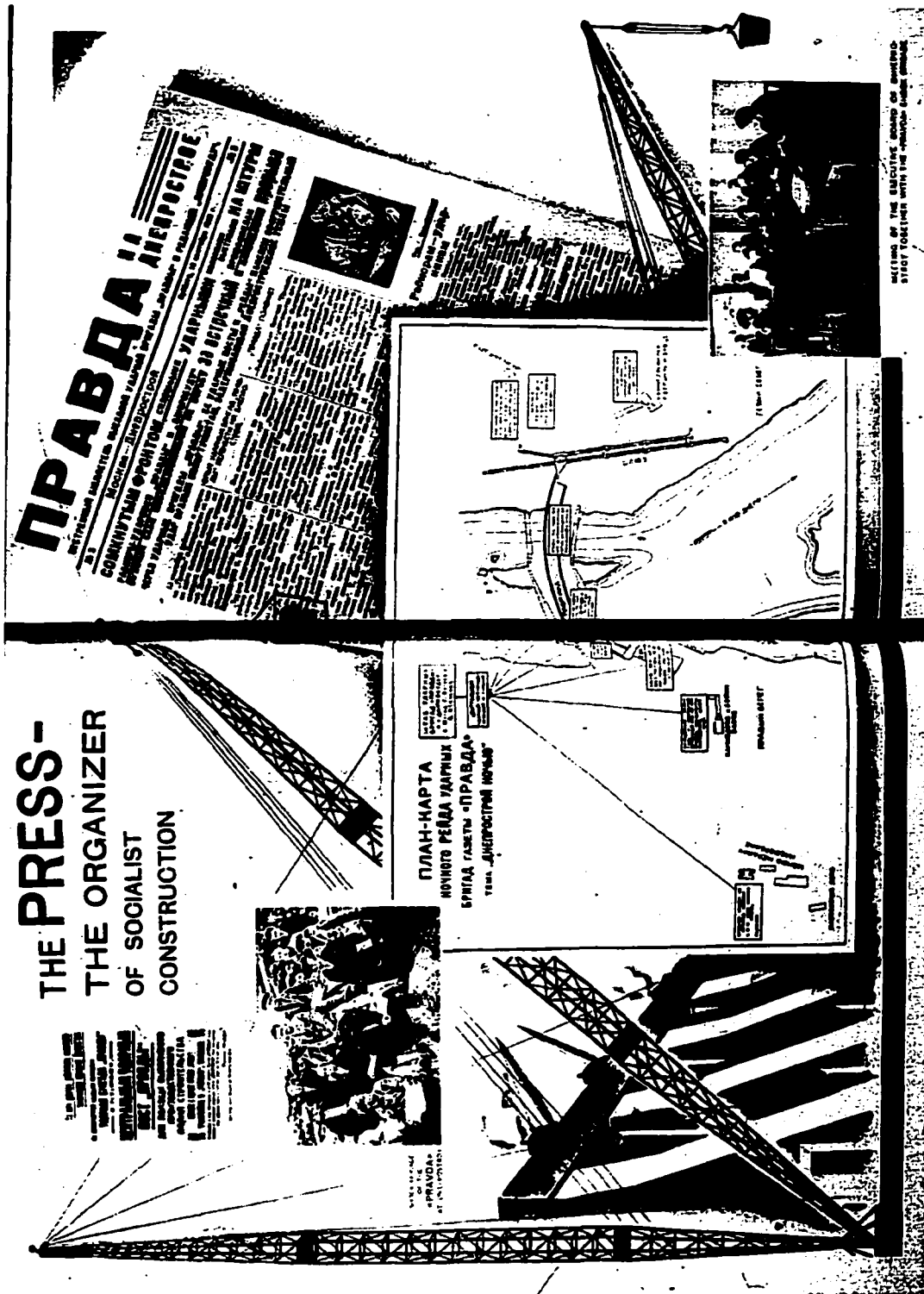


Figure 65



Workers of the Executive Board of Central Street Together with the - Moscow - Soviet Union

Figure 66

The newspaper FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1930, No 291 (2889)

THE TRIUMPH OF THE DNEIPROSTROY WORKERS

To Comrade Stalin and Comrade Ordzhonikidze LIGHTNING TELEGRAM FROM KICKASS.

The counter-plan proposed by the workers of Dneprostroy for the placing of 500,000 cubic meters of concrete has been exceeded. Shall immediately start on the fulfillment of the counter-plan for 1931.

Dneprostroy Triangle (President of the Administrative Board, Chairman of the Local Committee, and Secretary of the Party ...)



NEW KICKASS BRIDGE AT DNEIPROSTROY

PART OF THE DNEIPER DAM



THIS YEAR 500,000 CUBIC METERS OF CONCRETE HAVE BEEN PLACED AT DNEIPROSTROY. ALL THE CONTRACTORS WHO CONSIDERED THE FIGURES PROPOSED IN THE COUNTER-PLAN ...

Figure 67

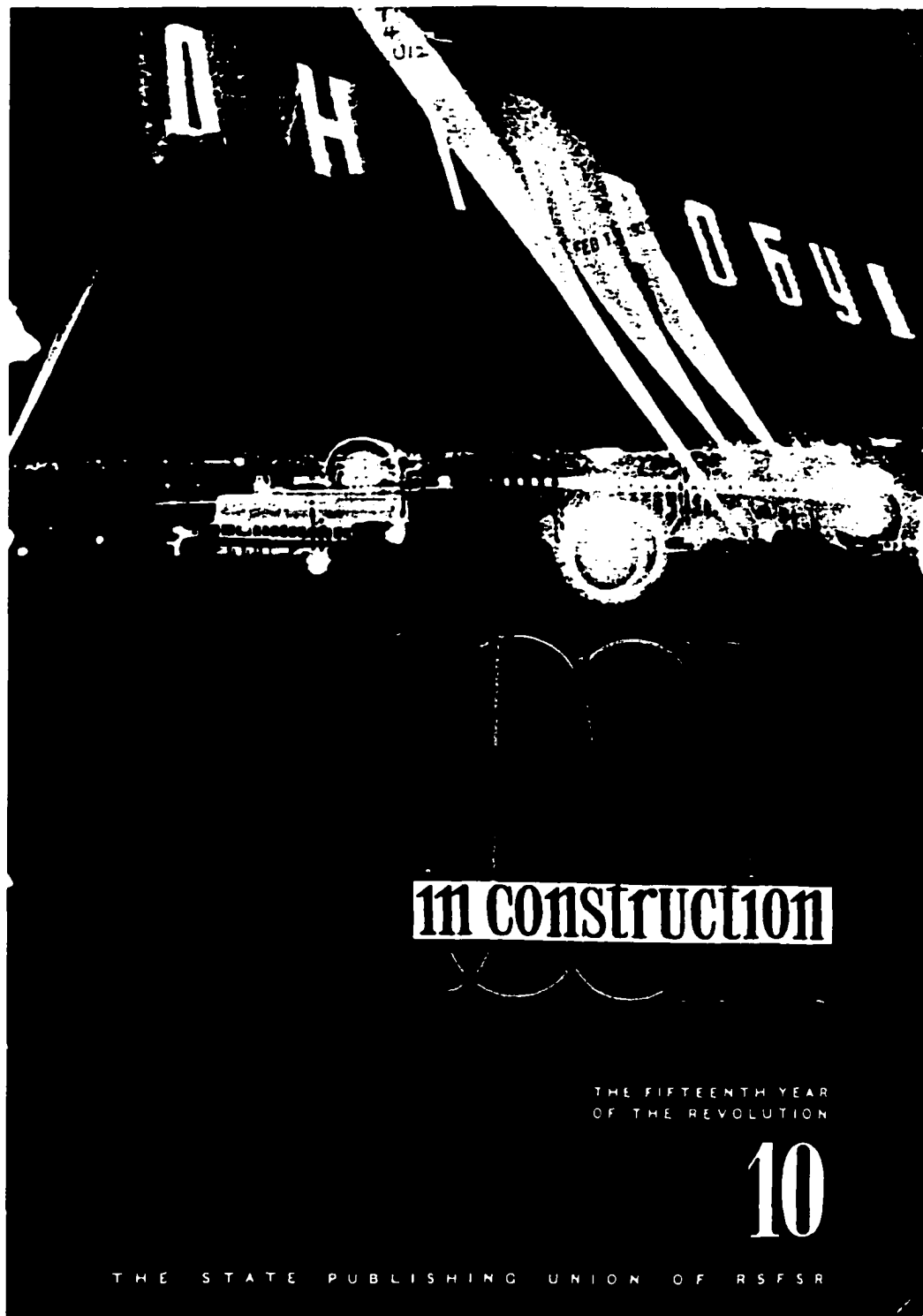
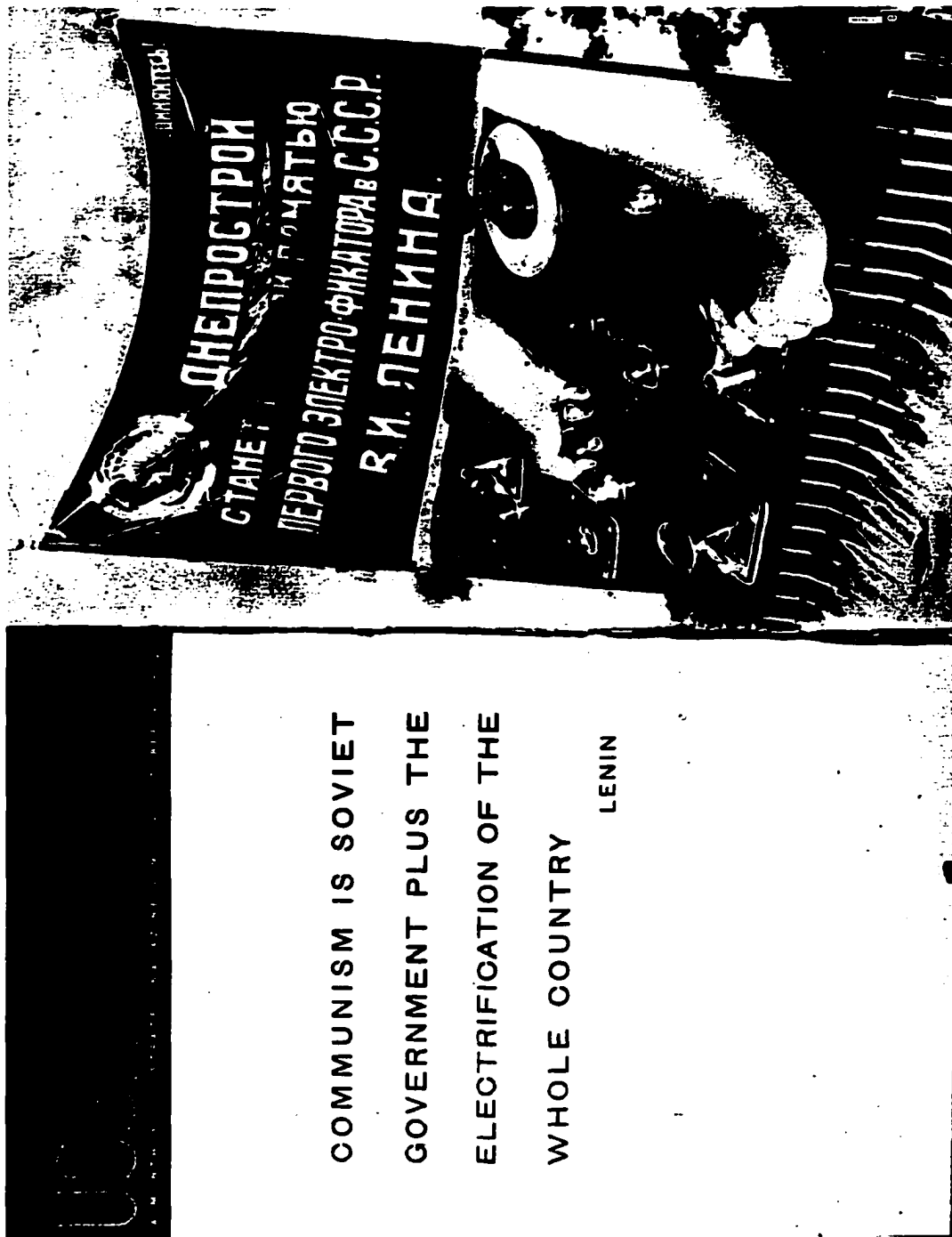


Figure 68



COMMUNISM IS SOVIET
GOVERNMENT PLUS THE
ELECTRIFICATION OF THE
WHOLE COUNTRY
LENIN

Figure 69



THE CURRENT IS SWITCHED ON

Figure 70



Figure 71



Figure 72



Figure 73

Рис. Гр. Розе

«РОССИЯ ВО МГЛЕ»

Пуща крупнейшая в мире турбина Днепрострой
(Из телеграмм)



Figure 74



W. G. ...



Figure 75



Figure 76

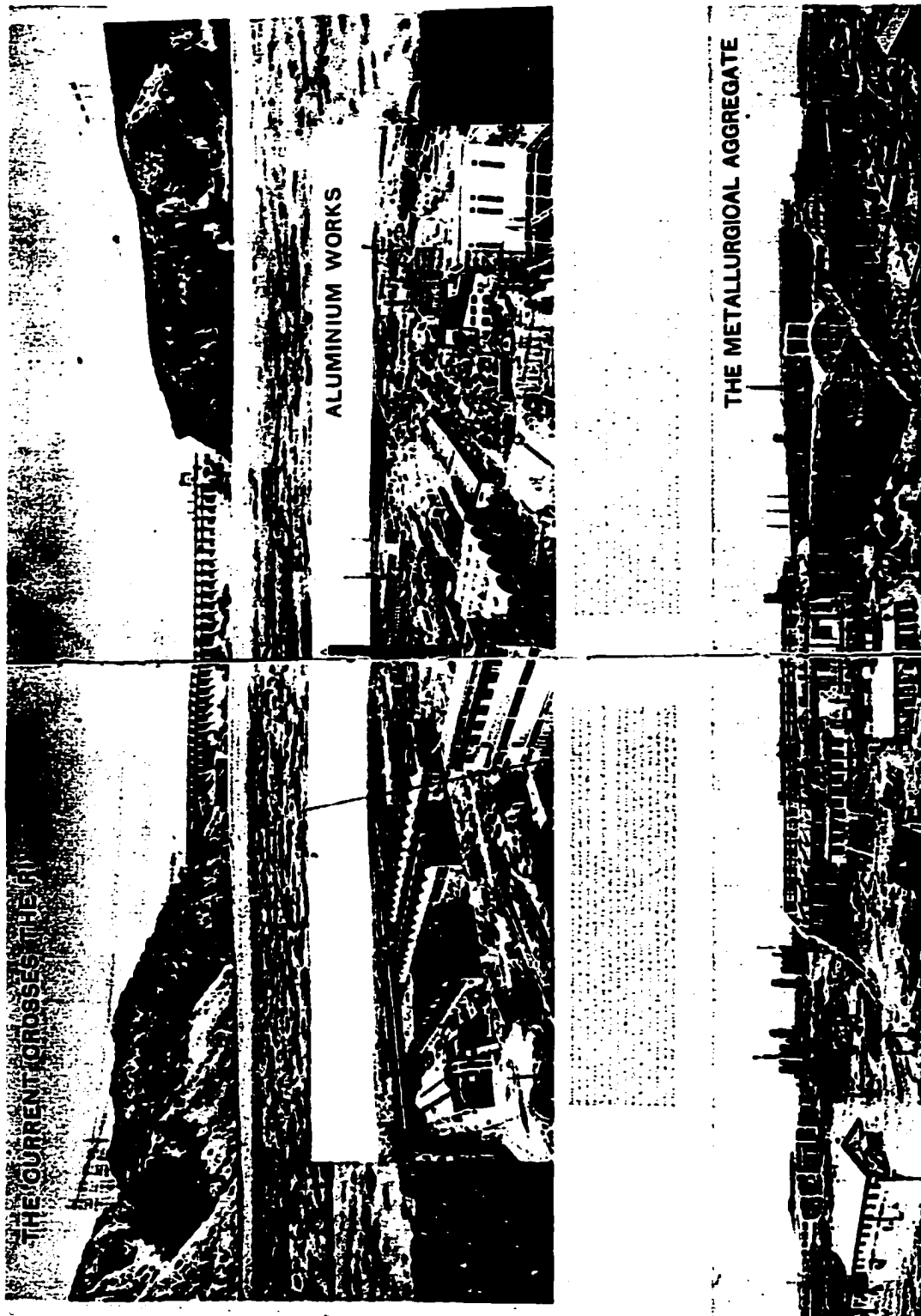
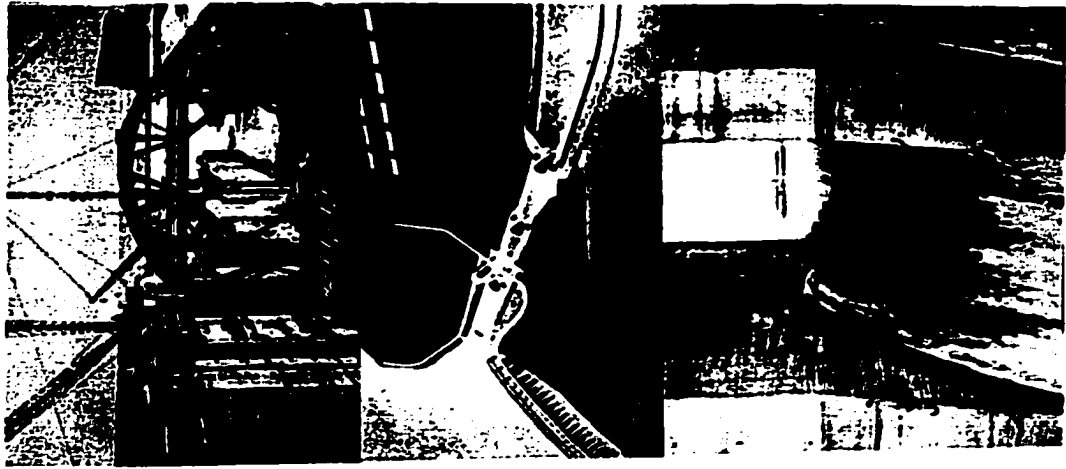


