

The Political Confrontation of the Arts in Europe from the Great Depression to the Second World War

Otto Karl Werckmeister



The Political Confrontation of the Arts

Otto Karl Werckmeister
The Political Confrontation of the Arts in Europe
from the Great Depression to the Second World War

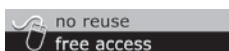
Printed with generous support from »Legat Dr. h. c. Georges Bloch« of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Zurich, and Zi.P^{CR}Zi. Publishing, Consulting and Research GmbH, Meilen, Switzerland

Zurich Studies in the History of Art
Georges-Bloch-Annual, University of Zurich, Institute of Art History, 2019/20, Vol. 24/25

Editor: Wolfgang F. Kersten
Founded by Wolfgang F. Kersten and Helmut Brinker (†) in 1993

Proofreading
Stefan Baumberg, Seraina Graf, Wolfgang F. Kersten

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.



This work is protected by copyright and/or related rights, but accessible free of charge. Use, in particular reproduction, is only permitted within the legal limits of copyright law or with the consent of the copyright holder.



Published at [arthistoricum.net](https://www.arthistoricum.net),
Heidelberg University Library 2020

The electronic open access version of this work is permanently available on <https://www.arthistoricum.net>

urn: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-ahn-artbook-649-1

doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.649>

Text © 2020, Otto Karl Werckmeister

Cover design © W. F. Kersten, using Gert Arntz, Cirkus Europa, Mei 1936, photo: International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

Picture Credits

Part 1, 4: photos: author, © O.K. Werckmeister; part 2: photos: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; part 3: Magnus Zeller, Einzug in den Hades, 1938, photo: Kulturstiftung Sachsen-Anhalt, © 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich; Magnus Zeller, Der totale Staat, 1938, photo: Stadtmuseum Berlin, © 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich; Hans Grundig, Das Tausendjährige Reich, 1938, photo: bpk-Bildagentur, Berlin, © 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich; Ernst Barlach, photo: Jacqueline Jung; Otto Dix, Flandern, 1934–1936, photo: Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders, © 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich.

ISBN 978-3-948466-23-7 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978-3-948466-24-4 (Softcover)

ISBN 978-3-948466-22-0 (PDF)

Transitory Dedication

Although the development of this book threatened at one point to fail for good, it has nevertheless finally been completed, after 36 years, due to the editor being able to give the author the necessary impetus to continue work by suggesting that the author and the editor could dedicate the publication to each other.

Zurich, Spring 2020

Wolfgang F. Kersten

Content

Preface	14
Related Publications.....	16

1 POLICIES

1.1/	Traditional versus Modern Art	
1.1/1	Structural Conflict	
1.1/1.1	Modernization and Tradition	
1.1/1.1.1	Declining Self-Adjustment.....	20
1.1/1.1.2	Upper Middle-Class Art Policies.....	21
1.1/1.1.3	The Crisis of the Depression.....	22
1.1/1.2	Political Stabilization and Social Emancipation	
1.1/1.2.1	Enduring Disparity.....	23
1.1/1.2.2	Art of Dissent.....	24
1.1/1.2.3	Depression Showdown.....	25
1.1/1.3	The Avant-Garde Ideal	
1.1/1.3.1	From Leadership to Nonconformity.....	27
1.1/1.3.2	Aesthetic Transposition.....	28
1.1/1.3.3	Post-War Rise and Fall.....	29
1.1/2	Political Competition	
1.1/2.1	Artistic and Political Culture	
1.1/2.1.1	Art in the Public Sphere.....	30
1.1/2.1.2	Modern Art on the Left.....	31
1.1/2.1.3	Politicization.....	32
1.1/2.2	Class Limitation of Modern Art	
1.1/2.2.1	Art of Freedom.....	34
1.1/2.2.2	Efforts at Class Transcendence.....	35
1.1/2.2.3	Depression Backlash.....	36
1.1/2.3	Market Decline and Political Struggle	
1.1/2.3.1	Quest for State Support.....	37
1.1/2.3.2	Coordination.....	38
1.1/2.3.3	Delivery.....	39
1.1/3	State Intervention	
1.1/3.1	Political Stability and Populist Appeal	
1.1/3.1.1	Populist Art Policy.....	41
1.1/3.1.2	Challenge to Democracy.....	42
1.1/3.1.3	Art with a Mandate.....	43
1.1/3.2	Public Building	
1.1/3.2.1	Political Economy and Architectural Policy.....	44
1.1/3.2.2	From Urbanism to Monumentalism.....	45
1.1/3.2.3	Traditional versus Modern Architecture.....	46
1.1/3.3	Revalidation of Traditional Art	
1.1/3.3.1	Recoil from Modern Art.....	48
1.1/3.3.2	Restoration and Enforcement.....	49
1.1/3.3.3	Realism or Classicism.....	50

1.2 / Totalitarian Art Policy

1.2/1	Professional Organization and Political Control	
1.2/1.1	State and Party Management	
1.2/1.1.1	Policy Structures.....	54
1.2/1.1.2	Totalitarian Artistic Culture.....	55
1.2/1.1.3	Chronology.....	56
1.2/1.2	Work under Control	
1.2/1.2.1	Economic Regulation.....	57
1.2/1.2.2	Controlled Debate.....	58
1.2/1.2.3	Structural Conflicts.....	60
1.2/1.3	Repudiation of Modern Art	
1.2/1.3.1	Stacked Competition.....	61
1.2/1.3.2	Public Discrimination.....	62
1.2/1.3.3	Oppression.....	63
1.2/2	Mobilization and Monumentality	
1.2/2.1	Totalitarian Capitals	
1.2/2.1.1	Monumental Urbanism.....	64
1.2/2.1.2	State and Party Allocations.....	65
1.2/2.1.3	People's Representation.....	66
1.2/2.2	Monumentalized Mobilization	
1.2/2.2.1	Pseudo-Plebiscitary Politics.....	68
1.2/2.2.2	Germany.....	69
1.2/2.2.3	USSR.....	70
1.2/2.3	Projection into the Future	
1.2/2.3.1	Planning and Style.....	71
1.2/2.3.2	Hyperbolic Building.....	72
1.2/2.3.3	Monumental Timelines.....	73
1.2/3	Policy and Accomplishment	
1.2/3.1	Setting Standards	
1.2/3.1.1	Parties and Policies.....	74
1.2/3.1.2	Parties versus Governments.....	76
1.2/3.1.3	Dictators' Interventions.....	77
1.2/3.2	Limits of Organization	
1.2/3.2.1	Reach of Control.....	78
1.2/3.2.2	Efforts at Instruction.....	79
1.2/3.2.3	Market License.....	80
1.2/3.3	Ascendancy of Elites	
1.2/3.3.1	From Populism to Elitism.....	81
1.2/3.3.2	Leadership Postures.....	82
1.2/3.3.3	Power, Money, Social Status.....	84

1.3 / Democratic Art Policy

1.3/1	France versus Germany	
1.3/1.1	Disparity of State Support	
1.3/1.1.1	French Equitability.....	88
1.3/1.1.2	German Imbalance.....	89
1.3/1.1.3	Competition in Reverse.....	90
1.3/1.2	Political Divergence, 1929-1934	
1.3/1.2.1	Modern Art on the Left in France.....	91
1.3/1.2.2	Traditional Art on the Right in Germany.....	92
1.3/1.2.3	Parting Ways.....	93
1.3/1.3	Politicization in France, 1934-1936	
1.3/1.3.1	Modernizing Traditional Art.....	95
1.3/1.3.2	Modern Art in Political Opposition.....	96
1.3/1.3.3	Communist Art Programs.....	97
1.3/2	Art of the Popular Front	
1.3/2.1	Campaigning with the Arts	
1.3/2.1.1	Democracy versus Dictatorship.....	98
1.3/2.1.2	Art under Debate.....	99
1.3/2.1.3	Communist Leadership.....	100
1.3/2.2	From Movement to Government	
1.3/2.2.1	Expansive Art Policy.....	101
1.3/2.2.2	Social Progress and Civil War.....	103
1.3/2.2.3	The Civil War Divide.....	104
1.3/2.3	Modern Art in Coalition	
1.3/2.3.1	Aligning Traditional and Modern Art.....	105
1.3/2.3.2	Democratic Coexistence.....	106
1.3/2.3.3	Modern Figurehead Artists.....	107
1.3/3	The Paris World Exposition of 1937	
1.3/3.1	A Democratic Enterprise	
1.3/3.1.1	Planning, Cancellation, Re-Launch.....	108
1.3/3.1.2	Labbé's Vision.....	109
1.3/3.1.3	Classical Architecture and Social Policy.....	111
1.3/3.2	The Totalitarian Challenge	
1.3/3.2.1	From Competition to Confrontation.....	112
1.3/3.2.2	Totalitarian Pavilions.....	113
1.3/3.2.3	The Monumental Scenario.....	114
1.3/3.3	The Popular Front Contribution	
1.3/3.3.1	The New Political Agenda.....	115
1.3/3.3.2	Propaganda by Traditional Art.....	116
1.3/3.3.3	Showcasing Modern Art.....	117

2 IDEOLOGIES

2.1/	Art of the People		2.2 /	Revolutionary Art	
2.1/1	Populist Art by the State		2.2/1	Apogee to Eclipse	
2.1/1.1	The Quest for Mass Acceptance		2.2/1.1	The First Wave of Revolutionary Art	
2.1/1.1.1	The Issue of Art for the People.....	122	2.2/1.1.1	Modern Art of Revolutionary Regimes	156
2.1/1.1.2	Totalitarian Mass Art.....	123	2.2/1.1.2	Retreat to the USSR.....	157
2.1/1.1.3	People's Art without Democracy.....	124	2.2/1.1.3	From Revolution to Modernization.....	158
2.1/1.2	Art by and for the People		2.2/1.2	The Second Wave of Revolutionary Art	
2.1/1.2.1	Popular Art and Professional Art.....	125	2.2/1.2.1	Revolution from Above	159
2.1/1.2.2	People's Judgment	126	2.2/1.2.2	Revolutionary Mobilization of the Arts	160
2.1/1.2.3	The Democratic Alternative.....	128	2.2/1.2.3	Construction or Subversion	161
2.1/1.3	Traditional Art for the People		2.2/1.3	Eclipse of Revolutionary Art	
2.1/1.3.1	Traditional Art Right and Left.....	129	2.2/1.3.1	Recoil to Rhetoric in France.....	163
2.1/1.3.2	Totalitarian Traditionalism	130	2.2/1.3.2	Class Struggle or Defense of the Republic in Spain ...	164
2.1/1.3.3	Popular Front Traditionalism	131	2.2/1.3.3	Surrealist Intransigence.....	165
2.1/2	Nationalist versus Internationalist Art		2.2/2	From Revolutionary to Anti-Fascist Art	
2.1/2.1	Nationalist Art in a Classical Style		2.2/2.1	Anachronistic Debate	
2.1/2.1.1	Competitive Classicism	132	2.2/2.1.1	Incommensurate Confrontation.....	166
2.1/2.1.2	Power Classicism.....	133	2.2/2.1.2	Hitler's Target	167
2.1/2.1.3	Populist Classicism.....	134	2.2/2.1.3	The 'Degenerate Art' Exhibitions.....	168
2.1/2.2	Internationalism under Attack		2.2/2.2	The Anti-Fascist Turn	
2.1/2.2.1	Resurgent Anti-Internationalism.....	136	2.2/2.2.1	Overview	170
2.1/2.2.2	Anti-Imperialism, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Bolshevism...	137	2.2/2.2.2	France.....	171
2.1/2.2.3	Specious Charges.....	138	2.2/2.2.3	Spain.....	172
2.1/2.3	The French Equation		2.2/2.3	Anarchist Relapse	
2.1/2.3.1	Limits of Internationalism.....	139	2.2/2.3.1	Revolution without Politics.....	173
2.1/2.3.2	Aggression or Cooptation	140	2.2/2.3.2	Anarchism in Spain	174
2.1/2.3.3	Surrealist Internationalism	141	2.2/2.3.3	The Manifesto of Anarchist Art	175
2.1/3	Totalitarian Enforcement		2.2/3	From Revolutionary Art to War Art	
2.1/3.1	Mass Base of Art Policy		2.2/3.1	Militarism versus Pacifism	
2.1/3.1.1	Comparative Overview	142	2.2/3.1.1	Soldiers' Revolutions.....	177
2.1/3.1.2	USSR.....	144	2.2/3.1.2	Revolutionary Militarism.....	178
2.1/3.1.3	Germany.....	145	2.2/3.1.3	From Revolution to Civil War.....	179
2.1/3.2	Propaganda Art		2.2/3.2	Modern Art, Revolutionary no Longer	
2.1/3.2.1	Functional Mission	146	2.2/3.2.1	From Futurism to <i>Aeropittura</i>	180
2.1/3.2.2	The Five-Year Plan for the Arts	147	2.2/3.2.2	Surrealist Introversion	181
2.1/3.2.3	The National Socialist Election Campaign of 1931.....	148	2.2/3.2.3	Broken Equation.....	182
2.1/3.3	Populism Enforced		2.2/3.3	The End of Revolutionary Art	
2.1/3.3.1	From Agitation to Guidance.....	149	2.2/3.3.1	Military Ascendancy.....	183
2.1/3.3.2	Policy Consolidation.....	150	2.2/3.3.2	No Venue Left.....	184
2.1/3.3.3	Political Assessment	152	2.2/3.3.3	Revolutionary Art or Art for the People?.....	186

2.3/	Ideologies and Policies	
2.3/1	Confrontation and Coexistence	
2.3/1.1	Uncertain Antagonisms	
2.3/1.1.1	Three-Way Conflict	190
2.3/1.1.2	Two-Way Conflict	191
2.3/1.1.3	From Revolutionary Art to Art of the People	192
2.3/1.2	Changes of Art Policy	
2.3/1.2.1	USSR I: From Activism to Contentment	193
2.3/1.2.2	USSR II: Socialist Realism.....	194
2.3/1.2.3	Germany, Italy, France.....	195
2.3/1.3	Deceptive Alignments	
2.3/1.3.1	General	197
2.3/1.3.2	USSR and Germany	198
2.3/1.3.3	Germany and France.....	199
2.3/2	Disoriented Artists	
2.3/2.1	Pavel Filonov and Oskar Schlemmer	
2.3/2.1.1	Rejected by the Regime	200
2.3/2.1.2	Painting and Teaching.....	201
2.3/2.1.3	Rejection of Conformity.....	202
2.3/2.2	Gert Arntz	
2.3/2.2.1	Schemes of Deception.....	204
2.3/2.2.2	From Statistics to Cartoon	205
2.3/2.2.3	Uncertain Confrontations	206
2.3/2.3	Le Corbusier	
2.3/2.3.1	The Search for Political Backing.....	207
2.3/2.3.2	Soviet Disillusion	208
2.3/2.3.3	Marginalized by the Popular Front.....	210
2.3/3	The Left at a Loss	
2.3/3.1	The Shifting Soviet Paradigm	
2.3/3.1.1	The Turns of Soviet Policy	211
2.3/3.1.2	Soviet Art Abroad	212
2.3/3.1.3	Soviet Art Beyond Emulation	213
2.3/3.2	Aragon versus Breton	
2.3/3.2.1	Louis Aragon.....	214
2.3/3.2.2	André Breton	216
2.3/3.2.3	The Clash.....	217
2.3/3.3	George Grosz in Exile	
2.3/3.3.1	The Conflict with the Communist Party	218
2.3/3.3.2	The Totalitarian Equation	219
2.3/3.3.3	The Trotskyist Quandary.....	220

3 ARTISTS

3.1/	Political Activity	
3.1/1	Political Engagement	
3.1/1.1	Political Potential of the Public Sphere	
3.1/1.1.1	From Opinion to Engagement	224
3.1/1.1.2	From Movement to Government.....	225
3.1/1.1.3	Acceptance or Rejection.....	226
3.1/1.2	Engagement for Revolution	
3.1/1.2.1	From a Futurist to the Fascist Party.....	227
3.1/1.2.2	Proletkult versus 'Futurist' Art in the USSR	228
3.1/1.2.3	Failed Revolution in Germany	230
3.1/1.3	Engagement During the Depression	
3.1/1.3.1	General	231
3.1/1.3.2	Germany.....	232
3.1/1.3.3	France.....	233
3.1/2	Totalitarian Service	
3.1/2.1	Artists in Office	
3.1/2.1.1	Organized Leadership	234
3.1/2.1.2	Structural Premises.....	236
3.1/2.1.3	Enactment of Authority.....	237
3.1/2.2	Rising to Serve	
3.1/2.2.1	Italy	238
3.1/2.2.2	USSR.....	239
3.1/2.2.3	Germany.....	240
3.1/2.3	Enforcing Conformity	
3.1/2.3.1	Degrees of Discipline	241
3.1/2.3.2	Alabian's Tenuous Leadership	242
3.1/2.3.3	Ziegler and his Cohort.....	244
3.1/3	Deferring to Democracy	
3.1/3.1	Artists in Democratic Government	
3.1/3.1.1	The Precedents of David and Courbet.....	245
3.1/3.1.2	France.....	246
3.1/3.1.3	Spain.....	247
3.1/3.2	Popular Front Democracy	
3.1/3.2.1	Allegiance and Opportunity.....	248
3.1/3.2.2	From Movement to Government	249
3.1/3.2.3	An Artist Left Behind	251
3.1/3.3	Political Overextension	
3.1/3.3.1	Le Corbusier's Quest for 'Authority'	252
3.1/3.3.2	Breton's Struggle with the Communist Party.....	253
3.1/3.3.3	Recoil to Anarchism	254

3.2/	Political Oppression	3.3/	Political Resistance
3.2/1	The Totalitarian Oppression of Modern Art	3.3/1	From Dissent to Resistance
3.2/1.1	The Discrimination of Modern Art	3.3/1.1	General
3.2/1.1.1	Structural Antagonism 258	3.3/1.1.1	Fields of Conflict 292
3.2/1.1.2	Preference for Traditional Artists 259	3.3/1.1.2	Modern Resistance? 293
3.2/1.1.3	Modern Artists' Bid for Acceptance 260	3.3/1.1.3	Against Totalitarian Oppression 294
3.2/1.2	Political Economy	3.3/1.2	Soviet Artists' Resistance
3.2/1.2.1	Political Support and Political Control 261	3.3/1.2.1	The Pressure of Orthodoxy 295
3.2/1.2.2	Political Market Regulation 262	3.3/1.2.2	Malevich and Filonov 296
3.2/1.2.3	Totalitarian Market Control 263	3.3/1.2.3	Chronology 297
3.2/1.3	From Rejection to Oppression	3.3/1.3	Fighting Hitler's Ascendancy
3.2/1.3.1	Chronology 265	3.3/1.3.1	To Stem the Tide 298
3.2/1.3.2	Success and Failure of Accommodation 266	3.3/1.3.2	A. Paul Weber's Work for 'Resistance' 299
3.2/1.3.3	Measures of Enforcement 267	3.3/1.3.3	Heartfield, Party Artist 300
3.2/2	USSR and Germany	3.3/2	Subversion at Home
3.2/2.1	Protagonists of Oppression	3.3/2.1	Going Underground
3.2/2.1.1	Similarities and Differences 268	3.3/2.1.1	Opportunities for Dissent 302
3.2/2.1.2	Anti-Modern Exhibitions 269	3.3/2.1.2	Diverse Resistance 303
3.2/2.1.3	Ideological Charges 270	3.3/2.1.3	Middle-Class Dissent 304
3.2/2.2	Chronology	3.3/2.2	Resistance from the Left
3.2/2.2.1	Adjustment and Rejection 271	3.3/2.2.1	Hans Grundig 306
3.2/2.2.2	Before 1936 273	3.3/2.2.2	Lea Grundig 307
3.2/2.2.3	After 1936 274	3.3/2.2.3	Käthe Kollwitz 308
3.2/2.3	Clampdown and Recalcitrance	3.3/2.3	Hidden Pictures
3.2/2.3.1	Contentious Oppression 275	3.3/2.3.1	Magnus Zeller's <i>Total State</i> 309
3.2/2.3.2	Leonidov and Filonov, Villains of Soviet Art Policy 276	3.3/2.3.2	Otto Dix' <i>Flanders</i> 310
3.2/2.3.3	Barlach's and Nolde's Rejected Conformity 277	3.3/2.3.3	Rudolf Schlichter's <i>Blind Power</i> 311
3.2/3	Emigration and Exile	3.3/3	Polemics from Abroad
3.2/3.1	The Necessity to Emigrate	3.3/3.1	Printed Propaganda
3.2/3.1.1	International Prospects 278	3.3/3.1.1	Public Limits 312
3.2/3.1.2	German Exodus 279	3.3/3.1.2	Graphic Imagery 314
3.2/3.1.3	Working Abroad 280	3.3/3.1.3	Clément Moreau 314
3.2/3.2	Organizing Abroad	3.3/3.2	John Heartfield's 'War Against Hitler'
3.2/3.2.1	Political or Unpolitical 282	3.3/3.2.1	Activities in Prague 316
3.2/3.2.2	Politicization 283	3.3/3.2.2	Provoking the Regime 317
3.2/3.2.3	The 'German Artists' League' 284	3.3/3.2.3	International Fame 318
3.2/3.3	The New Burlington Gallery Show	3.3/3.3	Oskar Kokoschka's Leadership
3.2/3.3.1	Conflicts of Organization 285	3.3/3.3.1	The Turn to Politics 319
3.2/3.3.2	Max Beckmann's Prominence 286	3.3/3.3.2	Political Writings 320
3.2/3.3.3	Read's Challenge to Hitler 287	3.3/3.3.3	Testimonial Paintings 321