Figure 77



Figure 78



THE LOCK

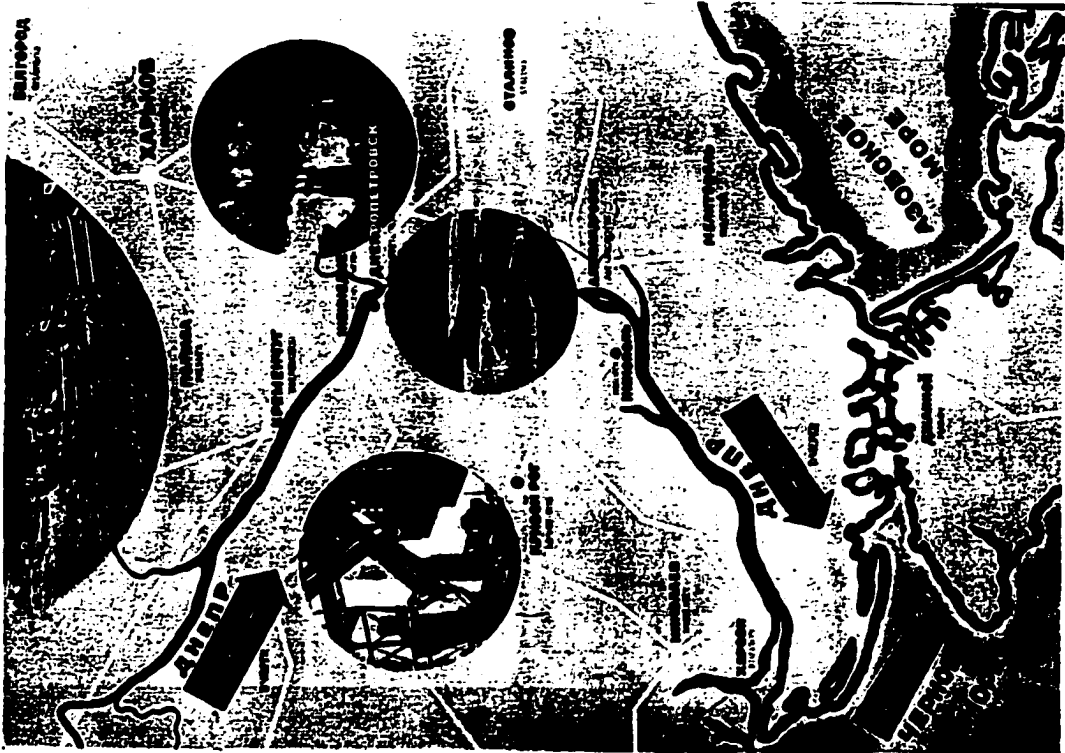
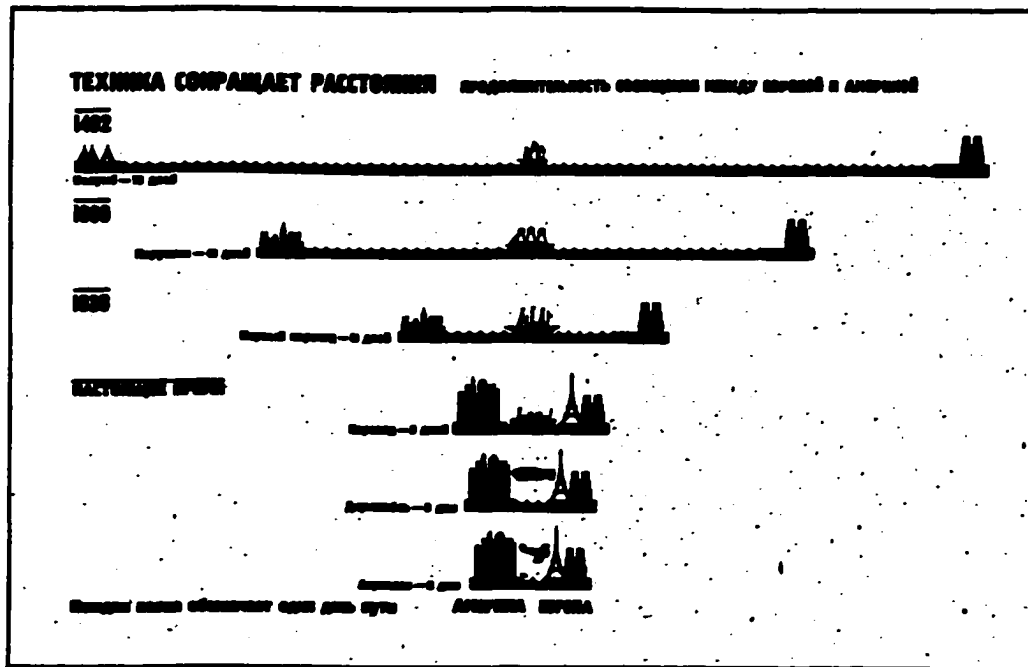


Figure 79



5
Beeldstatistiek uit het boek 'Aviacija i vozduchoplavenie', Moskou 1934

De typografie van deze beeldstatistiek wijkt iets af van de in de 'Weense Methode' gestelde normen, bij gebrek aan geschikt lettermateriaal. Overigens is voor de opbouw van de statistiek hetzelfde systeem gebruikt. Elk blauw golfje staat voor een dag reizen tussen Amerika en Europa - de grijze symbolen links en rechts - door middel van het vervoermiddel dat in het midden in rood is afgebeeld. De verkorting van de reistijden krijgt een haast dramatische visuele vorm: de continenten lijken elkaar snel dichterbij te naderen.

5
Picture statistics from the book *Aviacija i vozduchoplavenie*, Moscow, 1934.

The typography of these picture statistics differs somewhat from the norms posited in the 'Vienna Method' owing to a lack of a suitable typeface. Otherwise the same system has been used in composing the statistics. Each blue wave stands for a day's journey between America and Europe - the grey symbols on the left and right - by the means of transport depicted in the centre in red. The shortening of the travelling times has acquired an almost dramatic visual form, the continents appearing to come closer to each other at speed.

Figure 80



Figure 81



Figure 82

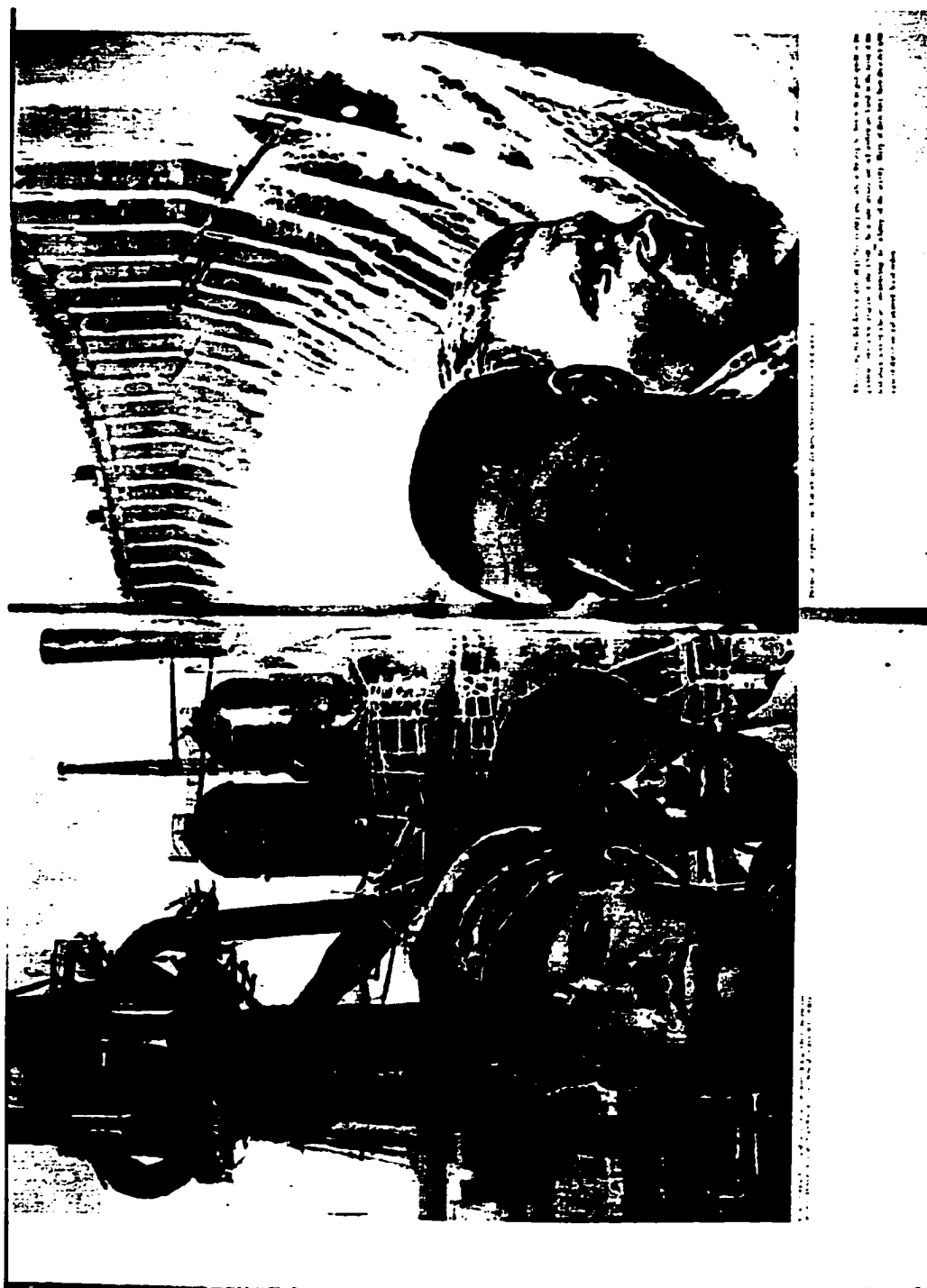


Figure 83

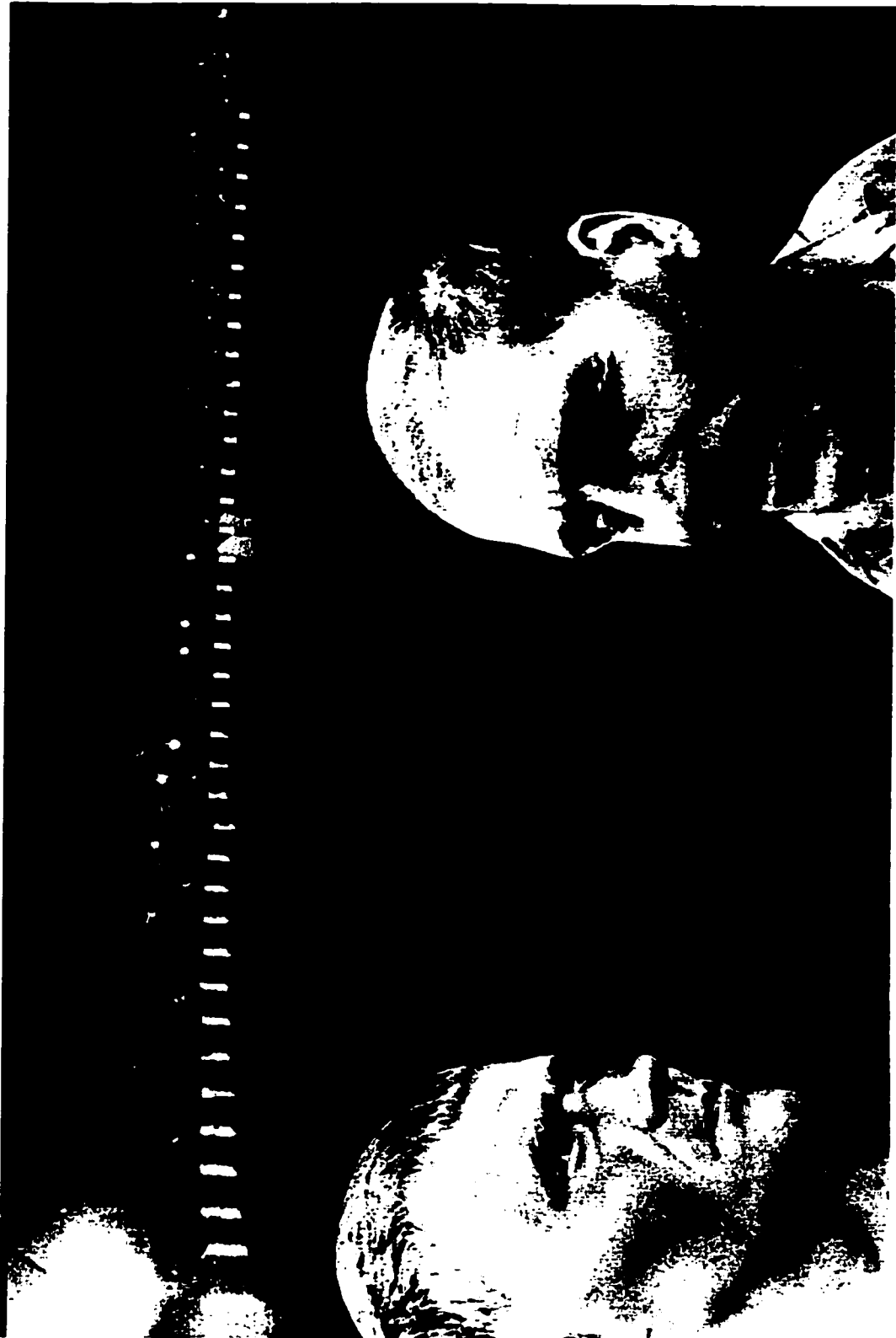


Figure 84

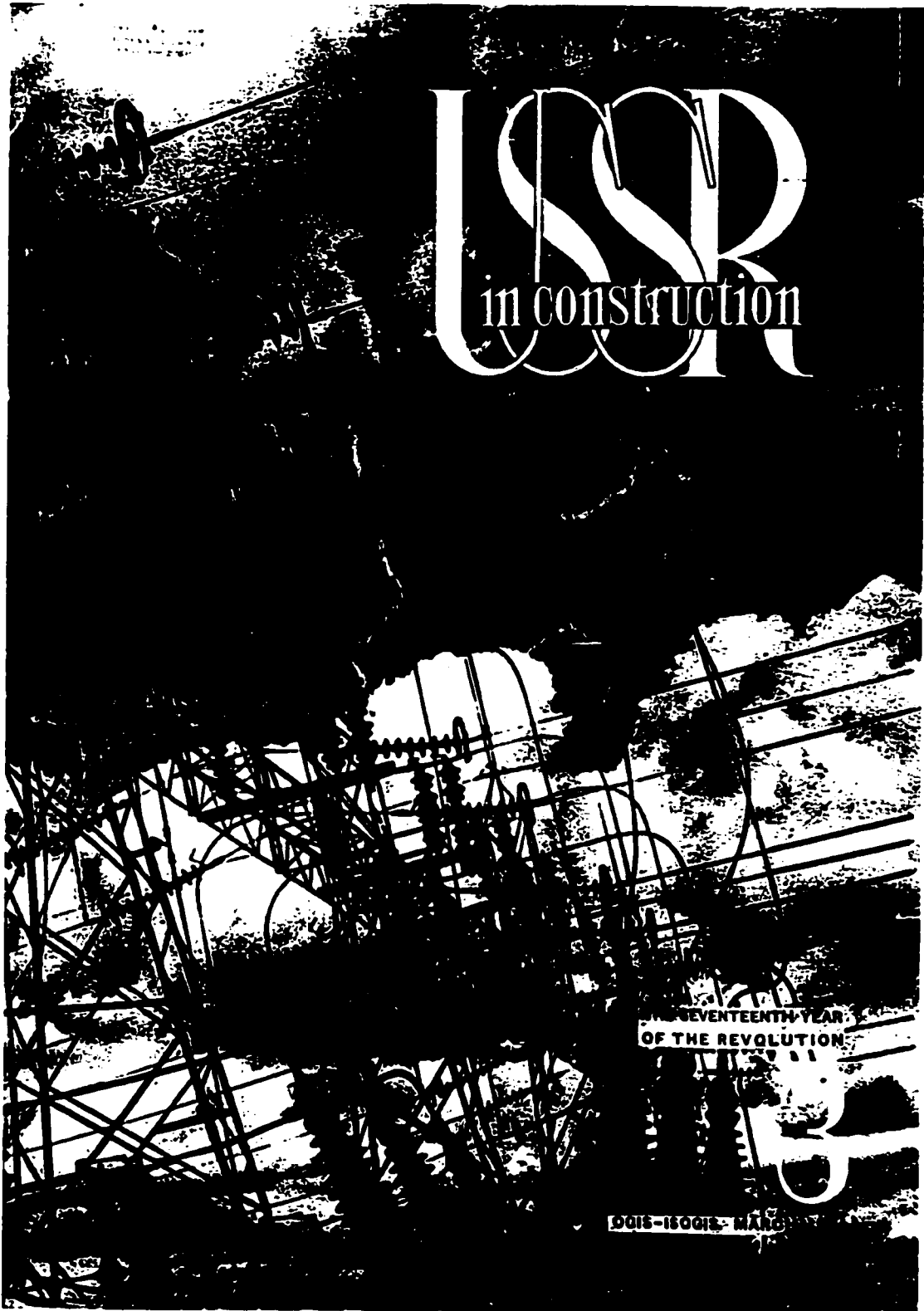


Figure 85

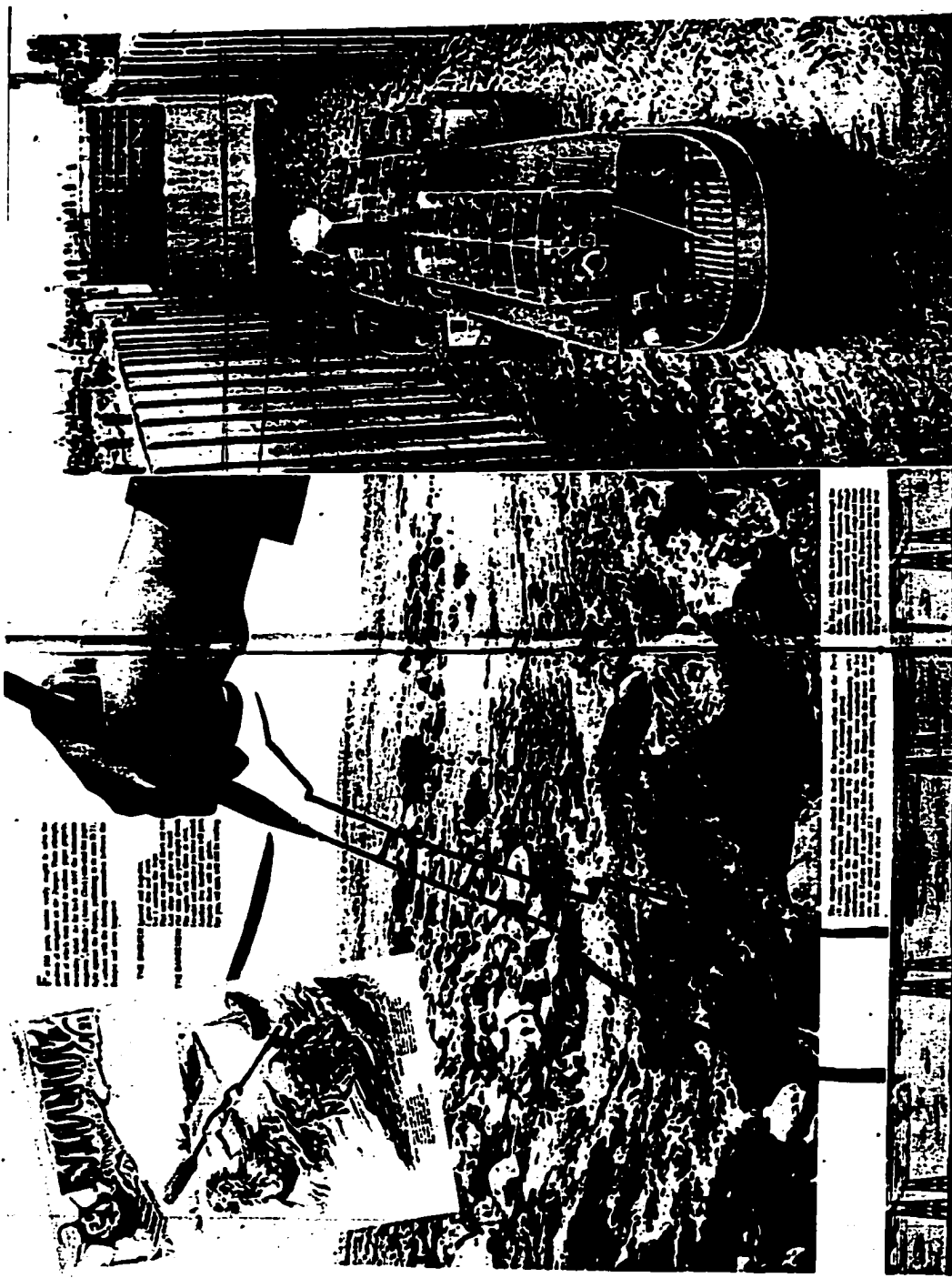
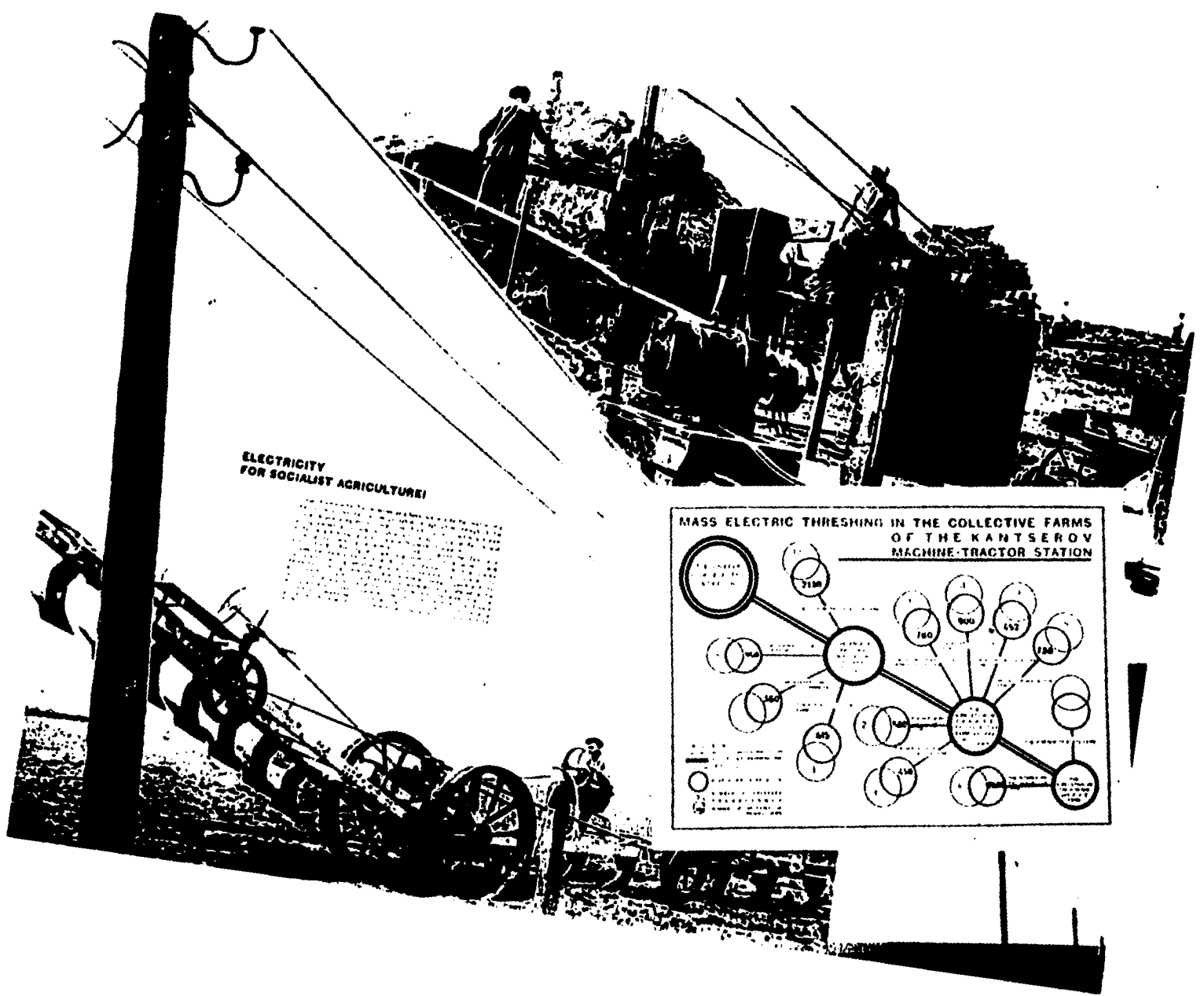


Figure 86

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Figure 87



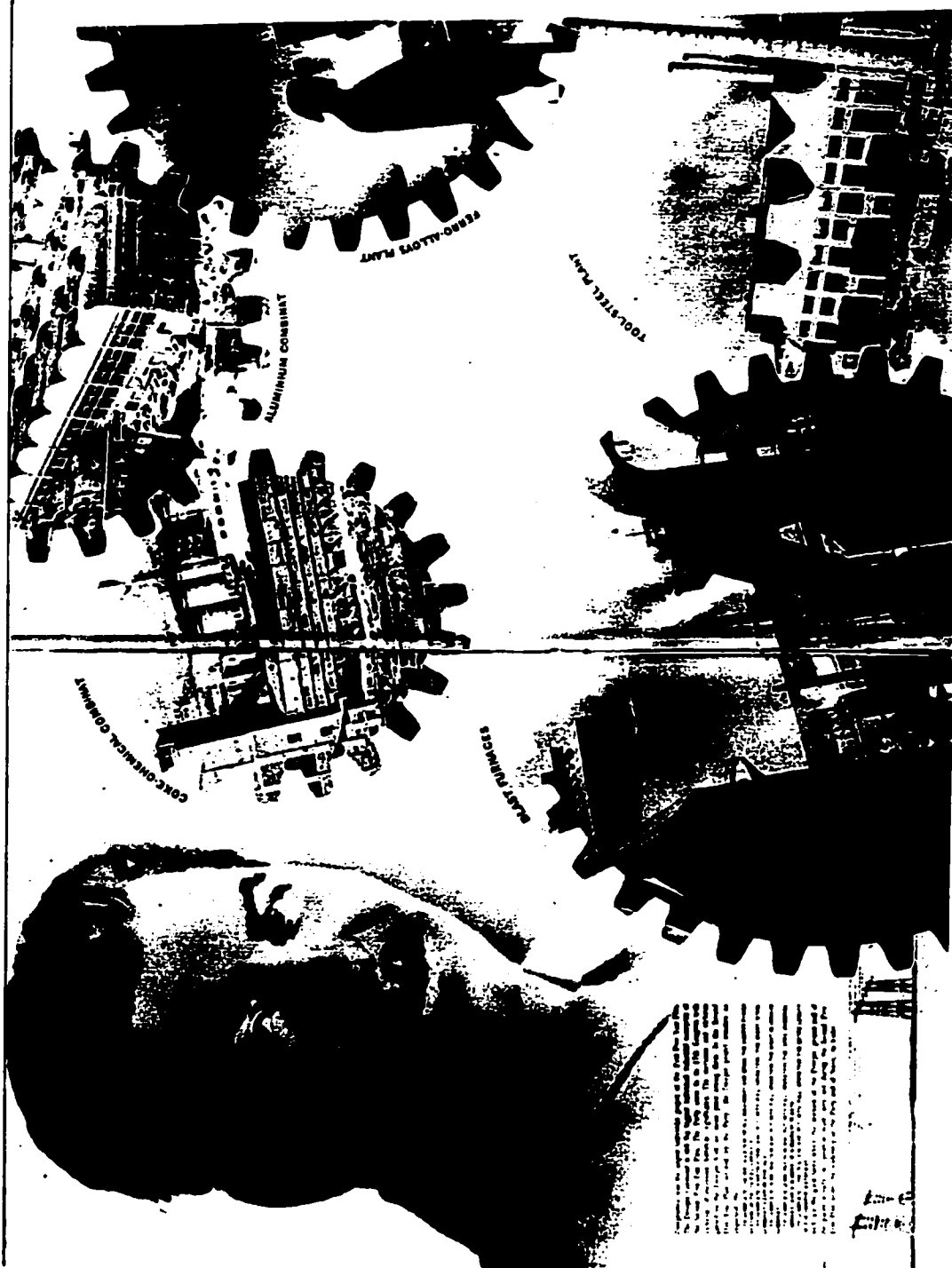


Figure 88

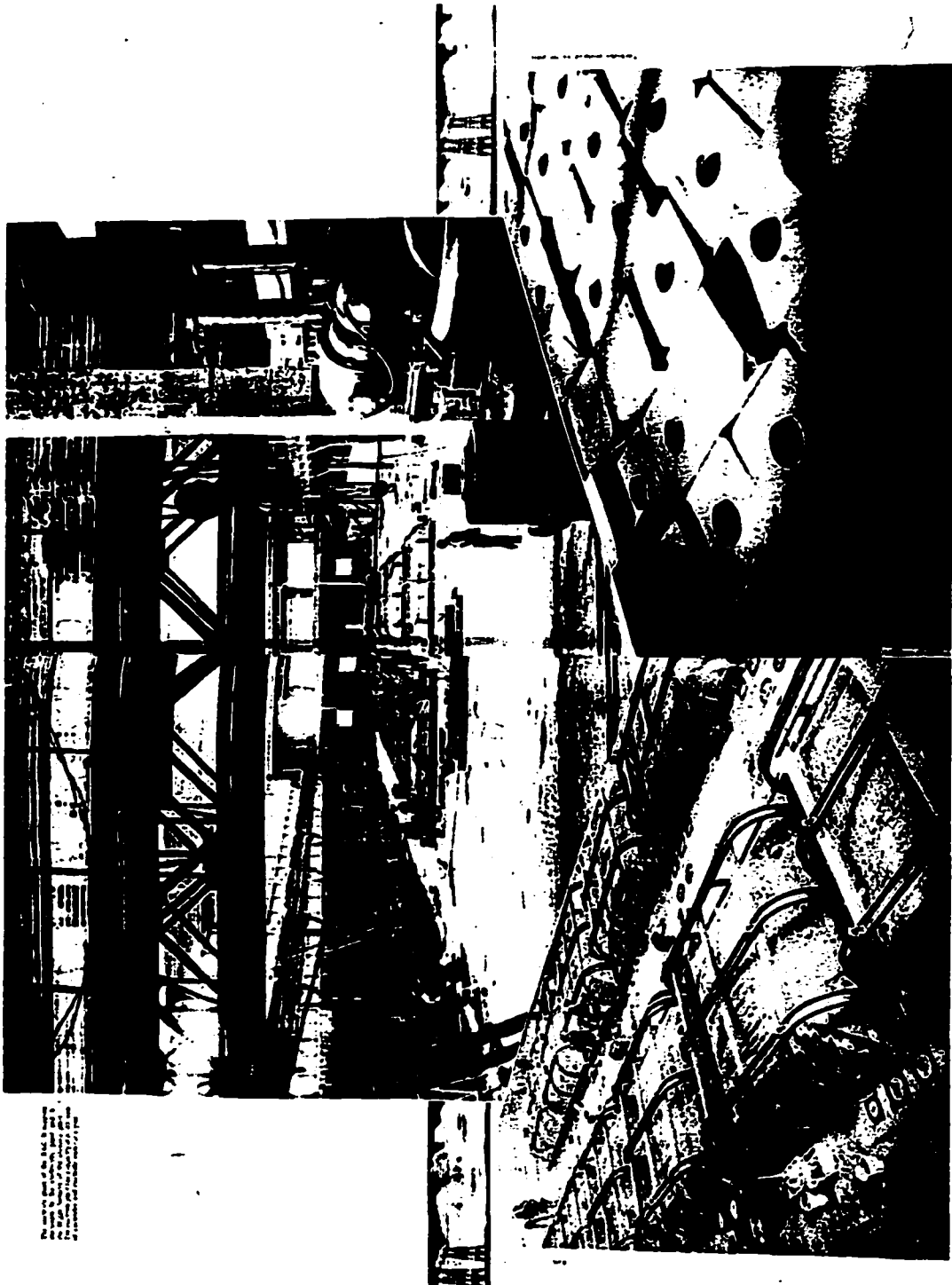


Figure 89

Методические особенности проектирования изданий 209 Группа агитационно-пропагандистских изданий