4 TOWARD WAR

4.1/	Art Policy and War Policy	4.2/	The Last Stand of Revolutionary Art
4.1/1	German Art Supreme	4.2/1	Revolutionaries to the End
4.1/1.1	Building and Rearmament	4.2/1.1	Rivera the Host
4.1/1.1.1	The Capital of Future Conquest..... 326	4.2/1.1.1	Arranging the Meeting..... 360
4.1/1.1.2	Architecture of Aggression..... 327	4.2/1.1.2	The 'Authentic Revolutionary Artist'..... 361
4.1/1.1.3	Architectural War Policy..... 328	4.2/1.1.3	Rivera's Controversial Career..... 362
4.1/1.2	Hitler's Art Strategy	4.2/1.2	Trotsky the Leader
4.1/1.2.1	From Ideology to Policy..... 329	4.2/1.2.1	Modern Art and Revolution..... 363
4.1/1.2.2	Art Policy for War..... 330	4.2/1.2.2	Authority and Independence..... 364
4.1/1.2.3	Albert Speer..... 332	4.2/1.2.3	Another Avant-Garde..... 365
4.1/1.3	War Art before the War	4.2/1.3	Breton the Scribe
4.1/1.3.1	Guarded War Propaganda..... 333	4.2/1.3.1	The Revolutionary Habit..... 367
4.1/1.3.2	Another War..... 334	4.2/1.3.2	Class Limitation of Independence..... 368
4.1/1.3.3	Hardship and Endurance..... 335	4.2/1.3.3	Breton's Trotskyism..... 369
4.1/2	Totalitarian Disparities	4.2/2	The Manifesto
4.1/2.1	Prepared or Unprepared for War	4.2/2.1	Structured Digest of Quotations from the Text
4.1/2.1.1	Overview..... 336	4.2/2.1.1	The Historic Moment..... 370
4.1/2.1.2	'Inter-War' Culture..... 337	4.2/2.1.2	Subjective Revolution..... 371
4.1/2.1.3	War Objectives..... 339	4.2/2.1.3	A New Organization..... 371
4.1/2.2	Art of <i>Pax Romana</i>	4.2/2.2	Internal Analysis
4.1/2.2.1	Memorials of the First World War..... 340	4.2/2.2.1	Against All Political Systems..... 372
4.1/2.2.2	Art of the African Conquest..... 341	4.2/2.2.2	A Communist Democracy..... 373
4.1/2.2.3	Empire of Peace..... 342	4.2/2.2.3	Anarchism and Psychoanalysis..... 374
4.1/2.3	Defense of Socialism	4.2/2.3	Collaborative Writing
4.1/2.3.1	From Capitalist Encirclement to the German Threat... 343	4.2/2.3.1	Breton's Texts..... 375
4.1/2.3.2	A People's Army at Peace..... 344	4.2/2.3.2	The Blend..... 376
4.1/2.3.3	Readiness at Risk..... 345	4.2/2.3.3	Trotsky's Editorial Work..... 377
4.1/3	Defense of Democracy	4.2/3	Historical Critique
4.1/3.1	France	4.2/3.1	An Artists' Group in a No-Man's Land
4.1/3.1.1	The Maginot Mentality..... 346	4.2/3.1.1	Against the Popular Front..... 378
4.1/3.1.2	Landowski's <i>Fantômes</i> 347	4.2/3.1.2	From Anarchism to Solitude..... 380
4.1/3.1.3	Bouchard's Monument at Mondement..... 348	4.2/3.1.3	Political No-Man's Land..... 381
4.1/3.2	Spain	4.2/3.2	Self-Contradiction and Self-Delusion
4.1/3.2.1	A War Policy for the Arts..... 350	4.2/3.2.1	Delusions of the Public Sphere..... 382
4.1/3.2.2	The Pavilion of War..... 351	4.2/3.2.2	Concealed Leadership..... 383
4.1/3.2.3	Civil War Photography..... 352	4.2/3.2.3	Circular Reasoning..... 384
4.1/3.3	From Defiance to Despondency	4.2/3.3	Too Late
4.1/3.3.1	War Policy versus Social Policy..... 353	4.2/3.3.1	FIARI's Failure..... 385
4.1/3.3.2	The Numancia Syndrome..... 354	4.2/3.3.2	Rivera's Defection..... 386
4.1/3.3.3	Democratic versus Totalitarian War Art..... 356	4.2/3.3.3	Masson versus Picasso..... 388

4.3/	Traditional versus Modern Art Revisited	
4.3/1	View from the USA	
4.3/1.1	The New York World Fair of 1939	
4.3/1.1.1	Monumentalization of Democracy	392
4.3/1.1.2	Reconfiguration of Pavilions	393
4.3/1.1.3	The Unbuilt 'German Freedom Pavilion'	394
4.3/1.2	State Art of Democracy	
4.3/1.2.1	State Support for the Arts	395
4.3/1.2.2	Controversial Enactment	396
4.3/1.2.3	Political Closure	398
4.3/1.3	The Democratic Investiture of Modern Art	
4.3/1.3.1	Traditional and Modern Art at the New York World Fair	399
4.3/1.3.2	MOMA's Exhibition 'Art in Our Time'	400
4.3/1.3.3	Recoil from Politics	401
4.3/2	Political Ascendancy of Traditional Art	
4.3/2.1	The Arrogance of Tradition	
4.3/2.1.1	The Totalitarian Achievement	402
4.3/2.1.2	Democratic Diffidence	403
4.3/2.1.3	The International Success of Totalitarian Art	405
4.3/2.2	Accelerated Masterworks	
4.3/2.2.1	The Moscow Subway	406
4.3/2.2.2	The New Reich Chancellery in Berlin	407
4.3/2.2.3	The Site of the E42	408
4.3/2.3	The End of Political Confrontation	
4.3/2.3.1	Balance Sheet	409
4.3/2.3.2	The World Exposition of Truce	410
4.3/2.3.3	The World Exposition of Fascism	412
4.3/3	The Political Marginalization of Modern Art	
4.3/3.1	International Survey	
4.3/3.1.1	The Totalitarian Challenge	413
4.3/3.1.2	Ideological Definitions	414
4.3/3.1.3	The Anti-Fascist Cachet	415
4.3/3.2	The Popular Front's Support of Modern Art	
4.3/3.2.1	Government Policy	416
4.3/3.2.2	Communist Reluctance	417
4.3/3.2.3	French Accomplishments	418
4.3/3.3	Modern Artists on Their Own	
4.3/3.3.1	Recoil onto Self-Orientation	419
4.3/3.3.2	The Last Issue of <i>Minotaure</i>	421
4.3/3.3.3	Dalí, Masson, Picasso	422

Plates

Monumental Sculptures at the Paris World Exposition 1937	426
Antonio Rodríguez Luna, Drawings published on behalf of the Spanish Government	434
Hidden Pictures of Political Resistance	446
Paul Landowski's War Monument	458
Notes	470
Repeatedly Cited Works	480
Index of Names	482

Preface

1 **THE THEME**

Between 1929 and 1939, during the decade of the Great Depression, the arts in Europe were politicized more than ever before. Government oversight, party agitation, and public pressure sought to make them serve domestic policies of social stabilization and foreign policies of antagonistic self-assertion. All of this jeopardized the freedom the arts had gained after the First World War. They were drawn into the struggles between the economic, social, and political systems which came to a head in the Second World War. As a result, they were entangled in a three-way ideological conflict between communism, fascism, and democracy. In a fast-moving course of less than ten years, art policies were enacted, and art ideologies were proclaimed, with doctrinaire assurance. This is what I call a political confrontation of the arts.

2 **COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

It is during the Cold War that the subject was first approached, albeit in a partisan way. The traditionalist arts of the Soviet Union and the Third Reich were equated under the term totalitarian and rated inferior to modern art oppressed by both regimes. Modern art, by inference, was automatically validated as the art of democracy. However, historically, this was not yet the case. In the decade of the Great Depression, modern art still fought an uphill battle for recognition against traditional art in both totalitarian and democratic states. Its fundamental value, the freedom of expression, was in fact a democratic right without allegiance to political democracy.

3 **PRESENT VANTAGE POINT**

Today, the polarization of Cold War politics has given way to multilateral conflicts of capitalist competition among democratic and authoritarian states. Regardless of these conflicts, modern art has come to dominate the flanking neoliberal culture. It no longer needs to reassert itself against traditional art in the historic sense of the term. Its triumphalist rhetoric has narrowed the history of 20th-century art to that of modern art alone. In this book, I have attempted to reassert the historical record of its conflictive coexistence with traditional art.

4 **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CONCEPTUALIZATION**

The overabundant literature devoted to the material covered in this book has

never been pulled together into a conceptual comparison. Rather, it has followed the growth principle of neoliberal economics, which promotes accumulation of assets, needless replacement, and redundant duplication. As a result, it has grown beyond any bibliographically responsible synthesis by a single scholar. This book is thus no synthesis, only an argument, backed up by text sources and previous scholars' insights. Unlike many authors, I have made up no substantive terms of my own—'copyright concepts'—to get on top of the overwhelming evidence. The terms I use are epistemological or historic. They can be verified in *The Oxford English Dictionary* and shared by any reader.

5 **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Since reproductions of the art works mentioned are overabundantly available in publications or on the internet, I have found it pointless to engage in the negotiations and expenses that would have been required to reassemble them once more between the covers of this book. To do so would have meant sharing in the redundancy of neoliberal overproduction which has made the art-historical literature serve the current show and market culture. I have limited illustrations to four sets of representative but little-known images, two of which I have photographed myself.

6 **STAGES OF WRITING**

My attempts to deal with the subject of this book started in 1984 with an inaugural lecture at Northwestern University,⁽¹⁾ and have since informed much of my teaching there until my retirement in 2001. In a paper for a conference about the impact of Critical Theory on art-historical scholarship held at Frankfurt in 1992, I presented a first book project, later replaced by the present one.⁽²⁾ In 2007, finally, I published a survey of the project in its present shape.⁽³⁾ Although I have often lectured on the subject at conferences and schools, and have discussed it with numerous friends and colleagues, it is only fair to say that I don't have to thank anyone for insights or advice. It is the graduate students active in my seminars who have steadily inspired me with their interventions, discussions, research papers, dissertations, and, finally, books. Occasionally I have used information gathered in their papers. They are Cristina Cuevas-Wolf, Jane Friedman, Keith Holz, Elizabeth Grady, Paul Jaskot, Jennifer Jolly, Karen Kettering, Barbara McCloskey, Diane Miliotes, Sarah Miller, Elizabeth Seaton, James Van Dyke, and, especially, Toby Norris.

1. "The Political Confrontation of the Arts at the Paris World Exposition of 1937," *Arts and Sciences. Magazine of the College of Arts and Sciences*, Northwestern University, Fall 1984, pp. 11–16.

2. "Walter Benjamins Passagenwerk als Modell für eine kunstgeschichtliche Synthese," in: Andreas Berndt, et al., ed.,

Frankfurter Schule und Kunstgeschichte, Berlin, 1992, pp. 165–182.

3. "The Political Confrontation of the Arts. From the Great Depression to the Second World War," *Georges-Bloch-Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Universität Zürich*, 11/12 (2004/2005 [appeared in 2007]), pp. 142–175.

Related Publications

“‘Guernica’. Picasso und die Weltausstellung 1937,” in: *Funkkolleg Moderne Kunst*, Studienbegleitbrief 9, Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien an der Universität Tübingen, Weinheim and Tübingen, 1990, pp. 89–125, 138–139.

“Picassos ‘Guernica,’” in: Monika Wagner, ed., *Moderne Kunst. Das Funkkolleg zum Verständnis der Gegenwartskunst*, II, Reinbek, 1991, pp. 491–510.

“The Summit Meeting of Revolutionary Art. Trotsky, Breton, and Rivera at Coyoacan, 1938,” in: *Actes du XXVII^e Congrès International d’Histoire d’Art*, Section 2, Strasbourg, 1992, pp. 157–170.

“The International of Modern Art. From Moscow to Berlin,” in: Thomas W. Gaethgens, ed., *Künstlerischer Austausch—Artistic Exchange. Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin, 15.–20. Juli 1992, III, Berlin, 1993, pp. 553–574.

“Der Sowjetpalast in Moskau und die große Kuppelhalle in Berlin als projizierte Bauten einer totalitären Volksrepräsentation,” in: Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper and Hiltrud Kier, ed., *Städtebau und Staatsbau im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich and Berlin, 1996, pp. 113–130.

Review of Stephanie Barron, et. al., “*Degenerate Art*”. *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* and Christoph Zuschlag, “*Entartete Kunst*”. *Ausstellungsstrategien im Nazi-Deutschland*, *The Art Bulletin*, 79 (1997), pp. 337–341.

“Hitler the Artist,” *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997), pp. 270–297.

“Moderne Kunst, totalitäre Politik. Pawel Filonow, Oskar Schlemmer,” in: Eugen Blume and Dieter Scholz, ed., *Überbrückt. Ästhetische Moderne und Nationalsozialismus, Kunsthistoriker und Künstler 1925–1937*, Cologne, 1999, pp. 211–222.

“Vera Muchina, ‘Arbeiter und Kolchosbäuerin,’” in: *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter*, 2002, no. 2, pp. 41–50.

“Staatsplastik der dreißiger Jahre in Europa,” in: *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter*, 2004, no. 9, pp. 45–54.

“Professor Beckmann! Professor Dix! Professor Klee! Professor Matisse? Professor Masson? Professor Léger? Warum gab es nur in der Weimarer Republik, nicht dagegen in der Dritten Republik Professoren für moderne Kunst?” in: Wolfgang Ruppert and Christian Fuhrmeister, ed., *Zwischen Deutscher Kunst und internationaler Modernität. Formen der Künstlerausbildung 1918 bis 1968*, Weimar, 2007, pp. 207–217.

“Picassos *Guernica*. Vom propagandistischen Auftragsbild zur politischen Ikone,” in: Gerhard Paul, ed., *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. 1900 bis 1949*, Göttingen, 2009, pp. 524–531.

“Politische Führung und politische Überwachung der deutschen Kunst im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in: Wolfgang Ruppert, ed., *Künstler im Nationalsozialismus. Die “Deutsche Kunst”, die Kunstpolitik und die Berliner Kunsthochschule*, Cologne, etc., 2015, pp. 107–125.

“Zur kulturpolitischen Bekämpfung der modernen Kunst. Otto Karl Werckmeister über die neue Ausgabe von Hitlers ‘Mein Kampf,’” in: *Texte zur Kunst*, 26 (2016), no. 102, pp. 153–156.

“Kunstpolitik der Wirtschaftskrise,” in: Eckhart J. Gillen and Ulrike Lorenz, ed., *Konstruktion der Welt. Kunst und Ökonomie 1919–1939*, Catalog, Bielefeld and Berlin, 2018, pp. 348–352.

“Entgegengesetzte Bestimmungen des Modernen auf der Pariser Weltausstellung von 1937,” in: *Moderne neu denken. Architektur und Städtebau des 20. Jahrhunderts*, (ICOMOS. Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, vol. LXIX), Berlin, 2019, pp. 116–121.



1/ Policies

1.1 / Traditional versus Modern Art

p. 20

1.2 / Totalitarian Art Policy

p. 54

1.3 / Democratic Art Policy

p. 88

1.1 / Traditional versus Modern Art

/1 **STRUCTURAL CONFLICT**

/1.1 **MODERNIZATION AND TRADITION**

/1.1.1 **DECLINING SELF-ADJUSTMENT**

During the two centuries before the French Revolution, the so-called *querelle des anciens et modernes* (*struggle between ancients and moderns*) as a venue for the competition between what counted for traditional and modern art in France and England had as a rule been adjudicated within a professionally organized artistic culture that was structurally all-embracing, no matter how politically conflictive and ideologically diverse. This artistic culture was conditioned to regulate itself: economically through market competition based on quality and fashion, socially through diversified offerings of art production to clienteles of different classes, and politically through corporative art institutions supervised by state governments. It was diverse enough to accommodate competing trends of change. As a result, modernization in art and architecture worked in tandem with other areas of culture, whose scientific and technological advances artistic culture stood ready to incorporate into its own professional development. However, it was limited by an admiration for the past that it often strove to emulate, thus preventing it from pursuing any straightforward ideal of progress. It vacillated between monumentality and modernization.

During the 19th century, professional parameters of artistic competition as a transitional adjustment, to be resolved according to an emerging correspondence between developmental logic and changing demand, became ever less inclusive. Competing artistic interests tended to obviate them, seeking alternative venues for success and posturing as unaccountable 'avant-gardes.' By the end of the century, artistic culture had ceased to be self-adjusting. It was no longer capable of resolving the conflictive processes of professional innovation, just as the underlying society was no longer capable of abiding by established social and political institutions in the effort to resolve the conflicts brought on by economic modernization. Artistic innovation styled itself as 'revolutionary.' Now the "quarrel between ancients and moderns" turned into the "struggle for art," as one early 20th-century controversy in Germany was called, that is, into a lasting structural antagonism of incompatible positions and convictions. Artistic culture came to be perceived, over and above

professional and aesthetic competition, as an extension of social conflicts enacted in the public sphere.

The structural problem with this development was that it also created a permanent asymmetry between majority and minority positions, because emancipation from traditional artistic culture was spearheaded by hard-headed individuals who insisted on self-empowerment against collective regulation, priding themselves of their minority status as a refusal to conform. When toward the end of the nineteenth century small groups of artists, defying established professional corporations, organized in interest groups for business, they often called themselves ‘secessions,’ by analogy to the walk-out of the Roman *plebs* from aristocratic government, with the difference that they were the opposite of a majority. The ‘German Artists League’ (*Deutscher Künstlerbund*), an association of such groups, was founded in 1904, to “guarantee an individual talent’s possibility to follow its artistic conscience unmolested and to aid it in its struggle against the multitude for its rightful place. For it is clear that in art only the exception is of value,” in the words of its program, written by Count Harry Kessler.⁽¹⁾

/1.1.2 UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS ART POLICIES

It was the upper middle-class that started to give a political voice to this kind of artists’ professional emancipation. Since the 19th century, as part of its drive for political empowerment, it had drawn artistic culture into the public sphere of principled debate, transforming competition from a bid for professional acceptance into a manifestation of irreconcilable cultural claims. Artistic culture was thereby turned into a representative venue for the antagonism between state government and upper middle-class political emancipation. The altercation about tradition versus innovation in the arts turned into a battlefield between mutually hostile ideologies. The underlying struggles about cultural policy at large were ultimately rooted in class conflict. As a result of the attendant institutional clashes and exasperated press campaigns, the challenge to tradition in the arts resonated with implicit calls for political change. “The principle that brought the Artists’ League into being: to protect and further individualism in art [...] will also have to be accepted in the political life of the nation,” demanded Count Kessler in his program.⁽²⁾

Such efforts, however, were not aimed at a ‘secession’—that is, a walkout—of art from state culture into a culture of privacy, but at making inroads into the direction and administration of cultural policy on behalf of the upper middle-class. Even absent a fully-fledged political democracy, they were part of a quest for greater influence on state policy regulating museums, academies and other art institutions. Therefore, in the period between 1871 and 1914, the contest between traditional and modern art took the form of a negotiated inclusion of modern art into government-sanctioned artistic culture. This process worked to temper modern art’s provocative social postures,

even at their most aggressive, as a measure of its professional success, but also, in reverse, the defensive hostility of its opponents. In 1874, for example, impressionist painter Claude Monet and his colleagues called their newly-founded private exhibition group *les intransigeants*, adapted from the name of an earlier Spanish leftist opposition party.⁽³⁾ Forty-four years later, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau offered a set of Monet's *Water Lilies* to the nation in celebration of France's victory in World War I.

That there was no broad embrace of modern art by the organized working-class, despite leftist sympathies harbored by many modern artists, made its class limitation a political risk for the future. Insistent outreach efforts vis-à-vis leftist organizations or journals by the self-consolidating modern art establishment tried to mitigate this disparity with limited success. Commenting on the modern art scene in his Vienna exile, clandestine Bolshevik leader Lev Trotsky wrote as early as 1913: "Bourgeois society showed its strength throughout long periods of history in the fact that, combining repression and encouragement, boycott and flattery, it was able to control and assimilate every 'rebel' movement in art and raise it to the level of official 'recognition.'"⁽⁴⁾ Every time such accommodation was attained, Trotsky went on to write, "from the left wing of the academic school or below it—i.e. from the ranks of a new generation of bohemian artists—a fresher revolt would surge up to attain in its turn, after a decent interval, the steps of the academy. [...] Nevertheless, the union of art and the bourgeoisie remained stable, even if not happy."

/1.1.3 THE CRISIS OF THE DEPRESSION

For five or six years after the First World War, modern art enjoyed a short-term rise on opposite extremes of the European geopolitical spectrum. On the flourishing French art market, flush with reparations money, it was made fashionable as the art of the rich. The first government of the early Bolshevik state vainly offered it to the working-class as the art of revolution. The changing presentation of Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third International spans this early phase.⁽⁵⁾ In the summer of 1920, the artist re-dedicated his model of December 1919, then simply titled Monument to the Bolshevik Revolution, to the Comintern on the occasion of that body's Second Congress, which hailed the advancing Soviet attack on Poland. Three years after the attack had failed and other foreign setbacks had made the Comintern shelve its plans for world revolution, Education Commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky and War Commissar Lev Trotsky repudiated the monument. In 1923, the Bauhaus show in Weimar featured it as a model of constructivist design. In 1925, Tatlin crafted a streamlined replica for the Paris World Exposition of decorative art.

During the latter part of the twenties, attention to commercial markets for architecture and product design sought to align modern art with industrial modernization. With such claims to a social base expanded beyond its collectors' clientele, modern

art lent itself to celebrating the perceived beauty of mechanized efficiency. It strove to turn the sparse surface of technology into an aesthetic setting. The Depression put a stop to this or any other kind of market expansion on the part of modern art, as governments endeavored to redress unemployment with make-work programs that cut back on labor-saving equipment. As a result, the aesthetics of mechanization lost much of its economic reason, and the stylish appeal of modern art in visual culture at large began to fade. Eventually, the Depression deprived art of whatever observance—traditional or modern—of much of its market, institutional or private. When, as a result, modern artists started to seek state support, they exposed themselves to the politics of state intervention, whereby European governments sought to overcome the slump. Only democratic France, and less so Fascist Italy, gave them a small chance.

As governments took political management of national economies into their hands, they embarked on art policies designed to reactivate the customary functions of traditional art for asserting political stability and social cohesion. They turned to traditionally-minded artists whose work had proven their public appeal, even without committing them to professing any political allegiance. Still, in the three totalitarian states, numerous artists, both traditional and modern, initially tried to outdo one another with expeditious ideological professions. Soon, however, the populist premises underlying the preferences of all governments for traditional art were confirmed by its majority acceptance. If modern artists did not adapt their work, they relapsed to an outsider status. In the three totalitarian states, thorough reorganizations of artistic culture within four years or less made their traditionalist preference official. Only in democratic France did the constitutional continuity of even-handed art policy allow artistic culture to persist in a protracted competition that gave modern art a fighting chance against traditionalist predominance.

/1.2 **POLITICAL STABILIZATION AND SOCIAL EMANCIPATION**

/1.2.1 **ENDURING DISPARITY**

Counteracting traditional art with an ever-growing self-assurance was an art based on the free market rather than on state guidance or support. It was advanced by independent-minded artists and their associated dealers, writers and collectors, who made their opposition to 'official' standards the hallmark of an alternative aesthetics expressing social independence. This art was championed as 'modern,' not because it claimed to mirror the relentless modernization of capitalist economy and society, but because it promised to redeem the attendant emancipation of the individual, to a point of a principled nonconformity with any kind of prescriptive culture, not only of aesthetic preference, but of political judgment. Incessant repudiations of traditional art orchestrated the market ascendancy of modern art in the public sphere. They often

claimed to go beyond aesthetic or professional concerns toward a fundamentalist cultural critique. In Germany, the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche—himself no advocate of modern art—provided one of the most influential platforms for this posture.

As a result of the structural bifurcation sketched out above, the history of European art from the late 19th century through the end of the Second World War was conditioned by an enduring disparity between two antagonistic venues of artistic culture, styled traditional and modern respectively. It became a two-track art history that pitted both venues against one another rather than recognizing them as complementary. Defenders of modern art used to represent this disparity as a mere time lag in its advance towards cultural preeminence by analogy to modernization in general. However, it never displaced traditional art at all. All the more defiantly was it fashioned as the art of the epoch. It was written up in one-sided accounts that dismissed, or simply ignored, traditional art's persistence. That eventually modern art should have prevailed in the artistic cultures of most capitalist societies is the outcome of a protracted contest, fought out in recurrent conflicts of cultural policy. This contest came to a head in the political confrontation of the arts during the decade of the Depression, because it became part of the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy.

Until the end of the Depression, state governments of whatever constitutional stripe pursued cultural policies promoting traditional art as a majority culture of political stabilization. A historic continuity of art, even reaching back to pre-modern times, helped to strengthen the legitimacy of such policies, provided they claimed to address contemporary social concerns. State guidance of the arts filling in for dried-up markets was not confined to patronage of public buildings and art collections. It extended to institutional systems of art education, professional organization of artists, public competitions and awards, and explicit or implicit codes of censorship. As a component of public policy, it had been drawn into the political upheavals following the First World War. While the Fascist and National Socialist regimes, their capitalist art markets intact, assiduously professed the freedom of the arts from state control, the Bolshevik regime, its art production increasingly regulated by the Party, made no bones about artists' obligation to follow instructions. Yet all three totalitarian states empowered themselves to foster an aesthetics of public order.

/1.2.2 **ART OF DISSENT**

Turning their backs to any consolidated tradition from the past, modern artists and their advocates took to claiming either a radical enhancement of subjective expression that ignored the common codes of social behavior, or a quasi-anthropological affinity with the arts from outside the borders of European culture and beyond the timeline of European history. Modern artists' resolve to ignore traditional norms entailed an aesthetic self-validation of their work, unresponsive to social expectations,

which culminated in the ideal of autonomy, of art for art's sake. Their minority audiences from the upper middle-class welcomed such self-fulfilling standards as an aesthetic validation of their own dissent from social conventions. Since the late 19th century, some of the most celebrated modern artists such as Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch led a socially marginalized existence whose well-publicized biographical specifics added to their renown. Their self-claimed license for autobiographical expression came to be appreciated as an aesthetic paradigm of social nonconformity.

In rejecting the standards of academies, patronage systems, and juried exhibitions, modern artists disputed the authority of state art institutions to decide artistic merit. Their conservative opponents retaliated by branding their professional independence as a challenge to the social order. Discontented segments of society, on the other hand, sympathized with them for just this reason. Foremost among those segments was the upper middle-class, the so-called bourgeoisie, principal sponsor of modern art until the First World War. Pushing for inclusion of modern art in state-run exhibitions and public museums pertained to its bid for more political influence on semi-autocratic or conservative governments which failed to honor their economic achievements with a due share in the conduct of politics. Often the partisanship of upper middle-class circles for modern art landed them in a strained political position, since the last thing they aspired to was an upset of the political order. Against an all too literal understanding of the term 'revolution' in which modern artists and their advocates tended to indulge, they felt obliged to assert their patriotic loyalty.

When after the First World War the political influence of the upper middle-class was in decline, the culture of modern art found itself in need of expanding its social base. With its strengthened foothold in some state art institutions, it started to promote itself as an aesthetic corollary of post-war reconstruction and productive technology, to the point of advancing hypothetical precepts for society at large. However, in the conflict-ridden social and political environment of post-war Europe, such categorical postures never attained enough of a political backing to be significantly implemented. Instead, their utopian rhetoric served to draw modern art into an increasingly overheated public culture of political strife. The claims of modern art for social change remained confined to ideology. No matter how emphatically the culture of modern art asserted its relevancy for all people, it could never shed its upper middle-class cachet. Its tentative initiatives of outreach to the working-class were rarely honored by political agencies of the Left. At the start of the Depression, its increased prominence in the public sphere could not conceal the fact that its class base had not significantly expanded.

/1.2.3 **DEPRESSION SHOWDOWN**

During the Depression, the long-term conflict between traditional and modern art moved to historic center-stage of public politics. It blew up in an all-pervasive

political confrontation of the arts that ran in tandem with the mounting conflicts between the European states representing four antagonistic political systems, all the way to the start of World War II. In a lecture entitled “Political Position of Today’s Art,” delivered on April 1, 1935, to a group of writers and artists in Prague calling itself “Left Front,”⁽⁶⁾ surrealist writer André Breton evoked imaginary “banners that have abruptly been set up to fly all over Europe, opposing to a national front, the last battle formation of capitalism, a common or social front, a united front or a red front [...].”⁽⁷⁾ No matter how vaguely Breton drew the fault lines of the confrontation, his conclusion “that we live in an epoch in which man belongs to himself less than ever, in which he is held responsible for the totality of his acts, no longer before a single conscience, his own, but before the collective conscience of all,” declared the arts to be a matter of political conscience.

For Breton, the political conscience now required from artists pertained to the self-assertion, or self-defense, of their creative freedom under mounting political pressure. But he was wrong in positioning artistic freedom, which he understood as the freedom of modern art, schematically on the left. Already one year later, he was disabused of this self-delusion. Rather, the confrontation was enacted on the antagonism between traditional and modern art and ran across all political systems in such a searing fashion that the decade of 1929-1939 came to mark an upset in the balance between the two. It compromised traditional art as a medium of oppression and revalidated modern art as one of freedom. However, such a polarity was never defined in terms of contemporary politics. The fallacy of the confrontation was that it never properly addressed the relationship of modern art to democracy. Only after the hiatus of World War II was the ascendancy of modern art from a minority culture of independence or dissent to a representative culture of political democracy accomplished, and modern art displaced traditional art in that capacity.

At the start of the Depression, the public ascendancy of modern art seemed to be stalled. In the capitalist democracies of Germany and France, it had lost its connection with the ideal of technological modernization. The Fascist regime had curbed it into propaganda service, and the Soviet regime had stripped it of its revolutionary credentials. At the end of the decade, by contrast, modern art had regained some of its public prominence through ideological alignments with the Popular Front governments of France and Spain, with the revolutionary postures—anarchist or communist—of the Surrealist movement, and with the manifest regime critique advanced by German artists driven into exile. This ideological rebound of modern art was due to its inherent dynamics of dissent from political order which was now turning into oppression. In Germany it was clandestine, and in the Soviet Union, where state control was even more oppressive, it never occurred. In France, on the other hand, democracy appeared too weak to encourage any ideological alignment.

/1.3 THE AVANT-GARDE IDEAL

/1.3.1 FROM LEADERSHIP TO NONCONFORMITY

The key term of the two-track history of art was that of the avant-garde, detached from its broader significance originating in the political culture of the French Revolution. In the writings of Saint-Simon and his followers, around 1825, the term became crucial for the social advance of culture in general. In the culture of modern art it was narrowed down to denote an unaccountable leadership of individuals. In Saint-Simon's maximum extension of the term, 'avant-garde' denoted all "men of imagination," a trail-blazing expert group of intellectuals, including but not limited to artists, who were professionally qualified to chart the progress of society, not through idiosyncratic visions of their own, but by implementing Saint-Simon's projection of utopian socialism. Such individuals who dared to buck convention were expected to prevail as the future elites of a reformed society, at which time their dissent from the status quo would subside. Saint-Simon and his followers never specified what this perspective meant for the arts in particular. For over fifty years, 'avant-garde' remained a generic claim for cultural alternatives.

Only in the last two decades of the 19th century did non-conformist artists seek and find sympathetic audiences who conceived of themselves as social minorities in their radical dissent from the dominant artistic culture and its sustaining social order. Although they rarely used the term 'avant-garde,' they embodied it in their social attitude, unconcerned about its underlying social mission. Now modern art became linked to alternative lifestyles labeled with the catchwords 'Decadence' or 'Bohème'. Even though its adherents predicted that artistic avant-gardes would eventually attain general acceptance, it was their incompatibility with current social norms which made them attractive to middle-class clienteles uneasy about the codes of their own social life. Diverging from Saint-Simon's premise that avant-gardes, as they turned into elites, were dynamic movers of society at large, some modern artists' disregard for extant society came to be rated as unbridgeable. With his phrase "One has to be absolutely modern" at the end of his book *A Season in Hell* of 1873,⁽⁸⁾ Arthur Rimbaud seemed to demand nothing less than a renunciation of culture for the sake of art.

It was in the self-assurance of their avant-garde posture that before World War I some modern artists sympathized, or even associated, with leftist or anarchist movements questioning the social order. At times, they found themselves politically compromised against their own intent since they had to face the original, that is, political, version of avant-garde leadership, which put artistic autonomy at risk. Marx had addressed the inherent contradiction in his political critique of the Bohème and its affinity to what he styled as the "Proletariat in Rags" (*Lumpenproletariat*), an idiosyncratic

counterculture of disenfranchised and impoverished segments of society that lacked class-consciousness, the precondition for the formation of political will, as it was cultivated in the organized working-class. Different from Marx, Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, in his *What is to Be Done* of 1902, argued for a self-empowerment of his Bolsheviks as the proletariat's avant-garde, a minority of determined intellectuals authorized to act on behalf of the uneducated masses. Left-leaning modern artists in the Soviet Union believed to be included in this kind of avant-garde, though at their peril.

/1.3.2 **AESTHETIC TRANSPOSITION**

Once modern artists shunned the institutions meant to anchor art in a social order where they found no place, they converted the transition from artistic avant-gardes to social elites envisaged by Saint-Simon into a non-representative, self-confirming leadership postures. They would devise hypothetical social orders of their own design as settings for their claims to individual authority. In 1903, Russian painter Vasily Kandinsky, living on inherited wealth, turned down a professorship at the School of Arts and Crafts at Düsseldorf in 1910, and instead chose to promote his art from within two tiny Munich artists' groups attached to private galleries. By 1914, he was recognized by some as Germany's foremost expressionist painter solely on his own achievement. Concurrently, in his book *On the Spiritual in Art* of 1912, Kandinsky coined a graphic metaphor for the avant-garde ideal. It was a steadily rising triangle with artists at its tip, so as to position art as he saw it at the apex of mankind's ascent toward spiritual fulfillment. At this point, he professed to expect, the aspirations of all political, social, and cultural initiatives would concur with the artist's vision.

Once the avant-garde posture of modern artists had gained a limited but growing acceptance and marketability, the structural transition from avant-gardes to elites envisaged by Saint-Simon seemed in reach, albeit not for society at large, but merely for a minority culture which seemed to champion social dissent, even though few of its participants if any were leading a marginalized existence. This minority culture, complete with elite artists of its own, was backed by upper-middle-class clientele, first on the market, and then within public museums and institutions, where officials from that class advanced to leading posts. Here the avant-garde defiance of traditional art was upped into its rejection as no longer adequate to modern life. Thus, the ideal of an artistic avant-garde materialized within the circumscribed realm of an alternative culture without any social, let alone political, accountability. Due to the structural aptness of closely-knit upper middle-class elites for self-entitlement, it tended to assert its own exclusive standing against the traditional mainstream. The ensuing stalemates conditioned the two-track history of 20th century art.

After the First World War, and throughout the decade to follow, the avant-garde's hypothetical challenge to the social status quo was accommodated in a public

culture of mutual provocation. This culture licensed modern artists, exempt from any significant political affiliation, to dramatize their nonconformity as a spectacle of social or political critique. The Futurist manifesto of 1909, the Dadaist performance culture of 1917-1920, and the Surrealist manifesto of 1924, all generated from within the art market and the literary scene, marked high points of an ever more vitriolic attack culture, eager to scandalize public opinion with its denunciations, a culture which could not be stopped by ever-recurring interference on the part of the authorities. This culture of provocation was bound to propel modern artists beholden to avant-garde ambitions into venues of political conflict. While the Futurists were informed by anarchist ideologies with little political resonance, the Dadaists, and even more so the Surrealists, professed 'revolutionary' Communism with so much fanfare that communist parties disowned them, mindful of their working-class constituencies.

/1.3.3 **POST-WAR RISE AND FALL**

Following the First World War, modern art's short-lived embrace by the Soviet regime, as well as its involvement in various political upheavals pervading Western European democracies, expanded its public resonance beyond the upper middle-class that had promoted its pre-war ascendancy. From the public sphere of artistic culture, it entered the political arena of ideological debate. This ideological expansion was related to the weakening of post-war democratic governments, which had culminated in the Bolshevik and Fascist takeovers of October 1917 and October 1922 respectively, and in the precarious start of the Weimar Republic since November 1918. The 'revolutionary' posture of modern artists grew louder in response to those governments' vacillating politics. Artists such as Vladimir Tatlin, Felipe Tomaso Marinetti, or Walter Gropius, backed up by their circles of adherents, but uneasy with the political parties of their choice, reasserted the customary avant-garde ambitions for art to transcend into 'life' with a vengeance. On the strength of their own convictions, they called for principled changes of state and society.

Modern artists placed in charge of early Soviet art institutions construed themselves by analogy to Lenin's doctrine of a political avant-garde. Aligned with, but not subject to, party leadership, they strove for what painter and writer Nikolai Punin called a "dictatorship of the minority" with "muscles strong enough to march in step with the working-class."⁽⁹⁾ Under Marinetti's personal leadership, Italian Futurists likewise fancied themselves as an artistic pendant to, rather than a professional segment of, Mussolini's Fascist Party, vacillating between demonstrations of allegiance and reassertions of independence or even temporary breaks. Eventually, their claims to leadership in cultural policy were rebuffed even sooner than those of their Soviet counterparts. In Germany, finally, a new elite mindset, based not on any party affiliation but on the support of social democratic and liberal governments, informed some circles

of modern artists, led by architects, with a missionary zeal of social or even political reform. The most prominent of these circles, the 'Working Council for Art,' took its name from the workers' organizations of the November revolution.