139
Фотомонтаж, усиленно
воздействующий на
читателя. Художник
Л. Лисицкий



140
Взаимосвязь фото-
графии и тематиче-
ских надписей

Будущее
начинается
сегодня

Спасибо

Мечтатель-
творец

Figure 90

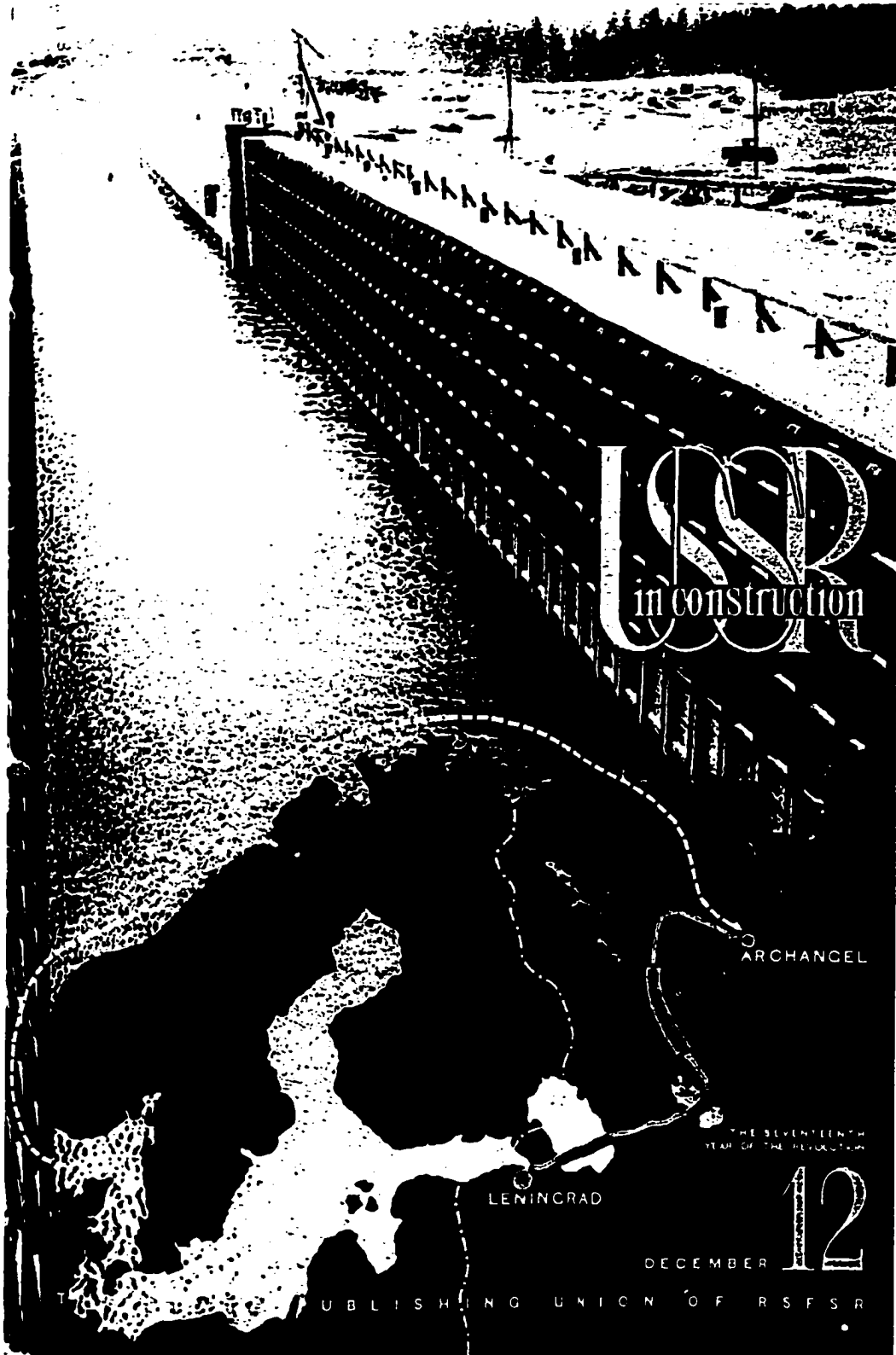


Figure 91a



Figure 91-b



Figure 91-c

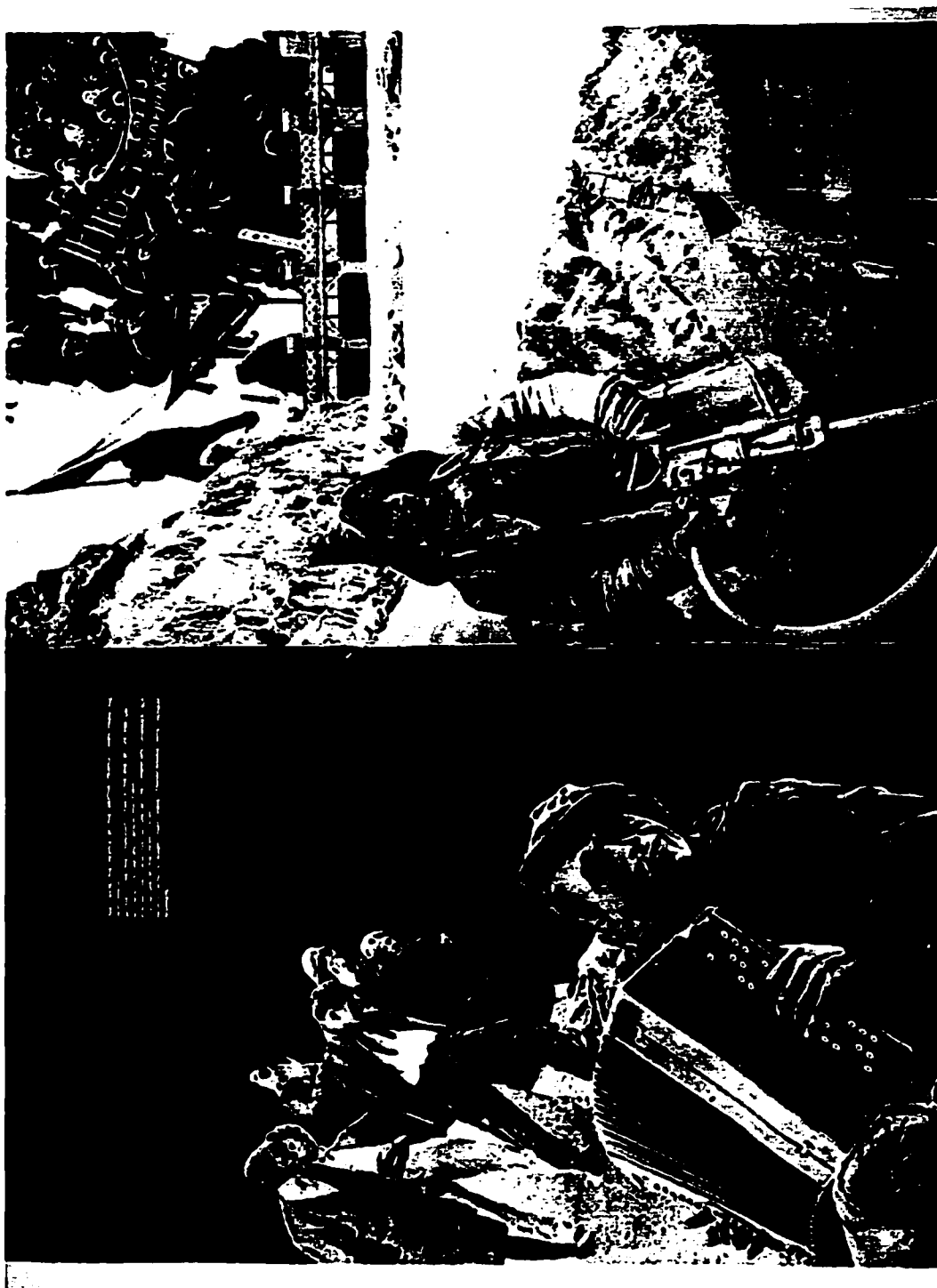


Figure 91-d



Figure 91-e



Figure 91-f



Figure 91-g

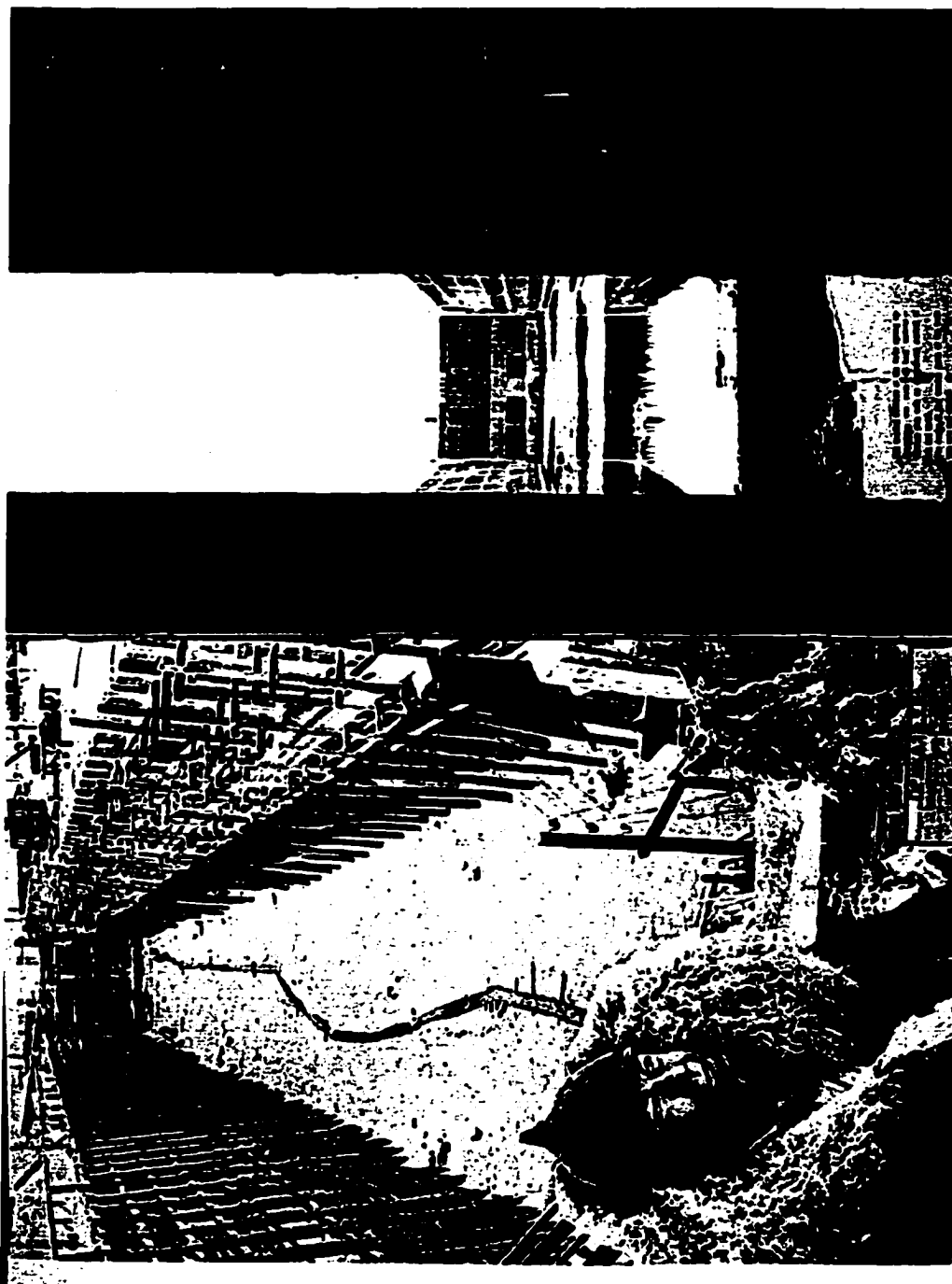


Figure 91-h

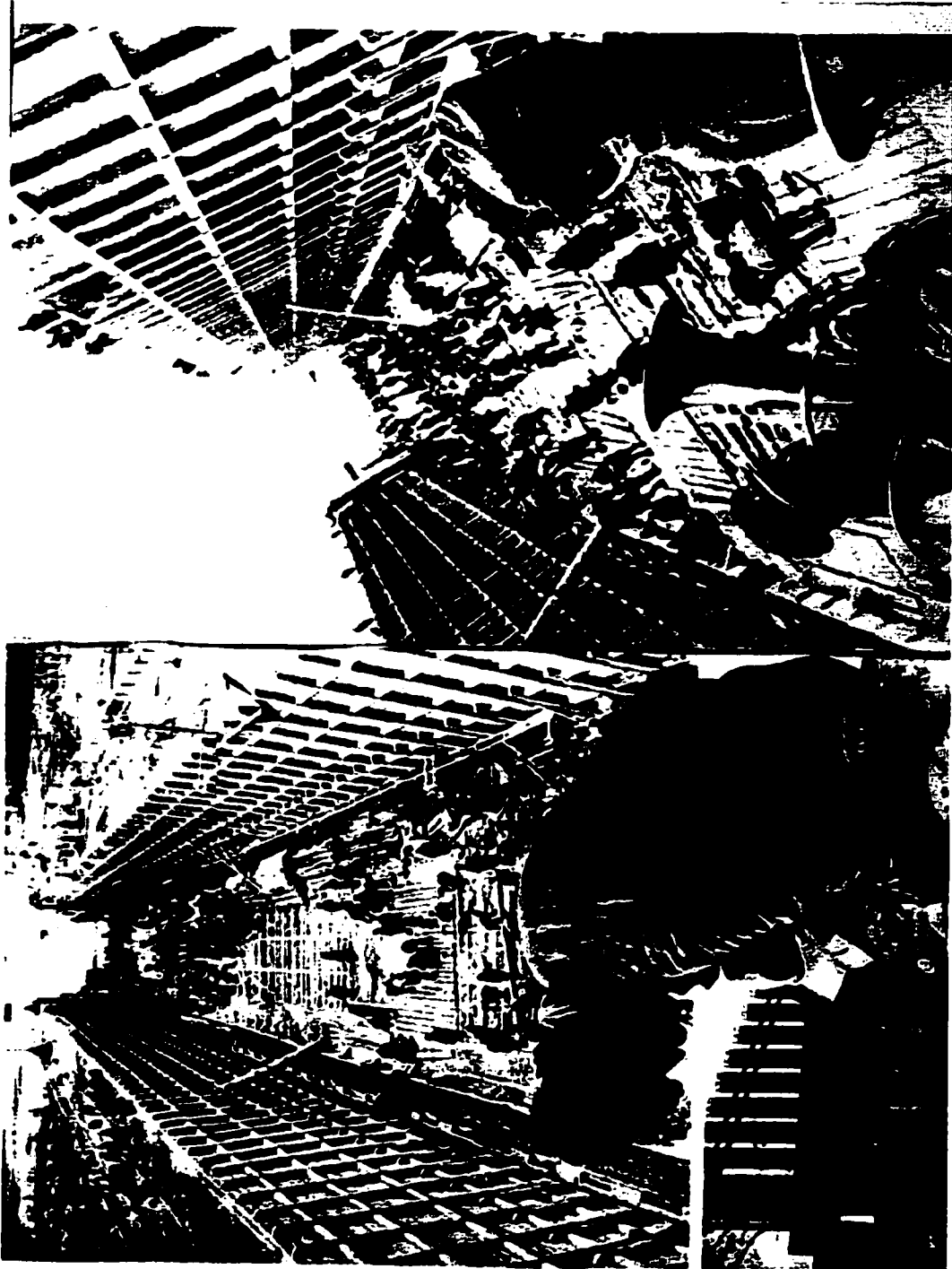


Figure 91-i



Figure 91-j

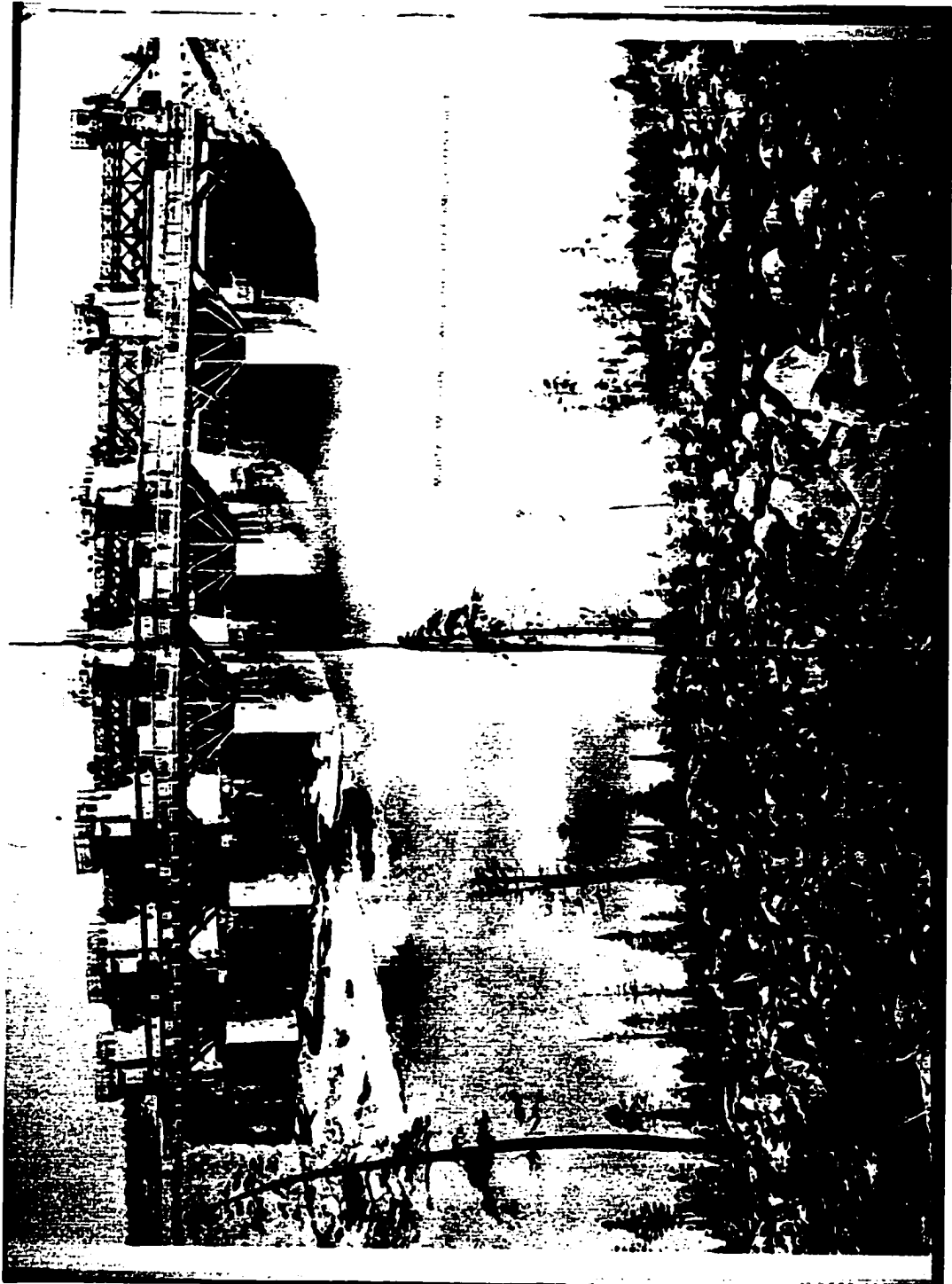


Figure 91-k

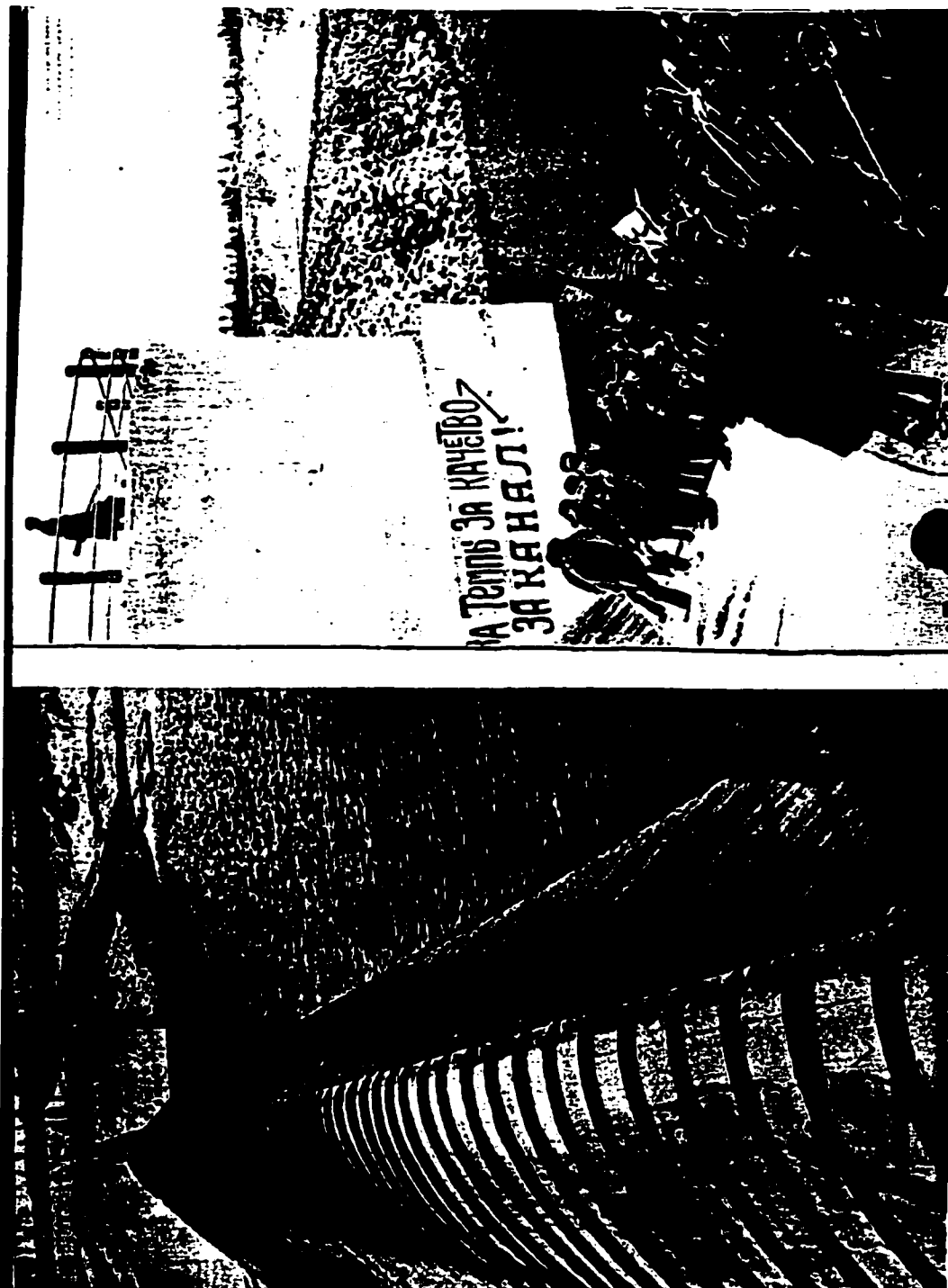


Figure 91-1

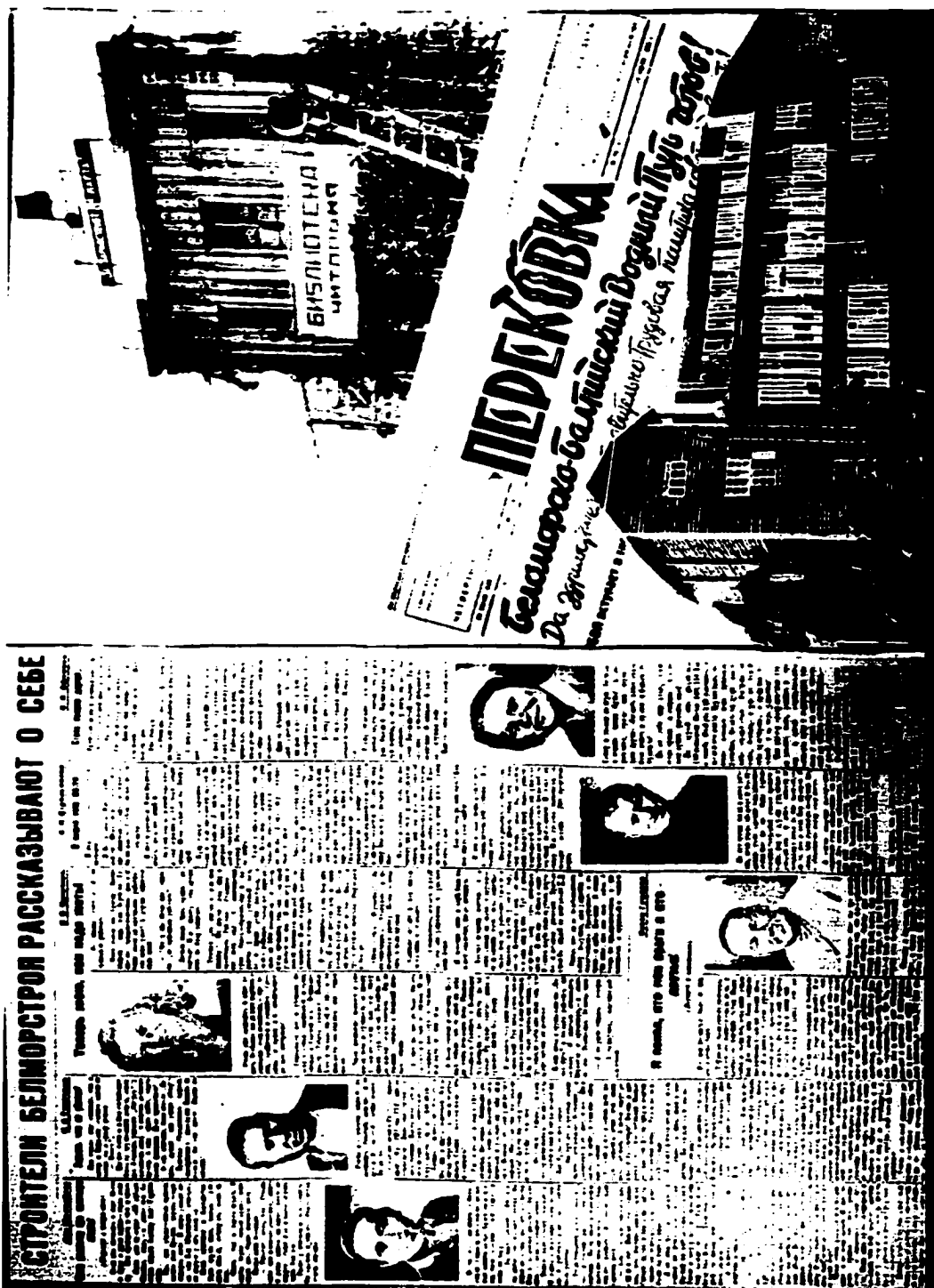


Figure 91-m



Figure 91-n



Figure 91-o



Figure 91-p

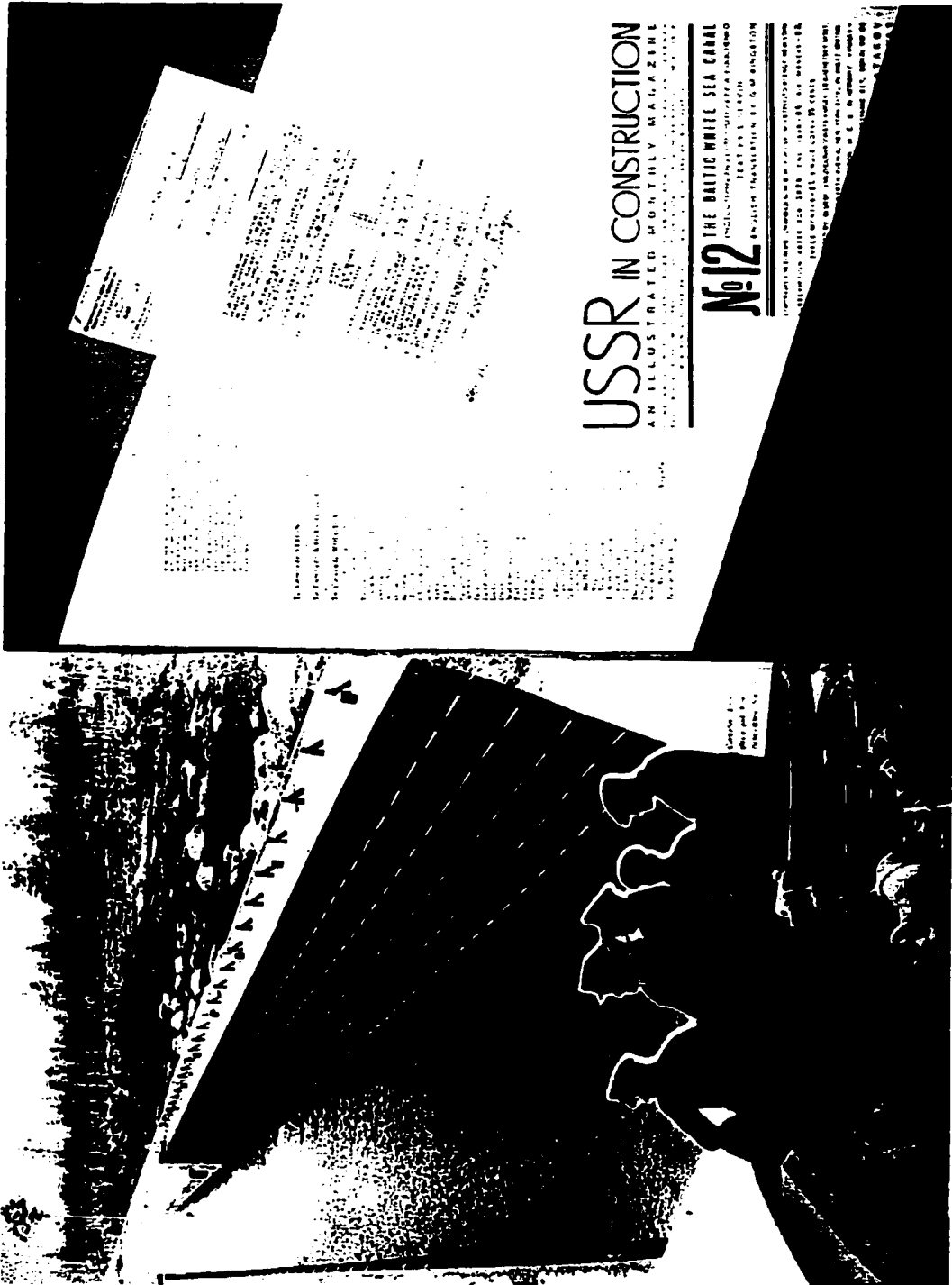


Figure 91-q

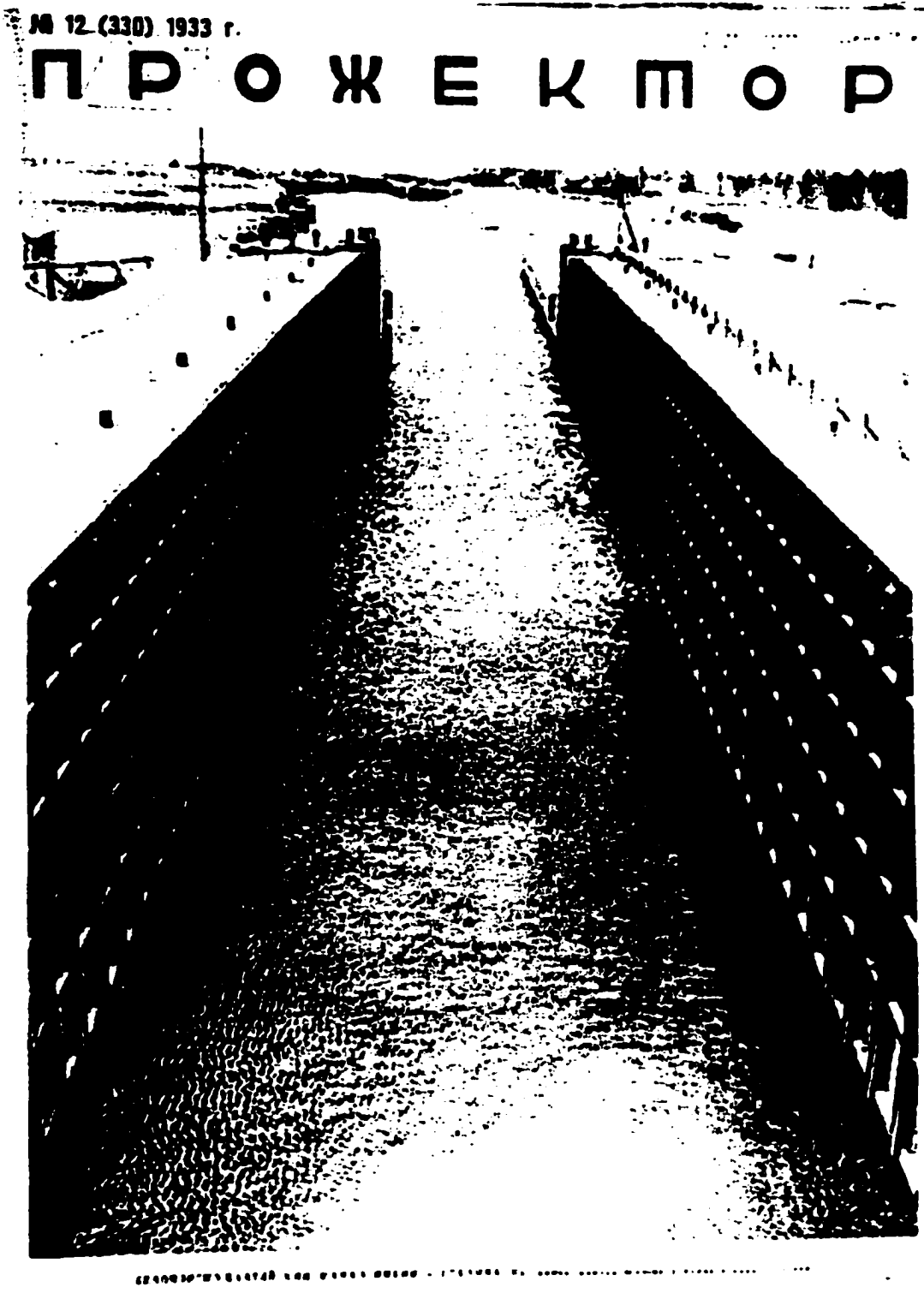
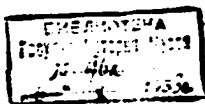
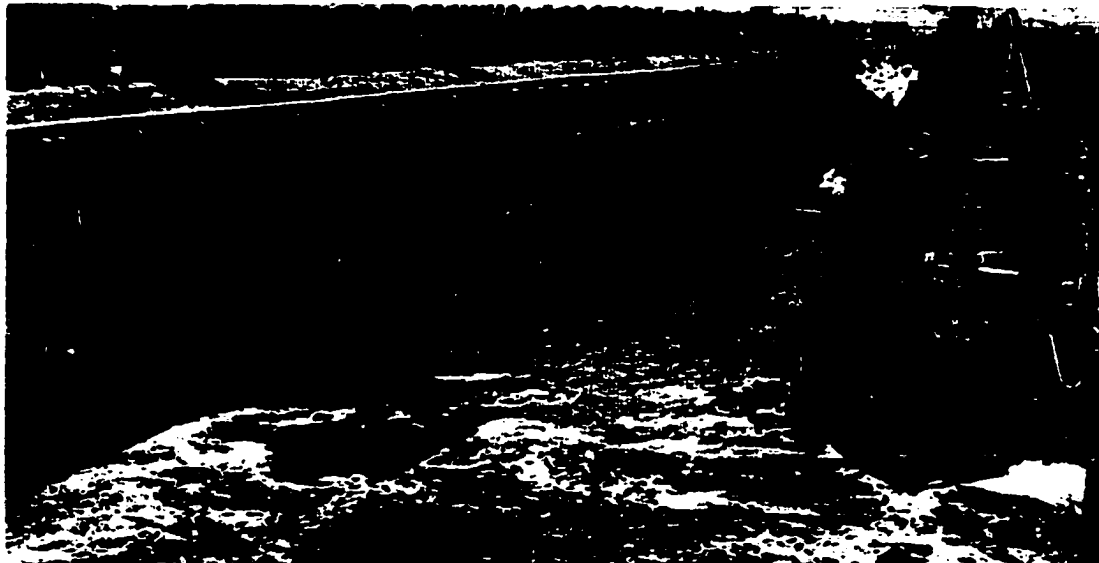


Figure 92



№ 29 (400) 29 сентября 1933 г. (16-й год пролетарской революции)



Первый пароход, вволящий в Беломорско-Балтийский канал

Фот. А. Растворко

НАШ ПУТЬ

Песня Б. Б. В. П.

Н. Асеев

Мы — канализарейши —
 Строим канал,
 Но не в том наша главная суть;
 Нам великое время
 Вышло в оборот,
 Чтобы поставить на правильный путь.
 Наш путь —
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Не так-то далеко
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Затем же смирною
 Песнь, аэромол,
 Разрывая болотную суть,
 Так он — прежнюю суть
 На житье проложил —
 С Беломорья прилаженный путь.
 Тот путь!
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Прощай, не скучай,
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Но на нем человеку
 Далеко идти,
 И теперь — наша совесть чиста:
 Копьейкина, Онега,
 Печора, Двина,
 Вы уже — не глухие места!
 Нет — путь!
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,

Не так-то далеко
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Но под палкой каменной
 Работали мы,
 Не в саудом безприметны террам,
 Мы — приходе болот
 Сильными водами,
 Через сушу пустивши волну
 В наш путь!
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Прощай, не скучай,
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Беломорский туман
 Не закрыв нам глаза,
 И речница не выдела соль,
 Мы прошли канал
 И прошли как гитара,
 Как гитара человеческая воля!
 И тот путь!
 Давай же отвал,
 штурман,
 Не так-то далеко
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Где еще ты отлащать
 Следы на воде
 Разориться и врыло, как путь, —
 Чужо — донимательные тысяч
 Оторванных людей

Обернулся отвороненный путь!
 Наш путь —
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Не так-то далеко
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Разрывая же прокладку
 Ивал — аэромол,
 Мы на полях — с открытым лицом
 И на Волге, Двинею,
 И с дождями, канал
 Союзом отлитым переносим,
 Дам путь!
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Прощай, не скучай,
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Так запомним о нем
 И спомне о нем,
 Это нам бодрость и волю дана
 Только в нашей
 Ветерной
 Ветерной стране
 Можно строить такие дела!
 Наш путь!
 Командуй отвал,
 штурман,
 Прощай, не скучай,
 Мурман,
 Архангельский порт
 рядом
 Стоит теперь
 с Ленинградом.

Figure 93

ПРОСТАРИ ВСЕХ СТРАН, СОЕДИНИТЕСЬ

БЕЛОМОРСКО- БАЛТИЙСКИЙ КАНАЛ

ИМЕНИ СТАЛИНА

ИСТОРИЯ СТРОИТЕЛЬСТВА

ПОД РЕДАКЦИЕЙ
М. ГОРЬКОГО
Л. Д. АБЕРБАХА
С. Г. ФИРИНА

1934

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО
«ИСТОРИЯ ЖЕЛЕЗНЫХ ДОРОГ»