The start of the Depression brought an ever-growing state encroachment upon society in the three pertinent states, which in a matter of years turned into totalitarian dictatorships, with Germany trailing the other two in time. This growing primacy of politics left no more room for modern artists' claims to social renewal, no matter how assiduously they tried to toe the line. The political overreach of artistic avant-gardes in the Soviet Union and in Italy was now reined in by party and government elites that were keen on framing and enacting cultural policies designed to curb personal projections. The National Socialist government, which never had a similar constituency of artists, let alone modern artists, made short shrift of those who belatedly professed their allegiance. "Our principal critical task, in the present period, must be to disentangle in *avant-garde* art what is *authentic* from what is not," wrote André Breton in 1935.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, by setting up Rimbaud and Lenin—absolute outcast and absolute leader—as personifications of co-equal artistic and political avant-gardes, Breton still upheld the political independence of art now being jeopardized by the Depression.

/ 2 **POLITICAL COMPETITION**

/ 2.1 **ARTISTIC AND POLITICAL CULTURE**

/ 2.1.1 **ART IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

The political confrontation between traditional and modern art during the Depression was the end result of the long-term convergence between the art market and the public sphere that had started in the 18th century. At that time, art critics working for a press with diverse political affiliations took to writing up exhibitions of competing artists in terms of ideological rather than aesthetic criteria. This convergence accelerated after the failures of the 1848 revolutions, when economic, and hence artistic, freedom faced a curtailing of political liberties. Debates ostensibly confined to art proved more elusive to censorship than direct expressions of political opinion. In France, by the time of the Second Empire, a thoroughly politicized art criticism was in place. The careers of Jacques-Louis David, who rose from change-bent activism within academic milieus to political leadership in revolutionary governments, and of Gustave Courbet, who topped his ideological exhibition strategy with organizational work for the Paris Commune, provide the most famous examples of how artists rose from ideological publicity to political practice.

The convergence of artistic culture with the public sphere was a corollary of the transition from socially circumscribed patronage to an anonymous market which

required public self-promotion. It propelled the competition between traditional and modern art into the political culture at large. Transcending the politics of state institutions and state patronage, it linked tastes to ideologies. On the one hand, the increasingly politicized artistic culture suited artists, critics, and their backers who wished to use the arts as a venue for voicing or contesting political opinions. On the other hand, it drove them to insist on divorcing art from politics in order to shirk political retribution on the part of their opponents. Hence a constant push-and-pull ensued between political intent and political denial. In 1912-1914, for example, cubist painters Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris fitted cuts from center-right, mass-circulation newspapers into their *papiers-collés* in order to express their anarchist condemnation of political events reported there. Even though they made these pictures under contract for a dealer's showroom, with next to no public exposure, they pretended to be taking a stand in a press debate.

Before the First World War, the rampant politicization of an artistic culture drawn into the public sphere was still largely being driven by professional interest. Primarily concerned with state control or state support, it nonetheless contributed to the definition of free artistic expression as part of civil liberties and public discourse. No matter how intensely this artistic culture strove to engage in and was affected by politics, it still stopped short of becoming an operative part of political culture, that is, a venue for affecting government or party politics. It remained focused on state art politics or on free political expression. Its primary concern was the defense against encroachment rather than demands for change. Only in the aftermath of World War I was artistic culture in the public sphere energized to become an operative ingredient of the political process by governments and parties, particularly of the rising totalitarian regimes. By the time of the Depression, it had been so thoroughly made serviceable for public policy that Hitler, in a speech of 1933, could call art "a sublime mission obliging to fanaticism."⁽¹⁾

/ 2.1.2 **MODERN ART ON THE LEFT**

When by the turn of the century modern art began to be perceived as complicit with the Left, it was not because socialist parties or labor organizations had come round to embrace it, but because its opponents linked its dissenting cultural postures to political dissent from conservative governance, and because some modern artists sympathized with the Left out of conviction. Socialist parties and labor organizations, on the other hand, envisaged their constituencies not as social fringes receptive to an artistic counterculture, but as disenfranchised majorities with a claim of their own to the art of the mainstream. Their political goal was no validation of minority lifestyles, but to secure standard living conditions for a stable mass society. For this reason, the visual culture of the organized Left was committed to traditional art, because it was

intended to convey political messages to mass audiences excluded from the educational privilege of the upper middle-class. Its agendas were best conveyed by a realist representation of life and work or by a clearly readable symbolic illustration of political struggle.

On the other hand, an independence from politically organized culture was axiomatic to the quest for the aesthetic and expressive self-determination of modern artists. If they did associate with leftist political milieus, these tended to be anarchist, that is, averse to the current social order, bent on utopian schemes, and distrustful of strategic organization. It was not artists who first advanced expressly leftist claims on behalf of modern art, but sympathizing writers of middle-class origin who worked for the socialist press. Ready to carry their taste for modern art forward into a disavowal of their own class culture, such writers voiced its inherent challenge to conservative culture in approximative Marxist terms. Munich art writer Wilhelm Hausenstein, for example, an early promoter of Vasily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Paul Klee, was an upper-middle-class academic who joined the Social Democratic Party in 1907. He taught in a workers' night school, edited the culture section of the *Socialist Monthly* (*Sozialistische Monatshefte*), and advocated a 'sociological' art history based on Marxist principles.

The connection of modern art with Communism was the historic, if not coincidental, result of the initial empowerment of modern artists by the Bolshevik government as officials for the implementation of its art policy. As a result, its tenuous ideological associations with the Left from before the First World War became politically explicit, not only in Russia, but throughout Europe. It is the fundamental contradiction of Soviet art history that after the October Revolution, state-directed artistic culture in Russia did not draw on the Western European tradition of 19th-century Socialist art with its penchant for working-class themes and mass audiences, but was steered by a tightly-knit group of previously anarchist artists of modern observance at its extreme. That such artists should have prevailed over the mass organization of Proletarian Culture (*Proletkult*), where workers were to participate and engage in artistic activities, spelled the defeat of Marx's proposition that in a communist society art should be an integral part of social life rather than an exclusive profession. Theirs was a short-lived attempt to fuse an artistic with a political avant-garde on Lenin's terms.

/ 2.1.3 **POLITICIZATION**

The Depression widened the public sphere into an arena of precipitous political change, most trenchantly in the three totalitarian dictatorships which had dispensed with constitutional constraints, less so in the Third Republic, whose constitutional stability was strained to the breaking-point in the riots of 1934. This politicization of the

public sphere swept the arts along. The long-term convergence of artistic and political cultures, already accelerated in the preceding decade, had readied the arts to be made politically operational. Ideological demands or protests would no longer do. Art policy turned from “politics aimed at the arts” to “politics made through the arts.”⁽¹²⁾ The arts were drawn into the political process to an unheard-of degree. Many artists had underestimated the disruptive potential of projecting the competition between traditional and modern art onto the political spectrum of right versus left at a time when Europe was about to plunge into an all-out conflict on those terms. They had not foreseen the demands and restrictions to which the politicization of artistic culture would subject them.

Totalitarian regimes largely preempted the economic nexus of open market and public sphere as an expanded field of artistic competition. They were ill disposed to grant the public any sphere without political regulation. Thus, they supervised or even organized the public functions of the art market with the aim of fostering its political conformity. In the Soviet Union, the new government art policy inaugurated by the April Decree of 1932 began with stopping the public competition between artists’ groups, continued with an adjustment of the art press from a forum of ideological discussion into a mouthpiece of Party precepts, and culminated in the promulgation of Socialist Realism as an obligatory style whose exegesis was the only subject of debate. The other two totalitarian states, which had left their capitalist economies intact, pursued quite different paths. The Fascist government turned the public sphere into a non-compulsive arena for traditional and modern artists to vie for ideological conformity. The National Socialist government, within three years of its accession, squelched it altogether by decree, yet failed to fill the void with prescriptions of its own.

The Popular Front movements in France and Spain also intensified the convergence of artistic culture and the public sphere toward a politicization of the arts. First, they engaged artists in their electoral campaigns. Once in office, they fomented vociferous debates aimed at reconciling traditional and modern art on platforms of political activism. Consistent with their origins in the public resistance of the left against the right-wing riots of February 1934 in France, and against the bloody repression of workers’ uprisings of October 1934 in Spain, both movements succeeded in mobilizing artists who had kept apart from politics thus far on the assumption that art in the public sphere was able to contribute to political change. However, both Popular Front governments empowered artists much less than they made it appear in their ceaseless ideological debates, which rarely fed into the art policies of their officials in charge. Their speedy fall from power in 1938-1939 disabused those artists of their confidence in the efficacy of their activist participation in the public sphere of democracy under duress.

/ 2.2.1 **ART OF FREEDOM**

The mindset of perpetual contest intrinsic to modern artistic culture could not have lasted had it not suited the mentality of its upper middle-class clientele. Part of this clientele found modern artists and their works to mirror their own, muffled dissent from dominant social and cultural conventions, which suited their culture of individualism, but stopped short of political dissent. Since the late 19th century, some modern artists had led a socially marginalized existence, whose well-publicized biographical circumstances added to their posthumous or even contemporary celebrity. The autobiographical profile they had given to their work came to be appreciated as a paradigm of an idiosyncratic blend between aesthetic and social nonconformity. Starting with Henry Murger's novel *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* of 1847-1849, books and journals glamorized the life and work of non-conformist artists. Self-doubts rampant in upper middle-class circles about the morals of their social norms, which had long found expression in the literature they read, were rarely addressed in the art provided by academic professionals for the decoration of their homes.

The undisputed hero of artistic dissent was the poet Arthur Rimbaud, who after putting forth a small but celebrated body of poetry left France for Africa at age nineteen, never to write another line. His famous phrase "One must be absolutely modern," from the conclusion of his prose poem *A Season in Hell*, was no call for modern art, but one for the wholesale rejection of European culture. Painters Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin attained a similar celebrity within a few years of their deaths. Both had turned their backs on city culture, one in the countryside, the other in the South Seas. Unlike Rimbaud, they had lived for their art until the end. One had died from a self-inflicted gunshot, the other deprived of medical care. Paintings tied to their suicide attempts became mementos of their fate. After the turn of the century, Pablo Picasso's rise to fame was marked by two famous masterworks, the *Saltimbanques* of 1905 and the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1908. Their themes—migrating street performers and prostitutes on self-display—transfigured social marginality, if not social transgression, into paradigms of aesthetic authenticity for the upper middle-class to watch.

In embracing modern art, the upper-middle-class and its associated writers idealized such artists' nonconformity as an aesthetic template for their own intellectual emancipation and emotional self-release. In response, a deliberately provocative social conduct, as opposed to conventional respectability, became part of the public appeal of modern artistic culture. The term 'decadence' denotes the conflictive, social ambivalence inherent in this appeal. While hostile critics of modern art used the word as an index of depravity, modern artists and their advocates embraced it as a distinction. It

was used to either extol aesthetic nonconformity as a lifestyle of freedom, or brand it as deviancy from civilized behavior, even as 'degeneracy' from biological norms. The penchant of upper-middle-class culture to transfigure its ideals into existential or historic absolutes exacerbated those controversies. Once modern art, a fraction of art production, was transfigured into the art of the epoch, and traditional art, the mainstay of art production, was dismissed as obsolete, modern art became liable to being called on its class limitation.

/ 2.2.2 **EFFORTS AT CLASS TRANSCENDENCE**

Before the First World War, support for an art that counted for modern because it had broken free of national traditions suited the internationalist outlook of the upper middle-class, which sponsored it as a culture to flank its international business interests. Its opponents, on the other hand, claimed to protect the integrity of the national economy along with that of national culture. In the first decade after the war, a time of recapitalization and reconstruction, modern art came to be aligned with technological modernization all over Europe. It was propelled from a private taste to the aesthetic surface of an optimistic public culture. Audiences beyond its clientele, down to the working-class, were persuaded to view it as a paragon of progress. This new ideological link-up of modern art to the class-transcending ideals of modernization shared by society at large served its internationalist promotion across the antagonistic political systems of democracy and dictatorships, be they Bolshevik or Fascist. When the Depression revealed modernization as a temporary measure, modern art ran the risk of being called on its class limitations.

The waning success of modernization, combined with the economic, and hence political, decline of the upper middle-class during the first decade after World War I, exposed modern art to political challenges from both Right and Left. Such challenges were backed by growing social segments and political constituencies that had always clung to traditional art. On one side of the political spectrum, a host of academically-trained artists, who kept plying their trade in private, local, or regional environments to satisfy the demands of lower middle-class clienteles, organized in opposition to the modernist predominance, perceived or real, on the art market, in the art press, and in state art institutions, and tended to adopt nationalist ideological postures. On the other side, cultural organizations of the communist and other leftist parties and their public outlets repudiated modern artists' self-professed leftist sympathies, because of their failure to elicit any working-class appreciation. Their ostentatious nonconformity was denounced as 'bourgeois' self-indulgence, invalidated by its shirking of commitment to any party politics.

Since the late 19th century, artistic high culture in capitalist Europe, with its inherent tendency toward high achievement, financial gain, public success, and social

standing, had to contend with the resentment of an overflow of academically-trained artists who failed to succeed on those terms. Classified as an “art proletariat” by analogy to the working-class, they became a source of concern for artistic culture. As soon as these disadvantaged artists and their associations found a voice in the public sphere, they claimed to be rooted in a people’s culture held in disregard and started to promote their interests in populist and nationalist ideological terms. Their complaint was that modern art remained inaccessible to the general public, did not represent its cultural ideals, and offended its sound tastes. The more headway modern art made in public culture after World War I, and the more post-war economic hardship exacerbated competitive antagonisms in artistic culture, the more did traditional artists vent an anti-‘bourgeois’ resentment against modern art as an art of privilege—most aggressively on the populist platforms of the ruling Bolshevik and the rising National Socialist parties.

/ 2.2.3 **DEPRESSION BACKLASH**

Since the start of the Depression a growing discrepancy between modern art’s sweeping claims to epochal standing and its de-facto class-based minority status in society made it vulnerable to being put in its place. Its subsistence base in a declining upper middle-class became endangered by the ground swell of populist mass politics unleashed in response to the economic crisis. When German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe built the Tugendhat luxury villa and the German Pavilion at the Barcelona World Exhibition of 1929 in the same style of ostentatious material affluence, he endowed the architectural representation of the Weimar Republic with an upper middle-class profile which contradicted the precarious social diversity of its population in distress. However, alignment of abstraction with technological modernization was merely taking the sting out of modern art’s aesthetic idiosyncrasy. Precarious conditions in post-war capitalist society gave modern artists no reason to desist from their provocative social or even political critique, although they found no lasting base in any political organization to turn activist.

The class-based minority status that modern art could never shed prompted its deliberate marginalization, and eventual repudiation, on the part of totalitarian regimes. These regimes strove to foster a class-transcending artistic culture combining majority acceptance with historic legitimacy, both of which could only be had from traditional art. They could not admit alternative expression, let alone dissent. When in 1932 the Soviet Union had finally succeeded in dislodging modern art from its initial predominance, two defamatory shows branded it as ‘bourgeois.’ The contemporary Communist press of the Weimar Republic called it the same. The National Socialist Party, still in opposition, tied it to Jewish money interests, a racist variant of this kind of attack. Only the Fascist regime in Italy, successful in obtaining upper-middle-class

support for its policies, was willing to enlist modern architects to its ideological platform of modernization, and on this premise granted modern artists a chance to comply. Its offer of conformity, on the condition of foregoing individual dissent, steered clear of any perilous disruption of Fascist artistic culture.

In democratic France, the success of modern art on the private market during the first decade after World War I did not entail its acceptance by state institutions and state patronage, because these operated on the basis of a political representation by diverse professional groups. Modern artists, however, relying on the dealer system, never organized into similar groups. In the Weimar Republic, on the other hand, where modern artists did take part in professional organizations that were able to deal with governments—the ‘German Artists League’ (*Deutscher Künstlerbund*) first and foremost—those governments lacked the financial wherewithal to translate the proportional equity between traditional and modern artists into even-handed support. By 1936, half-hearted efforts by the Popular Front in France and Spain to promote modern art on the strength of its ideological credentials were thwarted by de-facto preferences for mass-based cultural policies, for which traditional art continued to work better as a propaganda style. Thus, modern art was still dependent on private markets in distress.

/ 2.3 **MARKET DECLINE AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE**

/ 2.3.1 **QUEST FOR STATE SUPPORT**

When in all three states with capitalist economies considered here the Depression made art markets decline, competition between traditional and modern artists turned to state support. In the Soviet Union, this turn had started earlier, even before the private art market had fallen victim to the abolition of the New Economic Policy. As a result, artistic competition became politicized. In 1929 and 1930, in all four states, regardless of their economic and political systems, architects’ and artists’ organizations were being formed or newly energized to position their members on the spectrum of traditional and modern art in cultural policy. Efforts to obviate such allocations—most spectacularly by the Congrès d’Architectes Modernes—were unsuccessful. By 1931 and 1932, many of these associations and organizations had politicized themselves to such a degree that political interests—government or party agencies in the two totalitarian states in place by then, and left- or right-wing opposition movements in democratic Germany and France—enlisted them for their promotion, using their ideologies for propaganda.

It was in the two totalitarian states already in existence that such regimes’ political responses to the artists’ plight were most deliberate. The Fascist Associations of Fine Arts and the Soviet Artists’ Cooperative, both formed in 1929, were established

to organize exhibition and sales networks, at first without state subsidies. Within two years, political authorities had absorbed them. That same year, in Germany, the 'Combat League for German Culture' (*Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur*) was founded as an anti-modern pressure group affiliated with the National Socialist Party, still in opposition at the time. One year later it joined a 'Leaders Council of the United German Art and Culture Associations,' which expected the Party to support traditional artists once in power. Also in 1929, the French 'Union of Modern Artists' (*Union des Artistes Modernes*) seceded from its umbrella organization to promote modern arts and crafts, but without political affiliation. It was the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers,' founded in January 1932 under Communist auspices, and soon renamed 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' (*Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires*, AEAR), that made support of artists without work a cause for leftist politics.

In Italy and the Soviet Union, the coordination of the new, politicized artists' organizations with government or party agencies occurring between 1930 and 1932 produced two different forms of politically tested ideological alignments, whose outcome was the same demotion of modern vis-à-vis traditional art. In Italy, it was reduced to conformity, in the Soviet Union it was sidelined altogether. In Germany, the change of political system enacted after January 30, 1933, with lightning speed, prompted a one-sided political adjudication of the contest, which dispensed with debate, but still produced no clear winner. The new government swiftly fulfilled the 'Leaders' Council's' demands for a removal of modern art from public culture, but rebuffed its claims to shape the representative art of the National Socialist State. In France, finally, modern artists who placed their hopes in the populist platform of the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' had to endure a conservative backlash which also engulfed the 'Union of Modern Artists'. The short-lived tenure of the Popular Front government since July 1936 did not net them an enduring increase of state purchases and commissions.

/ 2.3.2 **COORDINATION**

As artists' organizations pursuing political strategies for professional advancement were embraced by government agencies or political parties eager to incorporate art policies into their programs, the ideological overdetermination of artistic culture, long rampant in the public sphere, introduced the competition between traditional and modern art into mainstream politics. The most emphatic incorporation of organized artists in a grand political scheme was their enlistment for the promotion of the First Five-Year Plan in the Soviet Union. Similarly, though less oppressively, artists in Italy were pooled in government projects designed to monumentalize the corporative organization of Fascist working society. In both these states, government or party officials

were involved. In Germany and France, activism of politicized artists' organizations remained confined to electoral politics. In 1930-1932, the NSDAP staged mass rallies to denounce modern art with uniformed SA troops standing guard. In 1934-1936, the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' staged mass demonstrations for the election of the Popular Front. Once elected, however, both governments had no use for their populist appeal.

As soon as parties and governments became aware of the ideological potential of artistic culture as an ingredient of politics, they embarked on framing cultural policies which raised the practical relevance of the arts for overcoming the social crisis brought on by the Depression. In the process, artists' political activities tended to be steered by politicians. It was the Bolshevik Party which, through its operational conduct of art policy down to the minute detail, was capable of organizing artists for propaganda tasks. The corporative policies of Fascist Italy, by contrast, placed leading artists who were ready to abide by prescribed ideological parameters in charge of political projects. In both states, participating artists felt inspired rather than curtailed. The National Socialist government, by contrast, discarded the ideological frenzy of the 'Combat League for German Culture' and its successor organizations under the aegis of Alfred Rosenberg. As late as 1939, organized artists, overheard by security agents, complained about a lack of directions from above. The government preferred to run its art policy through artists empowered by the leadership principle.

Totalitarian governments succeeded to different degrees and at different times in meeting the economic aspirations of artists whom they had forced to organize on their ideological platforms, all of them of traditional observance. In Italy and the Soviet Union, these aspirations were largely met by 1936. German artists had to wait until 1938, when the credit-induced boom of the war industry had taken hold. In all three totalitarian states, the process reduced the market chances of modern artists, albeit to different degrees. The Fascist and the Soviet government conceded them a greatly diminished niche, which in Italy entailed some stylistic license, while in the USSR it required rigorous stylistic adjustments. Only in Germany was modern art shut out entirely. Democratic governments in France, by contrast, were unable to foster an across-the-board economic recovery of artistic culture during the full length of the Depression. The one-time stimulus program for the 1937 Paris World Exposition still favored traditional over modern artists. Thus, the competitive antagonism between traditional and modern art was never resolved.

/ 2.3.3 **DELIVERY**

When it came to dealing with the multifarious, intricate, perpetually changing commission and purchase schemes of government or party agencies, artists' organizations remained at the mercy of selection procedures administered by political

appointees. No matter how they tried to politicize their posture, it did not net them any inside tracks toward professional success. Moreover, such organizations never succeeded in advancing any significant policy initiatives. They remained competitive pressure groups with no political clout. In the totalitarian states, they ended up being run by political liaison officials from party headquarters or government ministries. In the Third Republic, despite its pluralist art policy, they had no delegates in the committees of the Fine Arts Administration. How politically organized artists in totalitarian states could be induced to produce an art to serve political objectives remained uncertain nonetheless. Political and administrative authorities were aware that such an art could not be accomplished by following orders, only by a compelling linkage between economic and political success.

Only in the Soviet Union was such a linkage between economic and political success consistently enacted from above, because the state economy established by the First Five-Year Plan made politically supervised art production the only way to sell, and because eventually a single umbrella organization was set up to be the exclusive venue for individual artists to compete. In Italy, by contrast, the corporative convergence of the capitalist economy and government economic policy became the premise for a political self-regulation of the arts under market conditions the government could rely upon. It induced artists to empathize with rather than submit to Fascist ideology in their professional drive for market success by an unending sequence of shows for sale. Germany alone failed to solve the equation between supervised 'coordination' and political delivery, as the government had to acknowledge after four years in power. Its art-political measures had failed to make the vast majority of traditional artists compete according to political criteria. For its big-time projects, it fell back on a non-competitive art production by fiat from above.

Democratic France was the only one of the four states where politicized competition never worked, not even during the interlude of the two Popular Front governments. Fierce ideological struggles between the camps of traditional and modern art lasted throughout the decade without affecting artists' professional success one way or the other. The Fine Arts Administration, whose bureaucratic apparatus was bent on enacting a steady policy as governments of various political composition came and went, provided an effective buffer against artists' organizations' political demands or protests, all of which failed to influence its operations, no matter how strong their resonance in the public sphere. Even the Popular Front government never granted the AEAR, by far the largest and most activist political artists' organization, any influence on art policy-making, since the AEAR's communist leadership had no party representation in the cabinet. As a result, the public prominence of the AEAR's art-political ventures remained an inner-party affair.

/ 3 **STATE INTERVENTION**

/ 3.1 **POLITICAL STABILITY AND POPULIST APPEAL**

/ 3.1.1 **POPULIST ART POLICY**

The turn in 1931-1932 from deflationary austerity policy to deficit spending, which inaugurated the second phase of the Depression, enhanced the interventionist impact of state governments on their economies and societies, because they were now in a position to regulate them by granting or withholding financial support. The shift had a decisive impact on the political history of art as well. On the one hand, the self-centered disregard for world market interdependence, whereby governments embarked on national economic policies, was flanked by an increasingly nationalist political culture. On the other hand, their measures to alleviate unemployment were flanked by propaganda drives aimed at social restoration. Hence their support for a traditional art with national credentials. To act decisively, all governments strove for mass support beyond their original constituencies. While totalitarian regimes could engineer such a support with a showy semblance of mass politics, democracies in France and Spain remained beholden to an unstable balance between antagonistic segments of society, which denied them any cohesive self-representation through the arts.

Within their expanded political range, totalitarian regimes embarked on populist art policies designed to appeal to mass audiences over and above social divides. In Italy and Germany, such divides were ideologically overridden; in the Soviet Union, they were forcibly suppressed. Democratic France, on the other hand, upheld its diversified republican culture, even under the Popular Front government. All three totalitarian regimes lived by the historic premise that viable states must enhance their legitimacy through their care for the arts and by an artistic display of their political culture, both of which they sought to thoroughly refashion. The Third Republic, relying on its constitutional continuity with the past, felt no such need, and merely adjusted its art policies to the Depression. Hence only in totalitarian states did state intervention in the economy, through deficit spending, include systematic efforts at stimulating a politically aligned artistic culture designed to fashion an aesthetic environment of maximal consent. The Third Republic took such an environment for granted, subject to ideological strife in its modernization, to be sure, but in no need of being refashioned.

To ensure the economic viability of an artistic culture with a political purpose at a time of economic hardship, new art policies had to be aimed at majority acceptance by both the art public and the artists' professions. Such policies could nowhere be pursued in the way of autocratic patronage, only on platforms of popular participation, no matter how contrived. As a result, a realignment of the arts with accustomed

aesthetic conventions came to be the precondition for a mutual reinforcement of public spending and ideological appeal. In totalitarian states, it was geared toward the political culture of mass spectacles as venues of a performed reciprocity between leaders and people. In France, this kind of political culture was deemed unnecessary. The last thing mass art policies had any use for was an art such as the modern, which had made its inroads into culture as a minority position of dissent, thrived on a manifest disdain for majority taste, and prided itself of having broken with tradition. Its post-war alignments with the machine culture of modernization lost much of its credibility at a time of industrial production in distress.

/ 3.1.2 CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

Once the Depression had made art policy into a significant component of governance or electoral politics, habitual calls for an art with majority acceptance gained in political virulence. They became part of the challenge to democratic governments whose support of modern art, no matter how limited, was being denounced as contradicting their legitimacy as the rule of the majority. While the art policy of the Third Republic, secure in its traditions of content and form, never favored modern art until the advent of the Popular Front, and then only to a limited degree, the art policy of the Weimar Republic, with no artistic tradition of its own, supported modern art to the point of incurring charges of undue preference from the conservative opposition. In the USSR and in National Socialist Germany, the rejection of modern art because of its minority acceptance pertained to their repudiation of 'bourgeois' democracy as a de-facto disenfranchisement of the majority, which they countered with their claims for overwhelming mass support. In Fascist Italy this challenge was obviated by granting modern art the minority status it deserved.

In a speech at a National Socialist Party rally in Munich on January 26, 1928, entitled "National Socialism and Art Policy," Hitler for the first time addressed the lacking public approval of state-supported modern art as contradicting the majority tenet of democratic government, a tenet he promised to restore by supporting traditional art as the art of the majority he was campaigning for. "What is supposed to happen if the broad mass will really participate [in cultural policy]? Why this [state of affairs] in a nation with equal political rights? I will either enfranchise a people politically, then it must also be *culturally enfranchised*, otherwise [sic] one has no right to concede political equality to such a people."⁽¹³⁾ As soon as art relies on government, it must abide by its rules, Hitler reasoned. At a time when the Weimar Republic still seemed economically and politically stable, Hitler blamed the undue predominance of modern art in its culture on a disregard for its electorate. The dismal performance of his party in the elections of May, 20, 1928,—2.6 percent of the vote—still proved him wrong, but two years later, the NSDAP reached 18.3 percent, and the predominance of modern art began to be at risk.

In May 1939, a propaganda brochure accompanying the art show in the Soviet Pavilion at the New York World Fair evoked the mass response to the huge shows of state-sponsored art in major Soviet cities as a proof for the assertion that Soviet art corresponded to the mass democracy enshrined in the new Soviet constitution of 1936. Here state art and people's art seemed to coalesce. "In his work the Soviet artist primarily addresses the people. His art is democratic. That is why hundreds of thousands of visitors attend our art exhibitions, that is why the Soviet people take the successes and failures of their favorite artists so much to heart, that is why such heated discussions arise about various paintings."⁽¹⁴⁾ In this way the Soviet art show was made to fit the Fair's celebration of U.S. democracy. This international promotion of an art policy enacted by maximum oppression and serving to dupe a populace forcibly subdued by the purges of 1936-1938, as a successful implementation of popular demand, was an especially reckless challenge to democracy. It did not outlast the demolition of the Soviet Pavilion one year later, when the USSR, in league with Germany, invaded Poland.

/ 3.1.3 **ART WITH A MANDATE**

With its origins in the artistic culture of the French Revolution, the official or officious art of the Third Republic was cast in terms of the classical tradition, both in concept and in form. Its enduring, cumulative presence assured it of a long-term civic acceptance which successive governments could take for granted when they cast their own art programs into classical form. Jules Dalou's multi-figure bronze sculpture *Triumph of the Republic*, inaugurated in 1899 after a ten-year delay, set a paradigm for the convergence of state art and working-class imagery in classical form. Its public appeal was boosted by the sculptor's credentials as a former member of the Paris Commune, who had spent nine years in political exile until he returned to France. Just as paradigmatically, the installation of Rodin's *Thinker* before the Paris Pantheon as a monument to the unknown French worker in 1906, a time of intense labor strife, validated the ability of state art policy to address the cultural aspirations of the working-class, even with the most daring modernization of traditional art that could still be fitted into a classical environment.

The different receptivity of the Weimar Republic and the Third Republic to modern architects' political aspirations goes to show how official reticence vis-à-vis artistic innovation was tied to democratic legitimacy. While the precarious German governments tended to embrace such aspirations, at least tentatively, the safely legitimated French art administrations kept them at a distance. Social democratic and liberal governments in Germany were prone to adopt modern architects' far-flung schemes of urbanist renewal, which attempted to fuse technical innovation, functional economics, and social reform into a new aesthetics at the cost of surface embellishment, and

hence fell prey to conservative opposition whenever they lost their majorities at the polls. In France, by contrast, the most prominent modern architect, Le Corbusier, projected his work as a challenge to the architectural policy of democratic government under the catchword “Architecture or Revolution,” as he titled a book he published in 1924. For his radical social theories of architectural renewal, he sought backing in oppositional syndicalist, or even crypto-fascist, political milieus.

It is in the self-assurance of its democratic credentials, even in the midst of the Depression, that the art administration of the Third Republic had the core buildings of the Paris World Exposition of 1937 designed in a ‘modernized’ classical form. Not only did it count on the professional predominance of traditional architecture with its attendant imagery, but also on its unquestioned public acceptance. Paul Valéry’s golden-lettered mottoes for the twin façades of the Palais de Chaillot toward the central plaza—“It depends on him who comes whether I’m tomb or treasury”—commissioned in 1937 by Fine Arts Director Georges Huisman, validated the artists’ work by the democratic engagement of its public, consistent with the Third Republic’s emphasis on public education. In the same year, Christian Zervos, editor of *Cahiers d’Art*, the leading modern art journal in France, confirmed modern artists’ principled disavowal of popular acceptance. “There is no graver error than to mix up the artists with the community,” he defiantly proclaimed,⁽¹⁵⁾ recalling the popes of the Renaissance as precedents of a patronage from on high.

/ 3.2 PUBLIC BUILDING

/ 3.2.1 POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ARCHITECTURAL POLICY

Starting in 1931, capitalist states switched from deflationary austerity to state-guided deficit spending, while in the Soviet Union the premature fulfillment of the First Five-Year Plan released capital from industrial investment. As a result, public building took off as part of the political economy all over Europe. In the process, representative architecture took the better of public housing. The combination of financing and state supervision through newly-created mixed building companies in Italy and Germany proved most efficient for accomplishing such projects. Neither the outright government commissioning of the private building industry in France nor the state-run building industry in the Soviet Union were as successful. As early as 1926, the Fascist government set public works on a course of monumental architecture, followed by the National Socialist government soon after its accession in 1933. The Soviet government had projected such a course since 1931 with great fanfare but failed to see it through in its intended scope. French governments, on the other hand, never envisaged it.

In all three capitalist states, architectural policies aimed at redressing large-scale unemployment stepped back, to a greater or lesser extent, from the cost-efficient,

industrialized building methods which during the preceding decade of post-war reconstruction had sustained the aesthetic appeal of modern architecture as a progressive undertaking, where “form followed function.” The return to the labor-intensive makeup of traditional architecture cancelled the convergence of technical modernization and architectural style. Yet, unlike in earlier epochs, the new massive, highly decorative architecture did not result from affluence, but from a social policy of job creation. Hence its ‘monumental order,’ as it has been called, tended to extol the state. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, where unemployment was no political issue, hyperbolic designs of monumental architecture, more grandiose than anywhere else, were billed as tokens of a promised socialist affluence, surpassing the architecture of capitalism in decline. The near-failure of the Second Five-Year Plan prevented most of these projects from being built.

The extent to which public building was allocated to infrastructure, housing, rearmament, and representation, was differently calibrated in each one of the four states, as they were pursuing concurrent policies of economic recovery, political stabilization, and readiness for an approaching war whose priorities were hard to reconcile. Of the three totalitarian states, Germany proved most efficient in building monumental architecture, eliminating unemployment, and preparing for war all at one and the same time. Italy pursued its architectural policy at the expense of rearmament, banking on a postponement of the war. The Soviet Union, which had to conclude the Hitler-Stalin Pact to buy rearmament time, was unable to fulfill its grandiose building plans. Only France did not include monumental building in its economic development policy, as its momentary cancellation of the Paris Expo in 1934, and its later failure to get all its Expo buildings ready for the opening, go to show. Its deficit budgets were spread too thin by the simultaneous tasks of modernizing infrastructure, alleviating the housing shortage, and building the fortifications of the Maginot Line.

/ 3.2.2 **FROM URBANISM TO MONUMENTALISM**

During the austerity phase of the Depression, from 1929 to 1932, state support for public works was primarily targeted at infrastructure, urbanism, and housing. Thereafter, all three totalitarian states, but not the Third Republic, shifted their support from utilitarian to representative priorities. They endowed public works with the political mission of monumentalizing building far beyond function. How this shift in architectural policy was to be implemented in planning depended on the governments’ abilities to reconcile it with their infrastructure and housing requirements. Italy managed to uphold a precarious balance between the two. In Germany and the USSR, monumental building was assigned priority. The Third Republic had no need for representative building and yet did not alleviate its housing shortage. When Hitler, in a speech of September 23, 1933, announced his new architectural policy—“I see the effective way of leading

the German people back into the working process in recharging the German economy first of all through large monumental works"⁽¹⁶⁾—it was at a highway construction site. Barely one month later, he laid the cornerstone of the House of German Art, his intended paradigm of monumental architecture.

In the official book issued in 1939 upon the completion of Speer's New Reich Chancellery in Berlin, one writer, anticipating charges that the project had preempted housing, asserts that most of the city's construction workers were employed on other sites, and that the bricks used on the Chancellery were but a small fraction of those used city-wide. Still, the book never addressed the funding of the lavish building. Similarly, Politburo member Lazar Kaganovich, in his message to the First Soviet Architects' Congress of 1937, asserted that "the proletariat does not only want houses; it wants to live not just comfortably; it wants these houses to be beautiful,"⁽¹⁷⁾ as if the monumentalism of Soviet architectural policy had any bearing on housing. Of the three totalitarian regimes, only the Fascist had an architectural policy in place that struck a balance between monumental architecture and public housing, albeit in hierarchical stratified zoning schemes. The successive master plans for the rebuilding of Rome foresaw a ring of low-cost settlements on the outskirts for those displaced by the enhanced monumentalization of the center.

Eventually, the fast turnaround from an economy of recovery to one of war within the six-year time span between 1933-1939, which stalled or stopped the pursuit of their architectural schemes to various degrees, spared all four states the test of resolving the social contradictions between housing and monumentality inherent in their public building policies. Eventually, in the three totalitarian states, the ideological aestheticization of urbanism at the expense of functional practicality forwent any balance between funding, function, and feasibility. The mere planning of ever more sumptuous representative architecture became a policy end of its own, substituting large-scale mock-ups, publicized through films and photographs, for future buildings. The Paris World Exposition of 1937 dramatized this turn of events. The three totalitarian pavilions showcased deceptive accomplishments of a monumental architectural policy, supplemented by large-scale models of their future capitals. The Third Republic could barely match them with a one-time effort unrepresentative of any overall architectural policy, and uncompleted.

/ 3.2.3 **TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

Because it pertained directly to state intervention in the arts, the aesthetic detachment of a monumental architecture of traditionalist appearance from the functional look of urbanism proved to be the most salient issue of the newly exacerbated contest between traditional and modern art during the Depression related to both labor and living standards, not merely to aesthetic perceptions. Modern architects,

ascendant during the preceding decade, had stressed a non-decorative functionalism in the planning, technology, and purposes of their buildings. Clinging to the ideological alignment of modern art with technological modernization, they sought to vindicate the sparse appearance of their buildings by aspiring to an aesthetic convergence with abstract art of constructivist bent. Now their opponents, who charged them with compromising the artistic distinction between public and utilitarian architecture—of making government buildings look like department stores, as Hitler had written in *My Struggle*—gained the upper hand. In the three totalitarian states, the traditional decorousness of public buildings was tantamount to a monumentalization of strong government.

Internationally, the opposition between traditional and modern architecture for representative buildings was first publicized in 1928-1930 in the course of the protracted debate about the competition for the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva, where modern architects, including Le Corbusier, had incurred a categorical rejection they did not take lying down. Although Swiss architects Hannes Meyer and Hans Witwer, authors of the most functionalist project, expressly disavowed any aesthetic aspirations, Meyer exalted its stylish modern look as an expression of the democratic world order to be promoted by the League of Nations. The eventual choice of an ornate design was never justified on ideological grounds. In 1928, reacting to the outcome of the competition, a network of modern architects came together in the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), intending to promote functionalist architecture on an ideological platform that claimed to override fundamental differences between political systems. When in 1932 the Soviet government revoked the group's invitation to convene in Moscow, this platform had not worked.

Most of the arguments in favor of the totalitarian regimes' resolve to detach representative architecture from the look of modernization were rehearsed during the sequence of competitions for the Palace of Soviets in Moscow, held in 1931-1933, against whose outcome the CIAM issued a letter of protest. Its author, Le Corbusier, even dared to contend that the eventual choice was at variance with Communism as he understood it. Similar debates within the Fascist Corporation of Architects in Italy came to a head in 1933-1934 during the first, inconclusive competition for the Palazzo del Littorio in Rome. Here representatives of modern architecture, some of them related to the CIAM, attempted to salvage their stylistic tenets by subordinating function to monumentality. However, none of their compromise designs were chosen. In July 1933, barely six months after becoming chancellor, Hitler cancelled the ongoing competition for a new Reichsbank building, one of whose finalists was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. He thereby swiftly acted on his long-standing conviction, already laid down in 1925 in his book *My Struggle*, that a strong state ought to reaffirm the monumental distinction of public from private building.

/ 3.3 REVALIDATION OF TRADITIONAL ART

/ 3.3.1 RECOIL FROM MODERN ART

Traditional art was the obvious choice for the clearly understandable, symbolically charged representations of social and political ideals envisaged by the state art of the Depression. For centuries, it had been trained on such assignments, while modern art had been cultivated outside professional networks of state commissions and conceived averse to public functions. The few inroads modern art had made on state patronage were confined to acquisitions by public collections or museums, most often through social networks of dealers, collectors, wealthy donors, and sympathetic museum officials, hardly ever on the initiative of state authorities. The limited public acceptance it had won on its own terms entailed no adaptation to public service. In 1937, Georges Braque turned down a commission to paint a mural in the Palais de Chaillot, to be paired with one by neo-classical painter Louis Billotey. In the same year, he painted *The Duo*, one of his atelier pictures, an introspective reflection on the political challenges facing modern art (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.3.1). The state purchase of this painting two years later respected this posture of non-participation.