V. G. G. G.

Figure 95



Знамя штаба соревнования завоевано женской бригадой

Figure 96

ца и при свете прожекторов. Если на трассе погаснет электричество, это значит, что сейчас будет взрыв.

Работа прекращается только во время взрывов.

Люди приходят и уходят, а высокий экономист все сидит с письмом в руке и каждому рассказывает про домоуправление.

«Домоуправление — это враг заключенных. — говорит экономист. — Домоуправление выселяет семьи заключенных. Выкусывает комнаты с кровью».

Экономист читает письмо вслух, хотя его уже никто не слушает: одни ложатся спать, другие встают. Письмо от жены:

«Мне с твоей мамой пришли на суд, и упрямом очень радовался, что пришли две женщины и даже без юриста. А потом пришел человек в форме чекиста, взял нас обеих под руку, сказал, что ты писал Рапопорту, а Рапопорт велел ему прийти на суд.

Этот человек говорил на суде очень убедительно, что мы с мамой — семья инженера строительства. Нас не выселили, и упрямом очень испуган. Когда ты приедешь со стройки, подьезжай к нашему дому непременно в автомобиле. Пускай они знают».

Экономист читает долго. С топчанов протестуют, все знают письмо наизусть. Экономист вздыхает, складывает письмо и говорит:

«Пойду в клуб, там сегодня симфонический оркестр. Только жаль: первая скрипка освободилась».

У САМОГО БЕЛОГО МОРЕА

Дадим опять слово бывшему начальнику обороны Зимнего дворца инженеру Аняшеву:

«Особенно мое руководство имело ценность, так как я получил в ноябре льготу два года, затем в марте месяце 1933 года десяти-

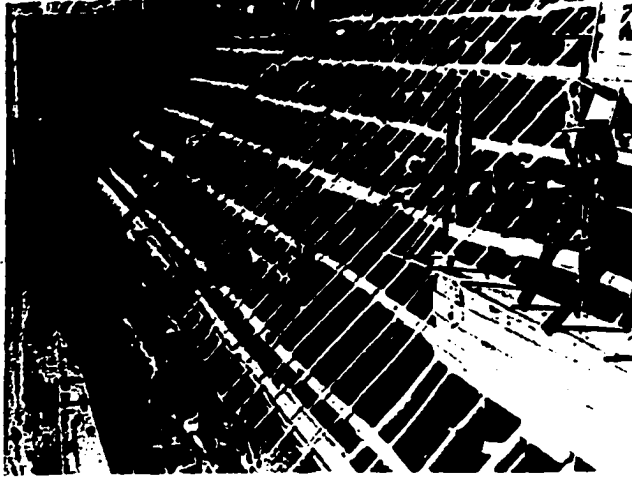


Поддержка чужих на суде

Figure 97



Снимок поверхности металла, на которой нанесены следы от пальцев. Видны характерные отпечатки.



Снимок поверхности металла, на которой нанесены следы от пальцев. Видны характерные отпечатки.



Снимок поверхности металла, на которой нанесены следы от пальцев. Видны характерные отпечатки.

Figure 98

После чего раздались такие аплодисменты, что штрафной поп в дальнем изоляторе, приняв их за взрывы, плюнул: «Тьфу, и днем и ночью терзают, рвут божью землю».

Но разные бывают агитбригады, и не все они умеют включаться со своим репертуаром в боевую жизнь лагерей. Год тому назад весной, в Телекине хотя бы, было совсем другое.

На передних скамьях сидели те из подрывников и бурильщиков, чья выработка была не меньше 150 процентов. Чем выше была выработка, тем лучше были места. Там сидели ударники и рекордисты. Завтра на рассвете они должны были снова сверлить и рвать упорную телекинскую скалу, но в данную минуту они интересовались выступлением штурмовой бригады центрального театра, посланной сюда из Медгоры. Занавес раздался. Были исполнены вокальные и хореографические номера, увертюра из «Орфея в аду», ария из «Продавца птиц» и «Испанские пляски в таверне».

— Следующий номер нашей программы — «Конек-Горбунок», — объявил ведущий.

— Набили ему холку, оттого и горбунок, — оживленно заговорили гужевики. — То-то и оно!

Они жадно глядели на сцену, но там мелькали яркие ткани, двигались икры. Не то!

В конце вечера певец запел: «Смейся, паяц». Тяжелый гул заглушил тенорок.

«Неужели аплодисменты?» спросили за кулисами.

— Взрывы, да не те, — мрачно ответил завклубом.

— Вот тебе и смейся, — заговорил зрительный зал.

Это было время, когда центральный театр и его агитбригады изо всех сил старались копировать ГАБТ и МХАТ. Они ставили сцену в корчме из «Бориса Годунова», «Свадьбу Кречинского» и скетч «Покинутая». Агитбригадники медлительно репетировали, «оживались в образ» и мечтали в день окончания канала поставить «Лакмэ».