The recondite, idiosyncratic appearance of much modern art, sustained by the educational privilege of its upper middle-class clientele, became a liability for any cultural policy aimed at majority support. Its appreciation was confined to an expanding coterie which prided itself of its alternative tastes. Public art education in schools and universities was not yet disposed to bridge this class divide. The fusion of ideology and life experience as a subject for uninitiated viewers germane to public art was neither the theme of modern art nor did it affect its form. On the contrary, its attendant literature extolled its penchant for distorting subjects beyond recognition to the point of declaring the distortion to reveal their essence. Literary initiation was a precondition for its understanding. When after the First World War modern art expanded in public culture, photography attained the status of a modern art form. Arising from documentary, scientific, or commercial photography, it allowed painting to divest itself of the task of imaging reality. Modern photography had little difficulty to be embraced by totalitarian regimes which otherwise clamped down on modern art.

In the first decade after the First World War, the social self-sufficiency of modern art was compromised as modern artists expanded their cooperation with institutions and commercial ventures of the decorative arts and crafts. Under the catchword purity, their clean abstraction appeared to jibe with a sober-minded aesthetic validation of structures and materials. They contributed to a new lifestyle. The advance of machine production as part of post-war re-capitalization related such aspirations to technological ideals of functional design. Streamlined sparseness and reductive

regularity made modern art appear akin to the rationalization of production and to the shapes of machine-made objects. It served to aestheticize modernization, both capitalist and communist. Thus, for a few years, the optimistic, or even utopian, outlook inherent in the post-war ideology of modernization made modern art appear affirmative rather than critical. However, this kind of social acceptance began to wane when, at the start of the Depression, industrial rationalization lost its economic productivity, social promise, and hence cultural appeal.

/ 3.3.2 RESTORATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Over and above the differences between political systems, the new art policies in all four European states proceeded from the premise that traditional art was to be restored to its original majority status in public culture, but on populist grounds rather than for the sake of returning to the past. They were meant to redress an undue prominence attained by modern art in the preceding decade. This backlash against modern art was rarely founded on any alternative aesthetic ideal pronounced by the authorities, but rather on the quest for a clearly circumscribed spectrum of contents and form inviting popular understanding and appreciation. What counted was the capacity of public art to use accustomed visual modes for endowing Depression policies with ideological self-assurance. The revalidation of traditional art confirmed an incremental turn away from modern abstraction and expressivity toward realist veracity or classical poise. In Italy and the Soviet Union, it had long been promoted in ideological debates. In France, it was called “return to order,” a conservative catchword based on the phrase “*rappel à l’ordre*” coined by poet Jean Cocteau.⁽¹⁸⁾ Only in Germany was it presented as a return to a previous practice.

This revalidation promised to restore the social balance of artistic culture, where modern art had gained a prominence at odds with its minority status. It suited the cultivation of a mass base on the part of totalitarian regimes. Its enforcement was part of their practice of enhancing their mass base by coercive measures. Traditional art was used to frame their policies as experiential reality. However, if the customary defenders of a conservative artistic culture had hoped to be entrusted with shaping the new art policies, they were disappointed. A nationalist restoration of academic art alone was not sufficient for the task of forging a mass culture with a contemporary look where the arts could be readied for new political functions. While the art administrations of France and Italy were acting with enough circumspection to avoid an anachronistic appearance of the traditionalist art they sponsored, those of Germany and the Soviet Union failed to reconcile the doctrinaire traditionalism they espoused with their quest for an art to inspire their mass societies for technical modernization.

Although such art policies claimed to restore traditional artistic standards, they were simultaneously aimed at an art of social innovation, and, in totalitarian states,

radical political renewal. They included a self-contradictory demand for modernization of traditional art while upholding its accustomed appearance. Therefore, it was not simply a matter of rejecting modern art in the name of tradition, but of devising a modernization of traditional art's appearance that would overcome the critical standoffs which had plagued a hundred years of two-track art history. Such an incremental modernization was expected to reconcile past and present rather than deciding between the two. This is how the French art administrations of the thirties justified their traditional preferences, how the Italian regime sought to devise a Fascist style in the manner of a corporate synthesis, and how the Bolshevik Party shaped its First Five-Year Plan propaganda culture. Only the German art administration made no effort in this direction.

/ 3.3.3 **REALISM OR CLASSICISM**

For an art of political stabilization, the relationship between the populist appeal of academic realism and the authoritarian appeal of the classical tradition became the primary alternative to define. After several centuries of steady attempts at their fusion, in the latter part of the 19th century the two traditions had parted ways and were applied to different kinds of themes. In the art of the Depression, both styles were championed even more, but kept even further apart. They were thematically polarized. Few works were realist and classical at once. The relationship between both styles was calibrated depending on either populist or authoritarian trends of art policy, an ambivalence that overrode sporadic attempts at making them converge. The art-political stakes in deciding between the two in the reassertion of traditional against modern art were so high that their mere retrieval was criticized whenever attempted. In this regard, Russian realist painters or Italian classicist sculptors were equally rebuffed.

Since state art programs of the Depression were focused on public building as a showcase for the arts at large, the emulation of classical architecture entailed an emphasis on power and control as salient features of the imagery. Insertion of imagery into architecture was largely released from subordination to classical orders, thus emphasizing its rhetorical aplomb. In all four states, the classical tradition was drawn upon as a means for transfiguring the human factor of technical productivity into heroic achievement. It made for a symbolic show of politically energized working societies. Drawing on mythological as well as socialist iconographies, it overstressed physical strength beyond its classical poise and organic limits. This transfiguration of labor replaced the machine aesthetics of the preceding decade, which had contributed to the public ascendancy of modern art in the name of technological investment. Its classical form suited both the celebration of biological strength and its insertion into conventional power schemes.

Academic realism, in so far as it stayed clear of classical idealization, was primed to infuse representations of everyday life and work with the expression of social

cohesion and political allegiance, both of which had been largely absent before. It was for this purpose, not for reasons of aesthetic appreciation alone, that it was being revalidated. The required adjustments were at variance with its creed of truth to nature. As soon as practitioners of academic realism in totalitarian states fell short of the ideological overcharge assigned to their accustomed style, they incurred criticisms of professional triviality, or worse, of lacking political commitment. While in the Soviet Union such a critique was rampant throughout the decade, in Germany it surfaced only in 1937, but with a vengeance. In the art of the Popular Front, art officials had a choice between an academic and a non-academic realism, the latter a tradition reaching back to Gustave Courbet and ideologically enhanced by leftist connotations. Eventually, not unlike their totalitarian counterparts, they opted for the academic variant whose idealistic surface made it serviceable for mass education.



1/ Policies

1.1 / Traditional versus
Modern Art p. 20

1.2 / Totalitarian Art Policy p. 54

1.3 / Democratic Art Policy p. 88

1.2 / Totalitarian Art Policy

/1 **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL CONTROL**

/1.1 **STATE AND PARTY MANAGEMENT**

/1.1.1 **POLICY STRUCTURES**

The political systems of the three foremost totalitarian states of Europe operated on the claims advanced by parties with a monopoly on political authority to act on an unaccountable mandate from the people, over and above any representative institutions. Rather than enacting their underlying societies' political will, they strove to subsume them under a 'total state.' Through an increasingly straightforward subordination to state government in Italy and Germany, and to the governing party in the Soviet Union, these regimes construed their populations as virtually homogeneous bodies. Ignoring the social and political divisions reflected in the multi-party government systems they replaced, they claimed a legitimacy flowing from the people as a whole. To demonstrate such a legitimacy without political representation, totalitarian governments fashioned multiple ceremonial, symbolical, and aesthetic venues for mobilizing, manipulating, or coercing their underlying populations into mass manifestations of political assent, overruling class distinctions and perverting submission into the semblance of political will.

Thus, different from autocracy or despotism, totalitarian rule rested on a fiction of popular government. It was internationally promoted as an alternative to democracy in heeding the will of the people. Scholars who construe totalitarianism and democracy as exclusionary opposites tend to underrate the majority support that gave totalitarian regimes their international appeal. All three totalitarian regimes responded to the Depression by an enforced, accelerated coordination of disparate social groups and interests previously engaged in competitive or conflictive relations. These were now organizationally aligned with one another so that they would work toward far-reaching economic and social conditions, suppressing their disparities. This political mobilization of working societies impressed politicians and observers from Western European states, who found it hard to pool the political will of their antagonistic societies to overcome the economic crisis wrought by the Depression within the parameters of democratic politics. In comparison to totalitarian governance, democracy looked indecisive and unstable.

The term 'totalitarian' started out as an argumentative self-designation of the fascist system in Italy alone, derived from the concept of the 'total state.' Starting around 1932, it tended to be widened into a comparative or polemical catchword for characterizing first the political systems of Fascism and National Socialism, and later that of Bolshevism, in their shared antagonism vis-à-vis democracy. From then to now, the categorical expansion of the term developed in four stages: first, the ideological self-description of Italian Fascism; second, the transfer of the term onto systemic comparisons between Fascism, National Socialism, Bolshevism, and Democracy; third, the conceptual abstraction of a structural model in political science; and fourth, the debate about its historical applicability. During the last of these four stages the term has been undergoing a steady historical as well as conceptual differentiation. From a label of reciprocal reproach, it has turned into a critical yardstick of revisionist scholarship. As a result, it can no longer serve to exhaustively characterize any one of the three regimes. The distinct histories of their art confirms this state of affairs.

/1.1.2 **TOTALITARIAN ARTISTIC CULTURE**

During the first four years of the Depression, when the totalitarian regimes of Italy and the Soviet Union, and later that of Germany, took decisive measures to tighten their grip on society, they devised new art policies designed to fashion an artistic culture made-to-measure by maximizing political intervention in the arts. At this point in time, starting from 1929, totalitarian art policies took shape. In Italy, the elections of March 24, 1929, restructured the Chamber of Deputies on a corporative model, included artists, and brought Giuseppe Bottai into the government as Minister of Corporations. In the Soviet Union, the 16th Party Conference of April 1929, devoted to adjustments of the Five-Year Plan, called on artists to be enlisted for that task. Four years later, when Germany became a totalitarian state almost overnight, it took Hitler's government just six months to reach a similar position. In March 1933, Hitler created a new Propaganda Ministry under Joseph Goebbels, who in September set up the Reich Chamber of Art for compulsory membership. This enabled the government to reorganize the artistic professions.

Totalitarian artistic cultures intended to contribute to the political homogenization of their underlying societies by placing the economic working conditions and social functions of art under political control. They endeavored to anchor the artistic professions in the politically regulated social fabric and to make them function on the premise of social cohesion. Art politicians and art administrations of all three regimes saw it as their task to refashion artistic practice to be economically viable within a streamlined social environment, as opposed to its previous precarious standing, which had exasperated the contest between traditional and modern art to the point of becoming

politically disruptive. They achieved this by taking modern art out of competition. Their efforts entailed a reorganization of the art market according to ostensibly egalitarian, corporative principles; state-directed public works programs for constructing monumental government and party buildings; and personnel changes in state art schools in order to groom artists for providing their respective regimes with a symbolic and aesthetic self-representation.

A fundamental difference in art policy between Italy and Germany on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other pertains to the relationship between state and party. While oversight of the arts in Italy and Germany fell to state ministries at the expense of party agencies, in the Soviet Union, starting in 1928, it was the reverse, prompting a more thorough ideological alignment. The Fascist and the National Socialist Parties, despite recurrent efforts at influencing government art policy, were eventually reduced to shaping and voicing ideological tenets with little impact on state governance. The Bolshevik Party, by contrast, whose central committee sections mirrored government commissariats, started to extend its mission of turning ideology into policy of the arts. This difference matched the different economic policies devised to cope with the Depression. While in Italy and Germany economic policy was limited to state allocations of capitalist production and state funding of job-creating public works, in the Soviet Union the government forcibly appropriated most, if not all, economic activity to run it on policies conceived by the Party.

/1.1.3 **CHRONOLOGY**

Totalitarian art policies were devised to replace the equitable political art management—professed, if not consistently enacted, by democratic governments—, with partisan guidance. While in Russia and Italy the change from one to the other was drawn out over the ten-year period from 1922 to 1932, in Germany it was accomplished from 1933 to 1934, in less than two years. In 1929 the Bolshevik Party started to systematically correct earlier art policies, ostensibly in the name of calibrating continuity and change, while the Fascist government made some long-delayed choices after a drawn-out debate about its options. The National Socialists, on the other hand, rushed to dismantle the art policies of the Weimar Republic without any coherent alternative in mind. As a latecomer, National Socialist art policy took a more precipitated course than that of the two other states. While the parameters of Fascist and Soviet art policy stood settled by the end of 1933 for the remainder of the decade, those of German art policy were initially so uncertain that one year later the government squelched a fledgling debate about them to prevent a marginal inclusion of modern art.

Whatever the time lag, by 1934 all three totalitarian regimes had achieved a political alignment of the arts, each in a different way, just in time to prepare for their

ambitious capital rebuilding projects. These projects made art policy a pivotal element in their competing drives for ascendancy within the European balance of power, which the reconstructed capitals were to proclaim. It was in that year that Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin all intervened in setting the shape of their state architecture. Mussolini, addressing architects at the Palazzo de Venezia on June 10, called for modern styles; Hitler, speaking at the Nuremberg Party Rally on September 5, insisted on the classical paradigm; and Stalin, from behind the scenes, made the Palace of Soviets a model for fusing architecture and sculpture. From then on, totalitarian art policies shifted from populist projection to autocratic planning. They fed into government initiatives for laying the financial, technical, and organizational groundwork of big official building projects towards which the other arts were geared. To make both institutional and private art markets ideologically conformist—which the Fascist regime never attempted—was not enough.

After 1934, between five and ten years remained for the three regimes to ready their politicized artistic cultures for delivery, depending on their flexible calculations about the starting date of a war they all regarded as inevitable. Aware that time was running out, they publicized models and films which showed their projects as if they already existed, and publicized fictitious deadlines for their completion. While the Fascist art administration managed to commit its willing artists to a common program without enforcing uniformity, the Soviet and German art administrations, keen on endowing their regimes with a distinctive artistic profile, turned to an increasingly rigorous selection and exclusion of artists based on pre-established aesthetic and expressive norms. By 1937, all three regimes finally had their artistic accomplishments ready for display in their pavilions at the Paris World Exposition, where international juries lavished gold and silver medals on their exhibits. Press reviewers jumped at the opportunity of interpreting their political characteristics from their art, often missing out on their differences, eager to subsume them under the totalitarian art equation.

/1.2 **WORK UNDER CONTROL**

/1.2.1 **ECONOMIC REGULATION**

During 1929-1933, totalitarian art policies started to be implemented by forcible installation and supervision of artists' organizations for the purpose of streamlining the economic and social transactions of artistic culture, imposing political regulations on the art market in line with ideological preferences, and managing state patronage according to political objectives. In Italy, the Ministry of Corporations, established in 1929, drew artists' organizations into the institutional framework of state policy. The National Council, established the following year, even accorded artists their

own representation. Four years later, Hitler's new government also subordinated artists as a professional group to the newly-created Propaganda Ministry, but without a political voice. In the Soviet Union, from 1929, a newly-appointed, non-expert Education Commissar, Andrei Bubnov, oversaw a gradual transfer of authority over artists' organizations from the government to the Party. The April Decree of 1932, issued by the Party, ordered all of them fused together and controlled by 'cells' of Party members in their midst. This political control of artists was the most severe of all three regimes.

True to the corporative premise of economic management by the state, Italian artists' and architects' organizations launched a stream of exhibition programs directed at the private art market as well as state and party agencies, blurring the distinction between ideological propositions and private tastes. Hence they were short on ideological prescriptions or restrictions. The German Reich Chamber of Art likewise saw it as its foremost task to stimulate the art market through organizational and technical measures, with the difference that it excluded modern artists from competing. Without the requirement of ideological zeal, and having the market for themselves, traditional artists continued to offer conventional work to private demand. By contrast to these two states with their private art markets intact, the Soviet Union's Five-Year Plan limited the art market to catering to state or Party commissions. Artists had no choice but to work through their political organizations for public or official sponsors. They ended up having to follow step-by-step selection procedures of works in progress, on demand.

While the two capitalist dictatorships were largely concerned with alleviating the economic hardships plaguing masses of artists by way of state-induced market programs, the only socialist dictatorship found them a place in the all-out industrialization scheme of the First Five-Year Plan. This was the only venue for their sales, with thematic and formal requirements to heed. With combinations of marketing initiatives and assistance programs, Italian and German artists' organizations strove to create opportunities for artists to make a living, without necessarily enlisting them for state or party projects. While in Italy such market policies were all-inclusive, in Germany they were restricted to traditional artists, whom the regime promoted on ideological grounds. The Soviet Union went much further than Germany in making working opportunities for artists dependent on their tightly judged ideological conformity, which was eagerly offered but not always honored. When the First Five-Year Plan had been fulfilled in 1932, and artists were thrown back onto working outside coordinated programs, guidance turned into censorship.

/1.2.2 **CONTROLLED DEBATE**

The political coordination of artists' organizations, accomplished between 1931 and 1934 by all three totalitarian regimes, was to restrain their ideological quarrels in

competing for official acceptance and to commit them to shared cultural policy objectives set by political authorities. These, in turn, were often unsure of how to manage professional artistic cultures. In Italy and the Soviet Union, competing groups of architects and artists were prone to attack one another by way of resolutions, shows, and press declarations. The new umbrella organizations induced them to reconcile their differences. In Italy traditional and modern artists had to compromise with one another. In the Soviet Union, modern artists had to retreat. After Hitler's accession two years later, mutually hostile groups of traditional and modern artists in Germany also vied for the new regime's acceptance. Administrative action from above, however, quickly made their confrontation pointless. In contrast to the other two totalitarian states, organized artistic culture was denied the possibility of turning their ideological propositions into politics.

Totalitarian regimes, being no unilateral dictatorships, did not have it in their power to install an art of their liking by decree. Instead, they channeled traditional artists, who were ideologically either naïve or neutral, into a competition for conformity by a guided process of exhibitions, press campaigns, and publications. Such venues of assessment and debate were preempted by the undisputed task of meeting the regimes' expectations. Taking functions and themes for granted, they were confined to the formal and expressive qualities for art to be acceptable. Within this limited range of debate, the alternative of traditional and modern features was the fundamental yardstick. Because of their longer lead time, the Italian and Soviet regimes had settled the pertinent questions with consensual and coerced blueprints for a future course of artistic development by 1934. The German regime, suddenly empowered in early 1933, never managed to fashion a similar artistic culture of guided ideological self-clarification, as the Art Chamber's failure to deliver four years later made it clear.

The first and foremost venues of debate in the Soviet Union and in Italy were the competitions for the Palace of Soviets from 1931 to 1933 and the Palazzo del Littorio from 1933 to 1934. Conducted under government authority, they focused the discrepant efforts of organized architects on a paramount political goal, and thus determined their future alignments. Likewise, both regimes in 1931 and 1932 mounted programmatic shows juxtaposing traditional and modern art to argue for a decision in favor of one tendency—modern in Italian architecture, traditional in Soviet painting. Both continued organizing—in the USSR until 1936, in Italy until 1939—diversified, comparative shows as venues of calibrating art policy. Only Germany lacked competitions or exhibitions as venues for shaping art for the regime. After Hitler overruled the ongoing competition for the new Reichsbank building immediately upon his accession, building commissions were administratively allocated, and, until 1937, a steady stream of vituperative modern art shows was never complemented by paradigmatic shows of traditionalist accomplishment.