Первая, подлинно лагерная агитбригада зародилась в Повенце. Наиболее драматически одаренными оказались тридцатипятичники. Им был свойственен пафос, юмор, чувствительность. У них оказался богатейший ассортимент улыбок и интонаций.

От прошлой жизни у них сохранилась склонность к перевоплощениям: сейчас все это пошло в ход, пригодилось.

Был проделан еще более смелый опыт: в агитбригаду после испытательного срока на трассе брали из РУРа, отдельных поме-

щений, штрафных изоляторов. Вскоре эти соцвреды, оправдав себя на производстве, стали страстными актерами. На первом же организационном заседании им было сказано, что звание агитбригадника и каналармейца — высокое звание, что надо его заслужить и производственной и художественной выработкой. Агитбригадник должен быть застрельщиком ударничества и соцсоревнования, глазом рабочего контроля и лучшим из лучших бойцов на всех передовых позициях великого строительства.

Третьего января, в звонкий зимний день, агитбригада приступила к репетициям.

Строжайшая дисциплина была установлена в агитбригаде. Тот, кто рассчитывал найти там привольное актерское «житьишко», горько разочаровался.



Повенцевская агитбригада



Основной герой Беломорской механизации — деревянный бэрри. Металлические части его конструкции сделаны целиком на самом строительстве

прошу, дорогие товарищи, определить меня в какой ни есть коллектив и даю честное гражданское слово, что буду работать, как работают ударники, а вы тогда посмотрите. И не только сам буду, а и других заставлю, чтобы не попадали они в этот самый рисунок. Мне, тридцатипятинику, стыдно, что я хочу остановить строительство и что на сегодняшний день я являюсь классовым врагом советской власти. К сему подпись Жигалов. Пожалуйста, прошу снять карикатуру».

Жизнь полна беспокойства, суматохи, торопливости, суеты.

Поминутно хлопают двери. Приходят и уходят люди.

— Какого чорта, — ругаются в телефонную трубку, — вы мне присылаете плотников вместо бурильщиков.

— Что вы мне прислали тысячу человек? Куда я их девать буду! Где я для них бараки возьму?

— Когда к нам прибудет тысячный этап?

— Пришлите шесть прачек!

КАНАЛОАРМЕЙЦЫ

И вот мечутся от телефона к телефону работники УРЧ, роются в карточках, изредка путая в спешке номера судебных статей с номерами телефонов.

— Товарищ! — кричит заболевший этой болезнью человек. — Товарищ! Да отлохли вы что ли... дайте мне 58^ю.

И, спохватившись, человек растерянно улыбается.

58^я — статья судебного кодекса, карающая за агитацию против советской власти. Это соседям понятно.

А телефонов немного. Всего два. Но они уютнее для телефонистки, чем целая телефонная станция.

Светлеют окна. Курьер ПТЧ принес разнарядку на работу.

— Скорей, скорей! — вопит старший подрядчик работникам УРЧ.

— Известите бригадиром: сто плотников на нижние поля. Бурильщиков в верхнюю голову шлюза. Бригады Подлепинского и Браварника на выемку скалы... Скорей.

На дамбе тянется вереница людей.

Идут группами, бригадами, трудколлективами. Несут топоры, лопаты, пилы. Несут выцветшие знамена.

Идут землекопы, плотники — ряжевики, бывшие кулаки и подкулачники, вредители колхозов.

Идут бурильщики, скальщики — бывшие воры-рецидивисты.

Тачечники-крючники — бывшие афганские курбаши, басмачи, ишаны и баи.

Плохо греет зимнее солнце. Неприятлива земля. Угрюмы вековые леса. Суровы морозы и пьюги.

За гребнем дамбы — порумевшая за зиму хвоя. Голые осины. Тихая тропа. Вдали углубляют реку. От взрывов глухо охают лес и воздух.

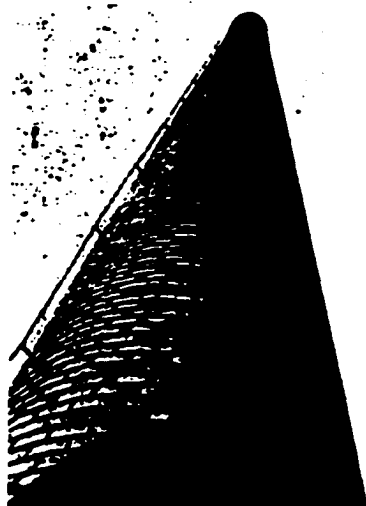
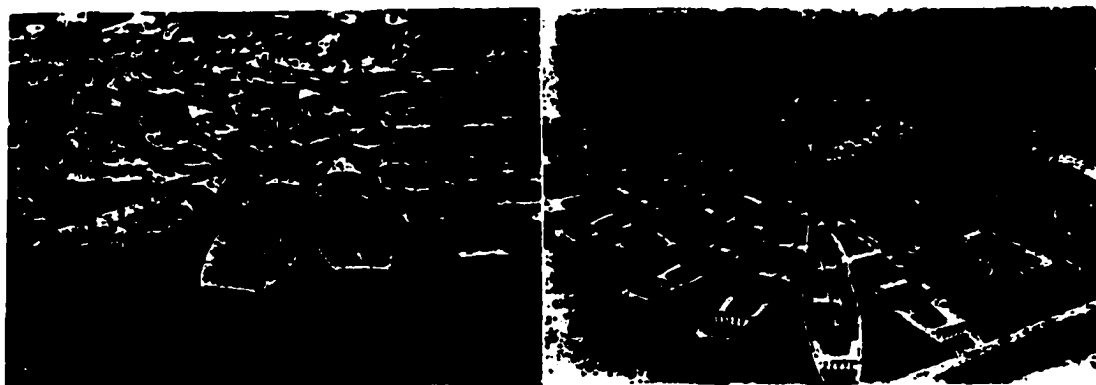
Дамба переходит в насыпь. Завалы вязкого глинистого грунта. Штабели скалистого битого камня.

За штабелями канал. Внизу, в канале, на снегу, люди. Спускаются вниз. По трапам ползут вверх тачки. Тачечники идут, широко расставляя ноги; тяжесть давит им на руки. Несмотря на холод некоторые в рубашках. Им жарко. Видно, как напрягаются мускулы. По трапам бегут крючники. На ходу подхватывают тачки крюками за передок и тянут наверх. Над обрывом на клетках ряжей прилепились деррики — подъемные деревянные краны — хитроумное лагерное изобретение. Плоскими перекладными глядят деррики в сырое северное небо; скрежещут, вздымаясь, нагруженные камнем ковши.



Нармелик не только сжалу — взрывали свой старий мир

Figure 101



*Иллюстрированное
ПИСЬМО в РЕДАКЦИЮ.*

**НАШИ
и ЗА-ГРАНИЦА.**

Материал 6 фото.

Вверху слева: фото Д. Мар-
тона (САСШ) 1925 г.

Вверху направо: фото А. Род-
ченко (Москва) 1926 г.

Посредине слева: фото
А. Рейгер-Павч (Германия) 1926 г.

Посредине направо: фото
А. Родченко (Москва) 1927 г.

Внизу слева: фото проф. Не-
голь-Ваги (Германия).

Внизу направо: фото А. Род-
ченко (Москва) 1926 г.

Примечание А. М. Родченко —
отнюдь не простой фотограф. Он —
художник-профессор Вуцетиса в Мос-
кве, является искателем новых путей
в фотографии, известен способно-
стью видеть вещи по-своему, по-во-
зможу, с собственной новой точки
зрения. Способность эта стала обще-
известна, что если какой-либо фото-
граф снимает сверху вниз или
снизу вверх — то про него говорят,
что он «снимает под Родченко», под-
ражает Родченко».

Предварительные выводы: Как
не стыдно иностранным фотографам
независимо от достигнутой совет-
ской фотографии для своих интерна-
ционалистических целей, да еще выдавать
их за свои собственные!

Своиственные выводы: из
всего вышесказанного — пусть сде-
лают сами читатели.

Фотокорр

Примечание редакции: К сожа-
лению, все вышерассказанное не являет-
ся первоприводной путкой: все 6
приведенных фото действительно де-
ствительно автором письма в редакцию
в виде вырвков из иностранных и со-
ветских журналов на вырвков вид-
но, что фото действительно принадле-
жат тем авторам, на кого ссылал-
ся писатель: года тому проверены.



Figure 102



Figure 103



Figure 104



На строительстве канала Волга—Москва. Товарищи Каганович, Ягода, Фирин, Ноган и Жун
(с выставки мастеров фотографии)

А. Родченко

Figure 105

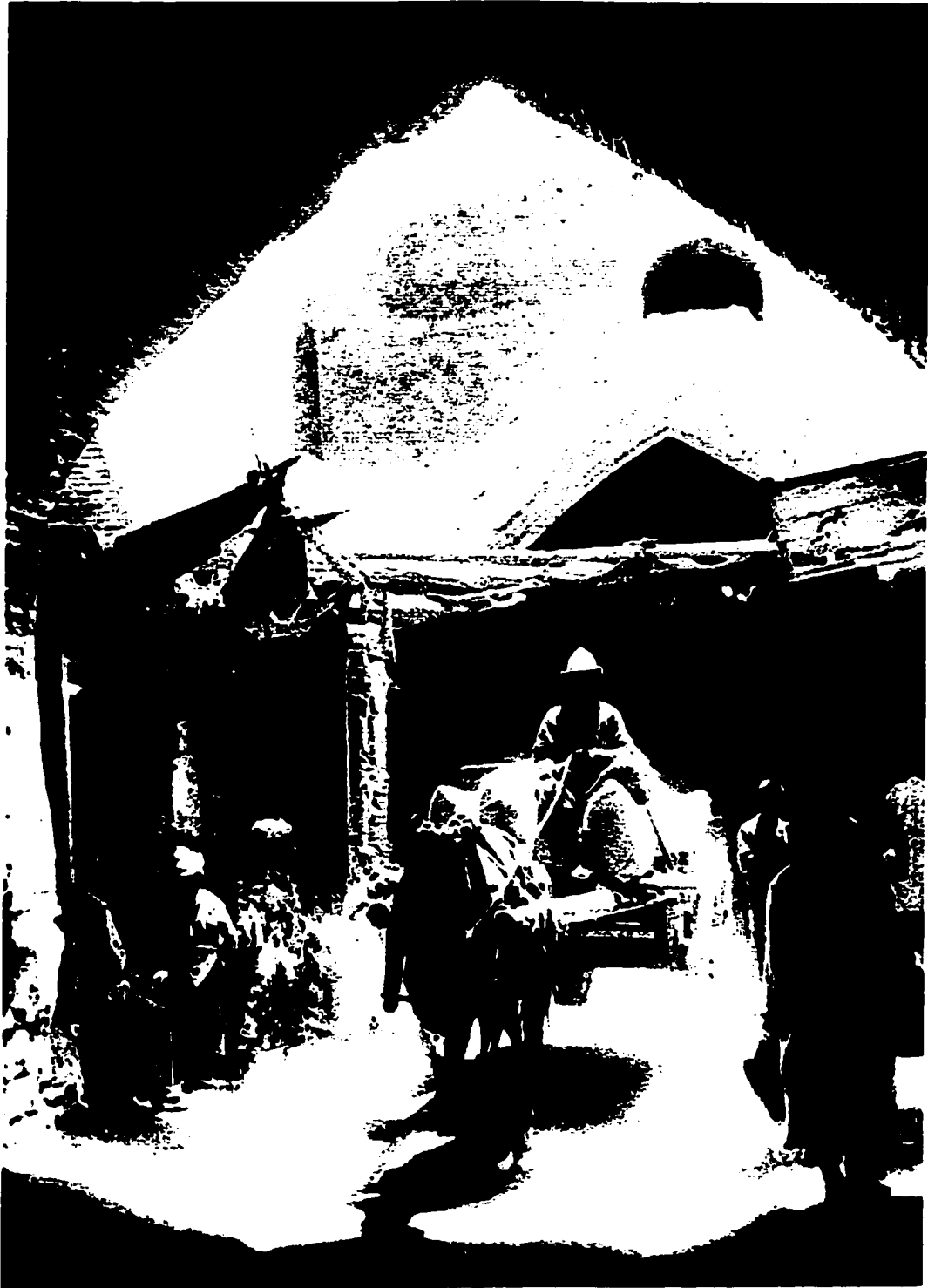


Figure 106



Figure 107



Figure 108



Figure 109



Figure 110



Томаска Френкель, Фирин и Успенский на трассе

что оно приносило целый ряд льгот, да и начальство не ругает, а оставляет в покое, если выработка большая. Поэтому многие приписывали выработку. Например взорвано 5 тысяч кубометров скалы; по плану предполагается, что скала должна быть вся выброшена, а фактически ее оставляют на месте. Бывали и другие формы: например вписывали в общую выработку удаление растительного слоя, включали его в кубатуру, чего делать не полагается, так как этот слой идет на отвал. Таким образом по сводкам неоднократно получалось, что все работы выполнены на сто с лишним процентов, на самом же деле, когда произвели инструментальный обмер, оказалось, что сооружения далеко не закончены.

Бывает так называемая «обратная туфта», на первый взгляд немного непонятная. Об инженере Кирсанове говорили, что одно время у него было 8 тысяч кубометров «запаса» выброшенной породы, не указанной в сводках. Инженер Кирсанов «скрыл» 8 тысяч кубометров уже произведенных работ.

Не мания ли это в конце концов? Какой же смысл скрывать выработку?

Смысл есть:

Наличие «запаса» позволяет варьировать месячные показатели: проработав месяц хорошо, следующий месяц или два можно работать с прохладцей и все же оставаться на завоеванном уровне. Наличие запаса позволяет держать руководство в постоянном неведении относительно действительного состояния работ и в случае надобности огорошить его неожиданной сверхударной цифрой. Такая «надобность» представилась накануне ноябрьских льгот. Инженер Кирсанов благодаря своим дутым показателям, в частности благодаря искусному маневрированию «запасом», был досрочно освобожден к ноябрьской годовщине. Логика цифр, свидетельствовавших черным по белому, что работы в отделении почти закончены, заставила Кирсанова отпустить как ненужную большую часть квалифицированной рабочей силы, переброшенной оттуда на канал Москва — Волга.

ма с пациентом-узбеком, напрасно пытавшимся выразить свой недуг красноречивыми жестами, Фирин заинтересовался:

— Вы понимаете, что у него болит?

Лекпом из попов, с видом строго научным, вместо указательного пальца поднял термометр:

— Народ они несознательный и объясниться на понятном языке не умеют. Однако же догадываемся. При некоем опыте, ежели у лекаря глаз изметан, определяем по внешней комплекции.

Фирин ходил один, ходил с Френкелем. У Френделя было чему поучиться. Он хорошо умел разрешать возникшие между канцлармейцами споры, когда один обвинял другого в присвоении им чужой нормы, а десятник мялся и глядел в сторону. Начальник работ отлично изучил уловки филтонов и с одного взгляда открывал обьемистый пенек, заложенный в середину штабеля камней, дабы увеличить кубатуру вынудой породы. Участок за участком исследовал Фирин, вникая в мелочи будней строительства.

Шли дни, а ожидаемого удара кулаком по столу попрежнему не было сделано. Гдето по участкам какие-то комиссии уже производили обмер недоделанных работ. Инженеры нервничали. Кто-кто из них, встречая помнач ГУЛАГа на трассе, решался первым перевести разговор на общее тяжелое положение строительства. Фирин внимательно слушал, иногда переспрашивал, но сам не говорил ничего. Инженер так и уходил ни с чем, не в состоянии ответить на основной вопрос: отдает себе Фирин отчет в положении или не отдает.

Поговаривали с косою улыбкой, что помнач ГУЛАГа гораздо более разговорчив с уголовной шпаной, особенно с бабьем. За свое краткое пребывание успел излазать все женские бараки и ни одной бабе на трассе не дает проходу, чтобы не заинтересоваться, как ей живется в лагере.

В бараках, в прачечных, в кухнях он действительно подолгу и подробно расспрашивал лагерниц об их прошлом, о том, что их привело в лагерь.

Ответы были удивительно однообразны.

«Родители мои умерли от дымного угля, когда мне было три года», рассказывает Подгорская.

«Отец помер, оставил нас троих, старшему десять лет», сообщает Юрцева.

«Семи лет осталась без отца на руках у матери», говорит Каледина.

«Отца своего я не помню, росла в сиротстве» (Мельникова).



Том Фирин — помнач ГУЛАГа в начальнике из гора Беломерстрое

«Отец умер. С малых лет пришлось работать по найму» (Шевченко).

Это они, сироты и полусироты, работали по найму, жили у чужих людей, батрачили, нянчили чужих детей, чужое поле, чужой огород. Они теряли вкус к труду, не вида от него ни радости, ни пользы.

Чужой ребенок рвет и жует у них из рючек. Чужая туго сплетенная каша вываливалась из стараниями. Сидели у них ворона в печи. Но хазийская печь для батрака, что северное солнце светит, да не греет.

Выйдя из этого холодного детства, надолго озявшие, такие сироты разбредались по жизни, плутали, оступались, падали. Мы встречаем их в угрозысках, в домах малолетних преступников, в исправительных колониях, на принудительных работах.

Помнач ГУЛАГа отыскивал бараки, где жило много нацменов, и вел странные разговоры:

— Здорово!

— Здорово!

— Ты из Ферганы?

— Из Ферганы.

— Я вижу, я был в ваших местах. Как ты работаешь?

— Работаем, начальник.

— Хорошо работаешь?

— Хорошо работаем, начальник.

— Нет, ты плохо работаешь.

— Плохо работаем, начальник.

— А ты откуда?

Сидели в камере, молчали, вдруг входит надзиратель и говорит:

— С вещами по городу.

Начали заключенные собирать каторжные свое имущество — тряпки, подкалдяльнички, мыла кусок, собрали в мешки, выходят в коридор.

В коридоре стоит надзиратель, хлопает каторжан по спине, отсчитывает и первый раз называет по фамилии.

— Гоц, Томский, Недельштейн, Дзержинский.

Сидели в камере эсеры и большевики, ссорились и не договаривались. От ворот тюрьмы пошли люди в разные стороны.

Коган сидел в тюрьме как анархист, но когда он был освобожден, он пошел за Дзержинским. Он пришел в партию через работу в газете, через отряды атамана Григорьева, в которых он боролся вместе с большевиками против анархистов.

В июле 1918 года Херсонский комитет выдал партбилет большевику Когану.

Работа в Красной армии начиная с полккома батальона до полккома инспекции IX армии.

Коган — начальник партийной школы на Кубани. Вскере — назначение начальником Особого отдела IX армии. Затем тов. Коган — заместитель начальника войск ОГПУ. Три года работы в пограничной охране. Затем тов. Когану поручается организовать Управление лагерей ОГПУ.

— Вас просит Повенец!

Коган берет телефонную трубку.

Из Повенца говорят долго. Коган терпеливо переспрашивает:



Начальник стрелкового полка тов. Л. И. Коган

— Сколько?

Дает отбой, разговор кончен.

— Вызовите ко мне Успенского, спит у меня на квартире.

Посыльный проворно бежит через глубокую канаву, ноги увязают в грязи. Он не разбирает мостков — ему некогда, начальник срочно требует Успенского.

Пошел высокий, сутулый молодой человек с оттопыренными, почти детским ртом. Он подошел к столу Когана. Успенский, слегка щури глаза, оглядывает комнату. Он ждет, когда Коган окончит разговор и займется с ним. Коган повернулся к Успенскому.

— Так вот. Мы вчера не закончили разговора. Мне только что звонили из Повенца. Там очередной скандал. Чалов не понимает видимо задач, которые перед ним стоят. Вместо того чтобы послушаться приказа, опять затеял скандал с инженерами. Хотите ли видеть, те заявляют, что они не лагерники, а инженеры.

Звонит телефон.

— Вот у меня тут есть интересный документ. — Коган протягивает Успенскому листок бумаги:

«Попрежнему в лагерях Повенца царит полная неразбериха. Лагерник не знает, кому подчиняться, — нет строгого распределения работ и плана. Всякий тянет в свою сторону. До сих пор не налажено с выпечкой хлеба. Попрежнему хлеб возим из Кемпи. На этой почве много недоразумений. Аппарат Управления разросся до невероятных размеров. А главная беда в том, что он стал изсквозь бюрократичен. Иначе чем объяснить, что Лестранскоз дает такие дальние командировки, что вывозить оттуда древесину нет никакого смысла? Под боком переставляется прекрасный строевой материал. Сообщите об этом Френкелю. Несколько больше развернули работу по постройке барачков. Но все равно, прибывающие этапы размещаются отвратительно.

Главным препятствием, мешающим развитию строительства и нормальному ходу лагерной жизни, считаю недопустимое отношение между администрацией и ИТР. Этому надо положить конец».