/1.2.3 **STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS**

It was in Fascist Italy, where, starting in 1931, a corporative coordination of state and society had been sanctioned as an overarching policy, that the ideological self-regulation of artists' organizations satisfied the regime's expectations. When Bottai, who had been Minister of Corporations since 1929, was moved to the Education Ministry in 1937, he took care to shield it from resurgent Party interference. The first test of this policy was the debate about the competition for the Palazzo del Littorio held in the Chamber of Deputies in 1934. A majority of Fascist deputies charged the submissions with "Bolshevism and Marxism," without being able to derail the architects' corporation from its goal of endowing fascism with a decidedly modern architectural style. The last such test was Party Secretary Roberto Farinacci's creation of the Cremona Prize in 1938 for promoting traditionalist art on an anti-modern, even anti-Semitic, ideological platform like Germany's. One year later, Education Minister Bottai squarely met him with his own Bergamo Prize, intended to uphold the competitive autonomy and pluralist diversity of the artists' corporation.

In 1934 the National Socialist government expressly disavowed the idea of a corporative state. It regarded its national organization of architects and artists as little more than a means to keep them under control, but never charged them with the task of elaborating ideological guidelines. While Hitler determined architectural policy in person, art policy remained without orientation. Four years into the regime, Hitler's draconian intervention in jurying the first Great German Art Exhibition, and his decision on short notice to flank it with the punitive 'Degenerate Art' show, amounted to admitting that the mere organization of artists with a license to practice had not worked to generate a viable art of National Socialism, such as it had been achieved the year before at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. As a result, Hitler and Goebbels tacitly relieved the organized members of the Reich Chamber of Art from any art-political task and let them direct their efforts at a growing private art market on condition of an undefined conformity. They left artists so disoriented that as late as 1939 the SS Security Services registered complaints by some of them about a lack of guidance from above.

In the Soviet Union the stern subordination of artists' organizations under Party control culminated in the setup of a 'Committee on the Arts' by a joint Party and government decree of January 17, 1936. Artists' groups were now deprived of the last remnants of ideological initiative and reduced to guarding Socialist Realism against any deviancy, real or perceived. The ensuing rush to prove or disprove conformity engulfed national architects' and artists' organizations in a frenzy of all-round internecine personnel struggles that fed into the murderous purges racking Soviet society during the years 1936-1938. After Education Commissar Andrei Bubnow was executed in 1937, their artist leaders ran them in cooperation with the NKVD. Throughout this

self-destructive turn of Soviet art policy, persecution of artists and art officials cannot be tied to their stylistic preferences, and rarely to their affiliations with past artists' groups long dissolved but discredited in retrospect.⁽¹⁹⁾ This disciplinary extreme, devoid of artistic substance, was only meant to curb the last residues of professional self-determination.

/1.3 **REPUDIATION OF MODERN ART**

/1.3.1 **STACKED COMPETITION**

The political logic of totalitarian states entailed the creation of a single, all-comprehensive artistic culture with no structural conflicts. It was unsuited to leave room for the alternative culture where modern art had thrived on the assurance of a socially limited acceptance, exempt from satisfying the traditionalist majorities to which government-sponsored art was to appeal. The totalitarian artists' organizations, newly consolidated after 1931, did not exclude modern artists outright. Instead, they drew them into a compulsory competition with traditional artists which left them no niche of their own. As far as public acceptance is concerned, it was an uphill contest, since all three regimes left no doubt about their traditionalist preferences. During the first six years of the Depression, modern artists in totalitarian states were still holding out for a minimum of ideological tolerance, even though the realization dawned on them ever more clearly that any residual competition was stacked against them. By 1936 they had to resign themselves to marginalization in Italy, repudiation in the Soviet Union, and condemnation in Germany.

In Italy and the Soviet Union, state-sponsored national exhibitions—the Rome Quadrennial in 1931 and the 'Fifteen Years of Soviet Art' show at Leningrad and Moscow in 1932-1933—were mounted for the purpose of positioning traditional and modern artists next to one another for a comparative ideological assessment, with a foregone conclusion as to who would win. By 1934, traditional and modern architects were still competing for the Palazzo del Littorio in Rome and the Commissariat of Heavy Industry in Moscow. Although neither one of these competitions produced a winner, they cemented the categorical distinction between traditional and modern architecture as the common denominator of megalomania for the remainder of the decade. These two competitions concluded a process of altercation that had been going on since 1925, yielding a steady accumulation of arguments for the final choice. While in Italy further attacks on modern art by fringes of the Fascist Right failed, in the Soviet Union, Party-backed attacks from above eventually did away with it for good. In both states, most modern artists came around to toe the line.

The National Socialist Party in Germany had, since its foundation in 1920, denounced modern art as part of its campaign to discredit the Weimar Republic which

had granted modern art official support. From 1930 on, it developed its anti-modern stance into an effective propaganda platform for its electoral campaigns, assisted by its cultural mass organization, the 'Combat League for German Culture'. Accordingly, in his first 'culture speech' given as chancellor on September 1, 1933—entitled "German Art as the Proudest Justification of the German People"⁽²⁰⁾—Hitler contemptuously rejected the overtures of modern artists and their supporters to cooperate as just so many turncoat ploys made by members of the Weimar 'system,' eager to perpetuate their undue influence. Numerous modern artists were admitted to the Reich Chamber of Art upon its foundation later that month, perhaps to keep them under a tight watch. Predictably, their competitive bids during the following three years invariably met with a rejection that needed little argument. Not even a debate environment like the one that orchestrated the Fascist and Soviet anti-modern policies was allowed.

/1.3.2 PUBLIC DISCRIMINATION

When the repudiation of modern art in the Soviet Union and in Germany was being enacted as an across-the-board policy in 1932 and 1933 respectively, it was not by way of any anti-modern legal dispositions or government decrees, but rather by a relentless series of pronouncements, interventions, and events creating a hostile public environment without recourse. However, Soviet and German anti-modern art policies proceeded from different political premises. While in the Soviet Union they were pursued as the last consequence of a long-term course correction five years in the making, in Germany they pertained to the new government's uncompromising break with the Weimar Republic under the banner of a fundamental national renewal. Soviet modern artists were being taken to task for deviating from a supposedly coherent policy, hammered out along procedural lines of Party decision-making, which until 1936 allowed for recalcitrant accommodation. German modern artists, on the other hand, found themselves fatally tied to a vilified regime, vituperated years after its demise.

An unspecified warning against "the influence of alien elements, especially those revived by the first years of NEP [New Economic Policy]" is the only reference to modern art in the Party's April Decree of 1932.⁽²¹⁾ It acknowledges "that over recent years literature and art have made considerable advances, both quantitative and qualitative," which it purports to encourage and accelerate. Only now did Osip Beskin, head of the art critics section of the Moscow Artists Union and editor of its two art journals, follow up his long-term efforts at championing realism with a prescriptive book, titled *Formalism in Painting*. The preamble—"Formalism in any area of art, in particular in painting, is now the chief form of bourgeois influence"⁽²²⁾—links modern art to the anti-Stalinist opposition. When in 1934 the Party proceeded to proclaim Socialist Realism as a prescriptive style, it contrasted a majority contingent of extant accomplishment with a minority residue of 'bourgeois' deviations. A few prominent modern

artists such as Pavel Filonov and Kasimir Malevich were singled out as warning examples. Both unsuccessfully tried to adjust their offensive styles.

In Germany, the April 1933 law on purging the civil service served to remove pro-modern art officials and academy personnel, without specific mention of their artistic persuasion. Still, the public condemnations of modern art that Hitler and Rosenberg pronounced later that year were not followed up with any policies for the authorities to implement. The clampdown on modern art remained confined to the public sphere. It was not until the fall of 1936 that the authorities finally proceeded to curb persisting attempts at self-assertion on the part of pro-modern museum officials. Administrative interventions by supervising ministries thwarted the rearrangement of the National Gallery's modern wing and the mounting of a Franz Marc Memorial Exhibition. However, such measures fell short of policies enacted across the board. And it was not until 1937 that Party artist Wolfgang Willrich matched Beskin's book of 1933 with a comparable anti-modern treatise, which immediately served as a blueprint for the punitive 'Degenerate Art' show of that year, although Willrich was unable to rest his argument on any government or party regulation. His book would have been redundant at this point in time had modern art been officially contained before.

/1.3.3 **OPPRESSION**

Finally, in 1936-1937, the Soviet and German governments, on a head-on ideological collision course with one another, proceeded to oppress their artistic cultures by administrative measures of contrived ad-hoc legality. Both branded modern artists as stand-ins for their adversaries, but while the Soviets only generically labeled them as 'imperialist,' the Germans called them 'Bolshevik' outright. When Hitler, in a speech at the opening of the first 'Great German Art Exhibition' of 1937, declared an "implacable mop-up war"⁽²³⁾ to the remnants of modern art in the country, he related old charges of 'art Bolshevism' to the Comintern's current anti-German policies. In 1938 a nationwide tour of 'Degenerate Art' follow-up exhibitions was synchronized with anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic propaganda shows. The other two totalitarian regimes desisted from linking the oppression of modern art to the war scare. The Soviet regime, no matter how gratuitously it tied 'formalism' to political subversion, could not possibly pin it on its prospective German enemy. The Italian regime, still aiming for Fascist preeminence in a Europe at peace, kept anti-Bolshevik attacks on modern art at bay.

On August 3, 1937, while the 'Degenerate Art' show of works raided from state museums was still on view, Interior Minister Hermann Göring ordered all modern art works in public collections to be confiscated "without regard to legal form or property status."⁽²⁴⁾ A law Hitler signed on May 31, 1938, confirmed his decree. The confiscated works were stored, sold off, or burned. Only now was the Prussian Education Ministry, along with public museums under its jurisdiction, cleansed of the last officials

suspected of delaying the implementation of anti-modern policy. And only now were erstwhile prominent modern artists expelled from the Reich Chamber of Art, losing their license to practice, even when they had long ceased to work in their past styles. From 1938 on, German artistic culture was finally subjected to the all-pervasive surveillance of society by the newly-founded SS Security Service, which monitored the resurgence of 'art-Bolshevik' tendencies for the Propaganda Ministry. It was a milder version of the NKVD control to which Soviet artists' organizations had been subjected two years earlier without, however, targeting modern art as such.

These extreme measures, uniquely German, amounted to a last-ditch effort at enforcing totalitarian governance in artistic culture, which both the Soviet and the Fascist states had long accomplished by that time. Hitler's violent speech of 1937 about the "implacable mop-up war" against modern art set the tone of their propagandistic orchestration and press coverage. Enforcing the tenets of the 'Führer State,' Hitler and his subordinates proceeded to do away with the last remnants of an institutionalized art policy that had still been functioning, if only to a limited degree, as a venue for efforts by some government and museum officials at sidetracking confiscations of modern art works. They simply overruled legality. The staging of the 'Degenerate Art' show exemplifies the totalitarian practice of eliminating institutional intermediaries between leadership and populace. It made it appear as if mid-range state institutions still harboring modern art were at last being exposed to the outraged German people for evading its judgment.

/ 2 **MOBILIZATION AND MONUMENTALITY**

/ 2.1 **TOTALITARIAN CAPITALS**

/ 2.1.1 **MONUMENTAL URBANISM**

That all three totalitarian states should have envisaged the thorough reconstruction of their capitals in the midst of the Depression constituted the paramount feature of their artistic cultures compared to those of Western European democracies, France in particular, whose constitutional continuity gave them no political reason for upsetting the architectural status quo. Topping anything democracies were capable of building formed part of those states' competitive, even confrontational, posture on the European geopolitical scene. Their capital reconstruction schemes put them into a position to focus their art policies on pivotal political objectives. They made them appear to inspire the arts with the political will of a grand design. The Soviet, German and Italian pavilions at the Paris World Exposition of 1937 were meant to prove that their regimes were capable of erecting—even for a short duration—monumental buildings in steel and stone, according to plan and within a deadline,

demonstrations of an art arising from a combination of economic accomplishment and political determination.

The revolutionary ideologies of totalitarian regimes, all of which had done away with democratic governance, entailed claims of refashioning the site of government along with government itself. The new topographies of their capitals were designed to suit the manifest enactment of their alternative configurations of state, single party, and popular representation. In Moscow and Berlin, capital planning culminated in giant central buildings of people's representation, called 'Palace of Soviets' and 'Assembly Hall,' for performative demonstrations of the mass base claimed by their regimes. Both buildings gave different solutions to the fundamental question of totalitarianism: mass assent to a repressive government. Only the Fascist state, for all its revolutionary rhetoric, clung to some constitutional continuity with the parliamentary monarchy it had replaced. Hence its projected capital reconstruction did not upset existing government centers. An architectural center of Fascist ascendancy in the middle of Rome, the Palazzo del Littorio, was never started to be built.

In all three schemes, Baron Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris for the Second Empire, with its comprehensive alignment of zoning, utility infrastructure, and traffic circulation and its visual enhancement of representative architecture by clearing surrounding spaces, set a precedent for balancing, if not reconciling, urbanistic and monumental concerns. In the decade preceding the Depression, urban planning had tended to align both these goals on the common denominator of a technological aesthetic to harmonize public and residential building. Le Corbusier's syndicalist scheme of 1925 for a "classless" *Ville radieuse* would have eradicated a large chunk of Paris' monumental cityscape to make room for functionalist living quarters. By contrast, urbanist requirements in the projected restructuring of totalitarian capitals were subordinated to artistically overdetermined monumental centers. The relationship between representative claims and residential requirements remained a precarious issue, addressed in Moscow and Rome by relocating housing to the outskirts, but altogether disregarded in Berlin.

/ 2.1.2 **STATE AND PARTY ALLOCATIONS**

As early as 1924, barely two years after his accession to government, Mussolini demanded a thorough architectural restructuring of Rome, reminiscent of Haussmann's mission in 19th-century Paris, but with a different monumental chronology. He wished to strip the cityscape of its 19th-century accretions in order to enhance the monumental presence of the ancient Roman Empire. At first, Mussolini's project did not include new monumental buildings to house the political institutions of Fascist rule. Only in late 1933 was one such building, the Palazzo del Littorio, envisaged, not for the conduct of government, but as a party headquarters, including a commemorative shrine for party members killed in the 1922 revolution. It never even reached the

planning stage. When in 1936 the reconstruction plans of Rome were revised for implementation, all new buildings were displaced from the core of the ancient city, with its restored monuments, to a distant seaside area near the ancient port of Ostia. There they were to house the 1942 World Exposition and later serve as a permanent cultural center showcasing the accomplishments of Fascist rule.

By contrast, planning for the reconstruction of Moscow was anchored in a complete rebuilding of the city center. It took its cue from imaginary designs of workers' or party palaces, devised during the first years after the 1917 Revolution. In accordance with the revolutionary concept of council rule, these hypothetical buildings were to monumentalize the ascendancy of party organizations over city governments. In March 1918, both party leadership and state government were moved from Petrograd to Moscow and installed together in the Kremlin, the secondary government center of Tsarist times. The new capital planning revived the concept of the workers' palace to reaffirm the original separation of powers inherent in the Council system, that is, the preeminence of the party over the government. When in 1932 the Central Committee reactivated the planning process for capital reconstruction, it scuttled earlier plans for urban decentralization in favor of the concentric topography already in existence. That this decision should have been taken after the first competition for the Palace of Soviets, goes to show how monumental concerns prevailed over urbanistic ones.

In Berlin, finally, the building of the Reichstag in 1884-1894 and its axial alignment with the 'Victory Boulevard' (*Siegesallee*) in 1890-1901 had created a monumental political center which was to visualize the ideological fusion of historical memory and political design to fit the newly-founded empire of 1871. Yet it had left government buildings scattered throughout the inner city. Starting in 1936 Albert Speer, under Hitler's supervision, designed a huge expansion of this monumental center to become a continuous architectural environment that grouped new buildings for the government and the military command near a giant hall for mass assemblies. By contrast to Moscow, it excluded the Party headquarters which were left in Munich, located in new buildings. A long, wide boulevard connected the government center with a new railway station in the South, the homestretch of an expansive system of radial and peripheral main roads, highways, railways, and airports for a nationwide pilgrimage to the capital. Its outward reach extended beyond the German borders into Europe at large, anticipating future conquests, suggested by rows of outsize cannons flanking the boulevard.

/ 2.1.3 PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATION

True to the structural ambivalence of totalitarian systems, all three capital projects combined populist aspirations to mass participation with autocratic aspirations to overpowering rule. However, only Moscow and Berlin featured central buildings for mass assemblies, expressing the ensuing double sense of representation—empowerment of

authority and ideological performance. Both the Palace of Soviets and the Assembly Hall were to manifest the ideological transfiguration of the popular support claimed by both regimes as the source of their political legitimacy, no matter how differently they calibrated participation and obedience. They were to showcase a mass base configured in staged ceremonials of unconditional allegiance. The five-stage competition of 1931-1933 for the Palace of Soviets led from a procedural enactment of people's sovereignty to a choreographed mass ritual of submission to Party guidance. In the design of the Assembly Hall, a similar submission to Hitler's one-man leadership, with no adjustments for an ever so fictitious protocol of power delegation, was projected from the start.

Until the fourth stage of the Palace of Soviets competition in July 1933, the remit assigned the smaller of two main auditoriums to alternate sessions of the Party Plenum and the Congress of Soviets, that is, the legislative bodies of Party and government. The convergence of both according to the notion of a "centralized" mass democracy was codified in the Constitution of 1936. Thus, at first a structured assemblage of discrete spaces for deliberative and executive bodies was to be opened to non-party masses allowed to enter and to watch. Eventually a compact tower encasing one hall alone reduced the delegates themselves to a mere audience looking up to the leadership on a giant stage. The transformation occurred in sync with the restructuring of Party and society during the purges. In its final form, the Palace of Soviets embodied a streamlined, ritualized one-party mass democracy, as it was called, using the catchphrase 'connection to the masses' for its self-legitimization, complete with sham elections and committees. It monumentalized the underlying principle of 'democratic centralism,' a give-and-take of decree and acclaim between leaders and followers.

Through its sheer grandeur, the Assembly Hall was to dwarf the Reichstag which lay at the far corner of the main square, gutted by fire on February 27, 1933. Leaving it in place in a semi-ruined state as a testimony of the discredited past seemed to suggest that in the National Socialist state representative democracy was superseded by mass participation of the people themselves. After the failure of the *Reichsreform* and the political disenfranchisement of party organizations in 1934-1935, the plebiscite of 1934 legitimized the 'Führer state' in perpetuity, at the expense of pre-existing government structures and with no constitutional codification whatsoever. From a set of four parallel chanceries, Hitler enacted legislation by decree. Different from the Soviet system, no institutional mechanisms were foreseen to bring the political will of the populace, be it framed or fabricated by the Party, to bear on any legislative or executive procedure. Hence, unlike the Palace of Soviets, the Assembly Hall was not even to mimic any accountability to the people, only to parade the people's acclaim on unspecified occasions.

/ 2.2 **MONUMENTALIZED MOBILIZATION**

/ 2.2.1 **PSEUDO-PLEBISCITARY POLITICS**

The capital schemes of all three totalitarian regimes were linked to the realignments of party memberships undertaken in 1932-1933 to energize their mass base. The Fascist and National Socialist parties were entrusted with mass indoctrination but kept at arm's length from governance. The Bolshevik Party, on the other hand, was empowered to remedy the government's shortcomings. In Italy, the appointment of Achille Starace as PNF secretary in December 1931 and the membership drive in 1932 on the tenth anniversary of the 'March on Rome' signaled the conversion of an elite party into a mass party. Similarly, in December 1932, Hitler dismantled the NSDAP's tight personnel organization and after taking office in 1933 opened it to mass membership, albeit only for a limited time. In the USSR, conversely, the Central Committee resolution of 28 April 1933 inaugurated a five-year process of purges and restructurings supervised by Party Secretary Andrei Zhdanov. When in March 1939 the 18th Party Congress formally concluded this process, a detailed statistical report certified an all but complete replacement of older by younger party cadres.