— Видал? Так вот. Все это верно. Так дальше продолжаться не может. Надо начать работу в кратчайшее время и оздоровить атмосферу этого отделения. Там за короткое время образовался штрафной городок. Постоянные скандалы и споры ИТР с Чаловым. Вы примите дела от Чалова и приступите к работе, подробнее договорившись о всех



Figure 114



Figure 115

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TRANSLATION OF INTRODUCTORY TEXT TO FIRST ISSUE OF *SSSR NA STROIKE* (1930, NO. 1)

“We go at full steam along the path of industrialization towards socialism, abandoning behind our age-old “Russkie”ⁱ backwardness.”

I. Stalin

The working class tore out of the hands of the bourgeoisie the economy, which was technically impoverished and ramshackle after four years of imperialist slaughter. This economy was being destroyed without break for three more years during the period of the war of the workers and peasants for power over their own country against the manufacturers and landowners, who sought to restore their power over the workers, peasants and over the natural resources of our richest country.

Only in the year 1922 did the working class gradually and practically with bare hands begin to restore the destroyed economy, working, in the literal sense of the word, on ruins. But the reason and will of the workers, led by their party, did so much in these 7-8 years that we now are entering into the epoch of construction, of a range unprecedented in scope, now we truly stand on the eve of a technical and cultural revolution.

But this grand labor is unknown in all its scope to our mass of workers and peasants. It is also unknown to the proletariat of Europe and that layer of the technical

ⁱ The substandard term "ÐÀÑÑÁÉÑÈÀß" is used here. I have rendered it as "Russkie" to render the ironic quality of the term. This choice of word seems to indicate a pseudo-national pride.

and radical intelligentsia which secretly and overtly is sympathetic to us, the builders of a new form of state life.

The language of numbers, diagrams, verbal descriptions, planning instructions is not convincing for all, even within our country, but abroad, where journalism and the press, lying in the hands of our class enemies, report all phenomena of our life from the point of view of the interests of a bird of prey--abroad the language of our numbers, articles, and diagrams is always suspected of artificiality, of exaggerations, always discredited. Slander and lies are the methods of war which the bourgeoisie, of course, cannot abandon.

In order to rob our enemies inside and outside the Soviet Union of the ability to distort and discredit the display of words and numbers, we decided to turn to drawing with light [*svetopis*], to the work of the sun--to photography. You do not accuse the sun of distortions, the sun illuminates what exists as it exists.

We should bring photography and cinema to the service of our construction. Photography and cinema are entirely able to graphically and concisely present the enormous scale of construction work being carried out by the proletariat in the land of the Soviets. Such films as *Turksib*, *The Murmansk Road* and others, in spite of their number of shortcomings, brilliantly solve the task. It is necessary that the cinema be closely occupied with the artistic representation of our construction. But photography should also be devoted to the service of construction not randomly, without system, but systematically and constantly. Photographic representations of our construction--dynamic representation at that--should be accessible to all interested in our construction. The magazine *USSR in Construction* puts before itself precisely the task of the systematic

representation of the dynamics of our construction by means of drawing with light [*svetopis*]. This is a new and difficult task. Implementing this decision, the editorial board publishes the first number of the magazine as a test, with the aim of calling forth good-natured criticism of the new undertaking. The magazine, entering on an unexplored path, can do its work well only with the vital participation and critical attention of the broad masses of workers, above all, of the main builder--the working class. The editorial board took upon itself the initiative and this initiative should find help: in the form of criticism of the magazine, suggestions for photo-themes and photo-objects, the submission of photo-materials and the distribution of the magazine. All of this, coming from various places in our enormous country, should tie the magazine into the broad collective of the participants of construction and thus make of it what it should be--a magazine truly representing the economic reconstruction of our old Rus.

The first issue suffers from major deficiencies. Above all it is insufficiently dynamic. We see this, but dynamism may only appear as the result of large and systematic work, in this instance photo-work. The magazine has the intention to show in construction the work of living people, scientist-inventors, worker-inventors, engineers, the working mass, its organizers, and the organizers of the workers' state. The magazine has not yet succeeded in the graphic display of the changes of our economic geography and, above all, the reconstruction of the backwards outlying borderlands of the former Russian empire, now the free members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The magazine has also not attempted the solution of many other tasks. The reorganization and changes taking place in the economy are enormous. With difficulty we are speculatively mastering it; understandably, it is only with great effort that it can be encompassed

visually, but it is precisely this task that the magazine places before itself. No one can say that it is not necessary to solve this task. But if it is necessary, then it is essential to begin work and, in the process, to reveal its shortcomings.

The editorial board hopes that the magazine will promote an even greater creative heightening of the energy of the masses. The editorial board is certain that the magazine will promote the eradication of all sorts of opportunism, pessimism and lack of faith, and will also facilitate the still more important matter of the greater solidification of the working class, and of the technical forces and organizers around the Worker State. The editorial board places before itself the task of contributing to our socialist construction.

Such are the aims of the magazine. The editors are sure, that with each number these tasks will be solved better and more completely.

Source: *SSSR na stroike*, 1930, no.1: 3.

APPENDIX B**PRINT RUN STATISTICS FOR RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH EDITIONS**

Year	Issue Number	Russian Edition	English Edition
1931	12	66,600	12,055
1932	1	59,000	10,140
	2	58,700	9,650
	3	88,700	10,100
	4	86,850	10,885
	5	87,350	10,650
	6	89,250	9,850
	7	88,450	9,350
	8	88,450	9,350
	9	88,450	9,350
	10	88,750	9,350
	11	75,850	9,150
	12	78,050	8,300
1933	1	60,250	9,500
	2	60,250	9,500
	3	65,665	10,005
	4	59,400	7,300
	5	59,400	7,400
	6	59,400	7,400
	7	59,400	7,400
	8	52,840	6,490
	9	46,250	6,229
	10	46,250	5,998
	11	37,495	5,255
	12	45,505	5,385
1934	1	42,145	5,725
	2	43,449	6,835
	3	100,595	5,900
	4	101,040	6,145
	5	101,040	5,945
	6	55,295	6,045
	7-8	53,586	6,600
	9	55,010	6,235
	10	56,640	4,940
	11	56,030	6,240

Source: Print run figures published in individual issues Russian and English editions.

APPENDIX C**AVERAGE PRINT-RUN PER ISSUE PER YEAR FOR RUSSIAN EDITION, 1930-1941**

1930	60,367	
1931	78,370	
1932	81,487	
1933	54,342	
1934	65,533	
1935	57,330	
1936	37,613	(year of Piatakov's arrest)
1937	60,368	
1938	65,880	
1939	76,730	
1940	71,016	
1941	74,350	

Source: Print-run figures published in individual issues of *SSSR na stroike*.

APPENDIX D**ANNUAL RUSSIAN & ENGLISH EDITION SUBSCRIPTION PRICES, 1930-1941**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Russian price</u>	<u>American price</u>
1930	10 rubles	5 dollars
1931	12 rubles	5 dollars
1932	15 rubles	5 dollars
1933	21 rubles	5 dollars
1934	21 rubles	4 dollars
1935	21 rubles	4 dollars
1936	30 rubles	4 dollars
1937	42 rubles	4 dollars
1938	42 rubles	4 dollars
1939	42 rubles	3 dollars
1940	42 rubles	3 dollars
1941	42 rubles	3 dollars

Source: Subscription information printed in individual issues of *SSSR na stroike* and *USSR in Construction*.

APPENDIX E

ISSUES DESIGNED BY LISSITZKY, RODCHENKO, AND STEPANOVA

Issues of *SSSR na stroike* designed by El Lissitzky & Sofia Küppers-Lissitzky

Issues marked with an asterisk were credited to El Lissitzky alone.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1932	10 *	Dneprostroi
1933	2 *	15 th Anniversary of the Red Army
	9 *	The Soviet Arctic
1934	2	Four Bolshevik Victories
	6	Soviet Science
	10	The Epic of the Cheliuskin
1935	5 *	15 th Anniversary of the Azerbaijan Oil Industry
1936	4-5 *	15 th Anniversary of Soviet Georgia
	10	Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Region
1937	1	The Workers and Peasants Red Army
	3	Peoples of the Ordzhonikidze Territory (Northern Caucasus)
	9-12	The Stalin Constitution
1938	5-6	The Far Eastern Territory
1939	6	The Korobov Family
1940	1	The Stalin Grand Canal of Ferghana
	2-3	Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia
	10	Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina
	11	Building the Red Navy
1941	3	Innovators of Socialist Labor

Issues of *SSSR na stroike* designed by Aleksandr Rodchenko & Varvara Stepanova

Except for the first issue (1933, No. 12), all issues were co-designed by the artists.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1933	12	The Baltic-White Sea Canal
1935	11	15 th Anniversary of Kazakhstan
	12	Fearless Soviet Parachutists
1936	8	Soviet Timber Exports
1937	5	Soviet Gold
1938	2	Moscow-Volga Canal
	4	Election of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR
	11-12	Kiev: Capital of the Ukrainian SSR
1939	9	Soviet Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV)
	11-12	Stalin Collective Farm
1940	7	Vladimir Mayakovsky
1941	2	GOELRO (State Commission on the Electrification of Russia)

APPENDIX F

TRANSLATION OF LETTER TO EMILIA VASIL'EVNA BAKKE

Ministry of Security of the Russian Federation
Office of the Cheliabinsk Region, City of Cheliabinsk

21 October 1992

Bakke Emilia Vasil'evna
29 Komsomol Street, Apt. 52
45500 Town of Magnitogorsk

Dear Emilia Vasil'evna:

Your husband -- Viktor Emel'ianovich Kalmykov, born 20 April 1910, native of the Central Black Earth Province, Tokarevskii Region, Mamontovskii Village Soviet, village of Kalmykov -- was arrested on 21 December 1937 on the charge of perpetration of crimes specified in articles 58-7, 58-8, and 58-11 of the Penal Code of the RSFSR (allegedly, he was a member of a counter-revolutionary organization).

At the moment of arrest he worked as a brigadier of metalworkers of the trust "Magnitostroi" and lived at the address: City of Magnitogorsk, 1st Sector, K.I.M [Communist International of Youth] Street, House of the City Soviet Number 2, Apartment 8.

28 July 1938 the Defense Council of the Supreme Court of the USSR condemned V.I. Kalmykov to the highest measure of punishment -- shooting. The sentence was carried out on 28 July 1938 in the city of Cheliabinsk. Unfortunately, the place of burial is unknown and to establish it does not present itself as possible due to the absence of information in the archival materials. It is entirely possible that he is buried in the "Golden Hill" neighborhood (Cheliabinsk), where one of the burial places of the period of mass repression was discovered.

A certificate of death will be sent to the Registration Office at the place of your residence, where you may obtain it.

By the decision of the Defense Council of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 30 November 1957, the sentence of the Defense Council of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 28 July 1938 in relation to Viktor Emel'ianovich Kalmykov was rescinded and he was rehabilitated.

You, Emilia Vasil'evna, were charged on article 58-12 of the Penal Code of the RSFSR (allegedly, you concealed the counter-revolutionary activities of your husband). On 4 October 1938 a preventative punishment was applied in the form of a written order not to leave the environs of the city of Magnitogorsk. In January 1939 the investigative case in accusation against you was dismissed due to insufficiency of evidence and you were released from the order.

Accept our condolences in connection with the illegal repression of you and your husband, Viktor Emel'ianovich Kalmykov.

Head of the Subdivision

V.S. Kovshov

APPENDIX G**ISSUES OF *SSSR NA STROIKE* DESIGNED BY NIKOLAI TROSHIN**

This list includes all 46 issues in which Troshin is credited as the designer. Troshin may have been the designer of several issues in 1930 whose artists are unidentified.

1930

- 4: Dneprostroi and Turk-Sib Railroad
- 7-8: The Seven Soviet Capitals

1931

- 1-2: The Bolshevik Press
- 3: The Five-Year Plan for Coal--In Three Years
- 4: Textiles
- 5: Chemical Industry and Food
- 6: Soviet Timber
- 7-8: Soviet Machine Building
- 10: Tadjikistan

1932

- 1: The Giant and the Builder
- 3: 10th Anniversary of the Transcaucasian Federation
- 5: Construction of Berezniki Chemical Works and Potassium Mine
- 7: Krammashostroi and Uralmashstroi
- 8: Railroads to the Aid of Socialist Construction
- 9: Soviet Oirotia
- 12: The Khibins

1933

- 1: Soviet Automobile Industry
- 3: Soviet Volga
- 4: White Russian Soviet Socialist Republic
- 5: New Plants and Crops
- 6: Soviet Kamchatka
- 7: Makstroi and Luganstroi
- 10: Middle Asia

1934

- 3: Dnieper Combinat
- 4: The OGPU Labor Communes
- 7-8: Physical Culture and Sports in the USSR
- 9: Maxim Gorky Park of Culture and Rest
- 11: Hibini
- 12: Soviet Sakhalin

1935

- 1: **The "Maxim Gorki" Agitational Air Squadron**
- 2: **Kuzbass**
- 7: **Watches, Bicycles and Gramophones**
- 8: **The Moscow Metro**
- 9: **15th Anniversary of Soviet Karelia**

1936

- 2: **Soviet Armenia**
- 6: **White Coal**
- 7: **The Urals Coal Works**
- 11: **Molotov Automobile Works, Gorki**

1937

- 6: **Kharkhov Tractor Works**
- 7: **Soviet Kamchatka**

1938

- 1: **Soviet Cinema**
- 7: **Soviet Railways**

1939

- 3: **Song of Our Native Land**
- 8: **Girls of the Soviet Union**

1940

- 8: **A Soviet School Teacher**
- 9: **Leningrad**

APPENDIX H**TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR DNEPROSTROI ISSUES OF
*USSR IN CONSTRUCTION*****1930, No. 4: "The Dnieper Hydro-Scheme and the Turkestan-Siberia Line"**

Photographs arranged by N. Troshin

Editorial Board: M. Gorky, A.Z. Holzmann, S.M. Dvolaitzky, A.B. Halatov, Michael Koltsov, F.M. Konar, G.L. Piatakov (Chief Editor), S.B. Uritsky

V.V. Krilenko (Consultant-Economist)

V.P. Mikulin (Manager Technical Art Department)

[No photograph credits given]

1931, No. 1: "The Bolshevik Press"

Lay-out by N. Troshin

Text by B. Nabatov

Editorial Board: M. Gorky, A. Holtzman, G. Grinko, M. Kalmanovich, M. Koltsov, F. Konar, G. Piatakov (Editor-in-chief), S. Uritsky, A. Khalatov

Director of the art and technical section--V. Mikulin

[Individual credits are given with some images for the following sources: Shaiket, N. Shterser, V. Mikulin, A. Ozersky, S. Tules, G. Petrusov, Unionphoto, Press-Cliche, Margaret Bourke-White, R. Karmen, M. Alpert, A. Moriakin.]

1932, No. 10: "Devoted to Dnieprostroy"

Plan of the issue by M. Alpert, El Lisitsky

Text by Boris Agapov

English translation by D.S. Mirsky

Artist El Lisitsky

The work of the following organizations and camera-men has been used in the present issue: Lenin Institute, Museum of the Revolution, Photo-Archive of the Dnieprostroy, Photography Department of the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR, Soyuzphoto, Abbe, Alperin, Chumak, Karmen, Kislov, Kravchenko, Lass, Makaseyev, Prekhner (IZOGIZ), Saveliev, Stepanov, Zelmanovich
Special photographs for this issue were made by M. Alpert and A. Shaykhet

Associate editors: M. Gorky, A. Holzmann, G. Grinko, T. Ehlukidze, I. Ionov, M. Kalmanovich, M. Koltsov, P. Krasnov, F. Konar, G. Piatakov (editor-in-chief), S. Uritsky, A. Halatov.

1934, No. 3: "The Dnieper Combinat"

Plan and text by S.J. Yantarov

Art Composition by N.S. Troshin

Maps by Z. Deineka

Photographs by M. Alpert, S.V. Alperin, and R.E. Osrtovskaya.

Translated by M. Pevsner.

Associate editors: M. Gorky, M. Grinko, T. Ehlukidze, I. Ionov, M. Kalmanovich, M. Koltsov, P. Krasnov, G. Pyatakov (editor-in-chief), S. Uritsky, and A. Khalatov.

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Arkhiv A.M. Gor'kogo

Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskii federatsii (GARF), Moscow.
Fond 4459 (Telegrafnoe agentstvo Sovetskogo Soiuz)
Fond 5283 (Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi sviazei s zagranitse)
Fond A-299 (Aksionernoe izdatel'skoe obshchestvo "Ogonek")
Fond A-394 (Vserossiskoe obshchestvo rabotnikov sovetsoi fotografii)
Fond A-144 (Komitet sodeistviia stroitel'stvu Turkestan-Siberskoi zheleznoi dorogi pri narodnykh komissarrov RSFSR)

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Fototek.

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Fond 2361 (Lisitskii, Lazar Markovich)

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