It was for these newly-activated mass parties, as driving agencies for a thorough politicization of their underlying societies, that the new monumental architecture of all three capitals was to provide a setting. Here they were expected to perform acts of symbolic acclaim, which replaced the conflictual procedures of party policy with the semblance of a unanimous mass assent. On July 14, 1933 Hitler's second government issued the 'Law on Plebiscites' which for crucial issues substituted plebiscites for Reichstag votes or government decrees. Henceforth such plebiscites became instruments of public legitimacy for National Socialist governance. They sanctioned Hitler's elevation to sole leader in 1934, and Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1936. The two other totalitarian states refrained from having plebiscites formalize mass assent. In the Soviet Union, five years of party reforms culminated in the semblance of an electoral democracy in 1936. Two years later in Italy, the replacement of the Chamber of Deputies by an appointed National Council completed the corporative reorganization of Fascist governance.

Consistent with the semblance of popular empowerment through plebiscite or sham democracy, the projected new capital structures in Moscow and Berlin were to cement the political culture of mass mobilization by steering it toward the giant assembly buildings in their city centers. Their performative topography of mass assent replaced deliberative scenarios of delegate assemblies. Only in Italy did the monarchic constitution and the collective authority of corporative organization prevent mass mobilization from substituting for representative legitimacy, no matter how theatrically the regime

used to tout its claims for mass support. The huge assembly centers mandated in both competitions for the Palazzo del Littorio were never built. Such differences notwithstanding, a dynamic enhancement of public architecture served in all three totalitarian states to mask political disenfranchisement by staged acclamation spectacles. The mass mobilization for which this architecture was to serve preempted the political will of diverse constituencies with a choreographed enthusiasm of a unified people.

/ 2.2.2 **GERMANY**

In late 1933, Hitler deliberately fused mobilization with monumentality when he decided to have the projected Olympic Stadium complex in Berlin double as a staging area for party rallies and military spectacles, and in late 1934 to have the Party Rally Grounds at Nuremberg built up into an elaborate site for the same combination of performative politics on an annual schedule. In Berlin, the actual sports stadium proper opened onto an adjacent, enclosed parade ground called 'May Field' for assembling formations of party organizations in uniform, or military units along with their equipment. The May Field was centered on a memorial for German infantry killed at Langemarck in World War I (see Chapter 4.2 / 1.1.2). The combination of both sites revived the ancient Greek idea of sports as combat training. A wide staircase above and a tunnel below connected the Olympic Stadium and the May Field to form a joint staging ground for political mass celebrations, to be regularly held after the Olympic Games were over. Hitler would proceed from one to the other, mount the speaker's rostrum in the stadium, and address the whole complex through an all-pervasive sound system.

In apparent contradiction between political practice and operative ideology, Hitler decided in 1934, the year the NSDAP was deprived of any institutional influence on governance, to transform the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds, in use since 1927, into a "national sanctuary" on the model of Ancient Greek and Roman temple areas, and underwrote its construction with government funds. It is here rather than in the capital that Hitler and his ministers used to pronounce themselves on fundamental policy issues every year, speaking amid mass rallies that gave them a maximum live resonance. It was a travesty of democratic party conventions, whose function is intended to fashion policies by motions, debates, and votes for elected governments to implement. Because it served to underscore the politics of the moment, the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds, under constant development, were given more propaganda coverage, than any other venture of National Socialist architecture. Eventually they were to include an oversized sports stadium for the world to compete in 'German Games' that would replace the Olympics after victory in a future war.

In the reconstructed capital of Berlin, the self-representation of mobilized masses was to be dynamically deployed across the full length of the reconfigured city center. The Assembly Hall formed the destination of a straight trajectory, leading from

the southern railway station through the triumphal arch, on to a central avenue past key government and business buildings. Hitler's boast that the central avenue would facilitate the deployment of tanks and troops against potential uprisings was redundant, since the Third Reich precluded any chance of mass rebellion. All one could imagine were nearly two hundred thousand people from across the nation pouring out of special trains and into the Assembly Hall to 'represent' the nation as an amorphous crowd. That the reconfigured capital should have included no monumental party building was due to the deliberate detachment of ideological and political components in the governance of the Hitler State. While the Nuremberg Party Rallies were confined to one September week, the ceremonial topography of the new capital would have allowed mass politics to be performed at any time.

/ 2.2.3 **USSR**

The topography of mass mobilization⁽²⁵⁾ envisaged for the reconstructed capital of Moscow was bound to deal with the elaborate scheme of parades and street spectacles which had been developed during the preceding decade. Initially this scheme foresaw a variety of festive pageants with multiple events for at least six annual holidays. By 1930 it was simplified to standard marching demonstrations. The Central Staff for the Conducting of Holidays in Moscow, established in early 1930, oversaw the organizing work of district committees. It issued detailed guidelines for the organization, banners and slogans of individual marching columns, thereby orchestrating mass movements for the ideological promotion of the First Five-Year Plan, the foremost theme of any celebration. Starting in 1931, the setup of mass demonstrations was adjusted, and repeatedly changed, in relation to the developing Palace of Soviets project. At first, the concentric parade flow was steered away from its original rallying point on Red Square toward the future building, designed to embrace the arrival of the marching columns, and to open its doors to their delegations.

The first competition brief for the Palace of September 1931 stipulated that the building "must be easily accessible for great multitudes of demonstrating laborers and workers,"⁽²⁶⁾ and that therefore, the submissions were to include a "schematic planning of the adjacent area with marked routes for the procession of demonstrators, types of traffic and their access."⁽²⁷⁾ However, it was one thing to design a building in compliance with these specifications—as functionalist designers such as the ARU team or the brigade working under Swiss architect Hannes Meyer intended to do when they pierced its walls on street level for marching columns to traverse—, and quite another to plot corresponding access routes across a constantly reconfigured city center. When the Construction Committee rejected the soundest solution—proposed by Le Corbusier, who assigned each group, as specified by the competition brief, a distinct passageway through the Palace—it not only took exception to its functionalist overdetermination,

but even more so, it seems, to the architect's ruthless interference into city planning, as he did not hesitate to propose razing adjacent areas for easier access.

Already in 1932, the Construction Committee, in its revised stipulations for the next stage of the competition, rescinded the requirement of having masses march through the interior of the Palace. Now they were to stop and assemble on a large square before the main entrance, in recognition, as it were, of the representative authority granted to the delegates inside. In the definitive general plan for the reconstruction of Moscow, issued in 1936, the avenue connecting the Lenin Hills with the Palace of Soviets met the building from behind, so that marchers would have to circle it before they reached the main facade. The preamble of the new Soviet constitution, spelled out in large letters over the entrance, proclaimed the legitimacy of the elected bodies. Now Red Square, with the Lenin Mausoleum before the Kremlin wall as its focal point, was reinstated as the goal for mass parades, and therefore to be cleared of adjacent buildings. Even the giant Commissariat of Heavy Industry, planned as late as 1934 to face the Palace of Soviets across the square, was eventually dropped from the topography.

/ 2.3 **PROJECTION INTO THE FUTURE**

/ 2.3.1 **PLANNING AND STYLE**

Boris Iofan, winning architect of the final competition for the Palace of Soviets, was nonetheless not authorized to build the final version of his design, but enjoined to develop it still further, not only in co-operation with the runner-up, Vladimir Gelfreikh, but also subject to instructions from a new building commission including prominent architects, artists, critics, and, since 1938, Stalin in person. No sooner had the competition been concluded than another one was opened for a matching monumental building facing the Palace of Soviets on Red Square, the Commissariat of Heavy Industry. Although modern proposals had just been categorically rejected in favor of 'Socialist Realism in Architecture,' the new competition once again was open to architects of all persuasions. The select group of architects to whom participation was restricted even included the most intransigent protagonist of functionalism, Ivan Leonidov, who four years earlier had been singled out for vituperative attacks in architectural debates. His entry, a functional design blown up to monumental shape, was rejected, to be sure, but by way of respectful reasoning rather than denigration.

In striking contrast to the elaborate Soviet planning processes lasting several years, Hitler and Speer alone determined the entire monumental core area of the reconstructed Berlin in one full sweep. The two foremost buildings dominating its two focal points—the Assembly Hall and the Triumphal Arch—were based on quasi-historic sketches Hitler himself had drawn in 1925. Numerous representative buildings flanking the axial avenue connecting those two focal points were assigned

to the most prestigious architects of the Third Reich, without any competition, only by Speer's Hitler-backed selection. Speer's subsequent checks on their designs-in-progress and requests for changes ensured their alignment with his vision. The most prominent of these buildings, comparable in its monumental scope and political significance to the Commissariat of Heavy Industry in Moscow, was the 'Soldiers' Hall' adjacent to the Army High Command. Speer commissioned it from Wilhelm Kreis, an old, prestigious architect from imperial times, who after 1938 rose once more to the highest positions.

When in 1936 the reconstruction plans for Rome had to be finalized in time for the World Exposition of 1942 (E42), Marcello Piacentini, Italy's preeminent state architect, was charged with total oversight, just as Speer was in Berlin. Different from Speer's empowerment by Hitler, however, he was accountable to a building corporation especially assembled for the purpose. As in Berlin, single buildings of the E42 were farmed out to leading architects of the country. However, again unlike Speer, Piacentini had no authority to determine their assignments and influence their shapes and styles. Open competitions with different juries were held for each one, making for laborious procedures of adjustment to the ever-changing priorities of the master plan. The large-scale plaster model of the E42 area, built by Piacentini's office for public viewing, shows these buildings as plain, generic blocks, which suited Piacentini's ideal of a classical architecture stripped of its decorative surface for the sake of a modern appearance. Their initial stereometric abstraction persisted in their final form, even after their architects had specified their designs.

/ 2.3.2 **HYPERBOLIC BUILDING**

In all three capitals, the technical and financial feasibility of planning and design remained hypothetical, even though preparatory work was carried just far enough to lend them credibility. Since financing formed no part of published budgets, they were even exempt from the tenuous statistical plausibility of totalitarian economic planning. Their artistic hyperbole was essential for their political purpose. The Italian capital reconstruction, ostensibly to be completed for the 1942 World Exposition, was more pragmatically pursued than its Soviet and German counterparts, which lacked any operational timetables despite their published target dates of 1950 and 1952 respectively. Since both regimes anticipated an imminent war with an uncertain starting date, their completion remained hypothetical. When war did break out on September 1, 1939, none of the three capitals was even close to taking shape. In Rome, only the archaeological clearing of the ancient city core had been completed. In Moscow, the steel-reinforced concrete perimeter of the Palace of Soviets had risen to a height of circa 50 meters. In Berlin, only one giant concrete corner block of the foundations for the Assembly Hall had yet been cast.

To counter these uncertainties, designs and preparations were profusely publicized through plans, models, photographs, and films. An ample propaganda literature dwelt on the exemplary significance of the projects and gave assurances of their completion. The underlying concept of a pictorial architecture took effect by a pictorial narrative of anticipation. At the Paris World Exposition of 1937, the pavilions of all three totalitarian states were built as stand-ins for these capital schemes. Piacentini and Speer, the architects in charge, designed the Italian and the German pavilions. However, only the Soviet and Italian pavilions featured large scale models of the future capital centers, while Speer preferred a model of the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds. Domestically, the Soviet and German regimes, mindful of the particularly precarious status of their planning, sought to balance utopian hyperbole and token accomplishment with two-short term showcase projects, completed in a rush (see Chapter 12/2.2). The Moscow subway and the New Reich Chancellery in Berlin—the latter even earmarked as provisional—boasted maximal lavishness as a standard to attain.

Standing in for building, planning was staged to demonstrate the mobilization of politically homogenized societies at work for distant goals. Its forced publicity was to highlight the capacity of self-confident artistic cultures to crown social well-being with monumental splendor. The open-ended long-term timelines anticipated the longevity of all three regimes. These campaigns-in-progress became political endeavors in their own right. They were staged to manifest the political will of the leadership to go through with them in disregard of short-term budgets, and the resolve of the underlying populations to dedicate themselves to their pursuit. How they were to be reconciled with equally publicized rearmament programs remained unclear. Fundamentally, the three totalitarian capitals-in-the making were featured as imaginary projections of their forms of government and social order, even though these were still under fast-paced, conflictive development from year to year. Their completion at some future time was to finalize the constitutional configuration of a totalitarian power no longer subject to change.

/ 2.3.3 **MONUMENTAL TIMELINES**

Reclaiming millennial traditions of historic legitimacy, totalitarian capital schemes were meant to place their regimes on a par with world-historical precedents such as the kingdoms of the Ancient Near East and the Roman Empire. Leapfrogging back over historical continuity, they construed ideological timelines back into the millennial past and forward into a perennial future. Such lengthy timelines compensated for the revolutionary discontinuity with the immediate past which all three totalitarian regimes claimed for themselves, their constant short-term internal upheavals and, eventually, their interdependent high-risk war policies, which required them to constantly recalibrate their planning of arms production and monumental architecture. Faced with such disparities between imaginary and real timelines, the public credibility

of totalitarian capital schemes depended on their correlation with war policy. However, this correlation was only apparent in Berlin, the capital of future conquest. Neither the smug triumphalism of Empire regained in Rome nor the decorous semblance of socialism achieved in Moscow was realistic by comparison.

When, in his campaign speeches of 1929, Hitler dwelt on the buildings of the coming Third Reich as monuments of a new epoch to come, he expressly referred to those of Fascist Italy, which, he pointed out, were inscribed with the chronology of the new regime, starting from year I. Like the French Revolution of 1789, where such a reset had been decreed before, the new epoch drew on a past beyond chronology. In 1930 the commission charged with drawing up the new master plan of Rome distinguished between 'Roma monumentale' of Antiquity and the Renaissance, to be restored, and 'Roma moderna,' extending from 1870 to the start of the regime, to be demolished to make room for 'Roma modernissima' or 'Roma fascista,' a synthesis of ancient and modern. In Berlin, Speer's projected recreation of Roman triumphal architecture on a scale disproportionate with the rest of the city discarded any monumental continuity. When Hitler imagined the new Berlin as "only comparable to Ancient Egypt, Babylon, or Rome,"⁽²⁸⁾ he speculated it might outlast his own 'Thousand Year Reich' as a site for posterity to admire, even when ruined.

It was the reconstruction of Moscow that was predicated on the most contradictory scheme of all three: the short-term achievement of Socialism as a political system in one country, ahead of its economic and social fulfillment. The VI Comintern Congress of 1928 proclaimed this doctrine as the premise of the First Five-Year Plan, desisting from socialism as the goal of a worldwide revolution. Belied by the stalling Second Five-Year Plan, the monumental scope of the Palace of Soviets and the Commissariat of Heavy Industry never ceased to grow. Their discrepancy to the country's lagging economic progress was just as big as that of Berlin's triumphal architecture, with the difference that it was not to be made up by conquest but by a domestic leap to productivity. Trotsky, the loser to Stalin in the 1928 debate about socialism in one country, included the Soviet capital scheme in the critiques of the policy he wrote in exile. Here he reiterated his earlier view that an art of socialism could only be the outcome of socialism accomplished in reality, which in turn required the victory of a world-wide revolution combining uprisings and wars.

/ 3 **POLICY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT**

/ 3.1 **SETTING STANDARDS**

/ 3.1.1 **PARTIES AND POLICIES**

When in 1931 the totalitarian regimes of Italy and the Soviet Union, and two years later that of Germany, embarked upon the task of fashioning a representative

state art made to measure, they could not rely on any art policy written into their party programs, no matter how categorically their party politicians occasionally pronounced themselves on artistic matters. Before 1929, the Bolshevik and Fascist parties had adopted selective judgmental positions vis-à-vis competitive offerings by artistic groups of various trends which vied for their support. However, different from their policies and ideologies on economic and social matters, they had not framed any pro-active art-political tenets. The National Socialist Party had nothing to show but anti-modern polemics. It is since the start of the Depression that party organizations in Italy and the USSR started to intervene in the ideological determination of a state art in the making. As both were ready to devise art programs of their own, success or failure of their efforts depended not just on the absorption of their ideologies by existing artistic cultures, but on their influence on government art agencies.

Once the Bolshevik Party assumed organizational control of the arts as part of its activist pursuit of the First Five-Year Plan, it belatedly lived up to its policy-making prerogative in most other areas of Soviet governance. It started not only to define artistic guidelines in a curt, deliberate fashion, but also to see them through by way of its ubiquitous representatives in artistic culture. The Central Committee's three principal decrees on art policy—the 'Five-Year Plan for the Arts' of April 1929, the 'Resolution on Posters' of March 11, 1931, and the 'April Decree' of April 23, 1932—were meant to remedy Soviet artists' erratic lack of political direction. In 1931 Party members within the Association of Revolutionary Artists split off to form a separate group devoted to following the Party line. In early 1934, coinciding with the proclamation of Socialist Realism, a special term—*partiinnost*—was coined to ensure adherence to party ideology. Since Socialist Realism was being discussed for years, it denoted the subordination of artistic practice to an uncertain Party doctrine. Party members forming the cells of the new artists' organizations enforced and adjusted it as time went by.

On the other hand, Fascist and later National Socialist party organizations, consistent with their more limited influence on governance, were prone to take doctrinaire positions critical of government art policy, only to be rebuffed by the ministers in charge. While in Italy, such party positions were reduced to passing protest declarations, in Germany they were enhanced by power struggles which only subsided in 1936. Fascist Party Secretary Roberto Farinacci led two art-political initiatives to protest the modernizing tendencies prevailing in government art policy—the 1934 censure of the Palazzo de Littorio competition in the Chamber of Deputies and the 1938 creation of the Cremona prize to reward a traditionalist art which glorified nation and even race—yet both to no avail. In Germany, the 'Combat League for German Culture,' a mass organization affiliated in 1929 with the National Socialist Party, lost out in its bid to become the official artists' organization of the state once the Party came to dominate the government in early 1933. Its leader, Alfred Rosenberg, was sidelined to a

Party office of cultural supervision, whence he continued to promote his views with a limited resonance.

/ 3.1.2 **PARTIES VERSUS GOVERNMENTS**

The different constitutional relationships between party and government in the three totalitarian states made setting standards for the arts a matter of contest between party politicians in charge of mass indoctrination and government officials in charge of art administration, that is, between ideology and policy. Not until 1936 were these contests decided either way. In the Soviet Union, on July 4, 1929, pluralist Education Commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky was replaced by Andrei Bubnov, a non-expert party commissar coming from the army, to ensure that the Commissariat would implement party directives rather than setting policy by itself. By 1934, Leningrad Party Secretary Andrei Zhdanov assumed that task in his capacity as a secretary of the Central Committee. As if in mirror reverse to the Soviet Union, strong, resourceful government officials in Italy and Germany—Bottai, corporations minister from 1929 to 1932 and education minister since 1936, and Goebbels, propaganda minister since 1933—used their executive authority to subsume the arts under their programs for an all-embracing culture of the Fascist corporate state and the Führer state respectively. While Zhdanov, at the All-Soviet Writers' Congress held in 1934 at Kharkov, was in a position to promulgate Socialist Realism as an all-encompassing paradigm, Bottai and Goebbels, no matter how intellectually ambitious, and hence intent on a political micro-management of the arts, never aspired to formulating ideology-based aesthetic prescriptions.

Zhdanov, who had no personal interest in the arts but a deliberate notion of their place in cultural policy, attained a firm grip on their regulation without having to make any substantive pronouncements, because he could rely on a well-organized process of policy formulation and policy implementation by means of the party cells within compulsory artists' organizations. Bottai and Goebbels, on the other hand, relied on state-guided but self-regulating artists' corporations with a built-in competitive diversity, which they sustained against recurrent party interference calling for more ideological zeal. Their policies were not aimed at enforcing aesthetic conformity for the sake of social conformity, but at setting tasks for an adequate art of the state.

On January 17, 1936, the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars jointly established the Committee on Arts, detached from the Education Commissariat, in accord with the organizational convergence of Party and government envisaged by the 1936 Constitution. Education Commissar Bubnov was summarily shot, and the Committee subjected the arts to NKVD control. On June 11, 1936, Corporations Minister Bottai was transferred to the Ministry of Education, in time to activate the corporate alignment of the arts in preparation for the E42, where Italy aspired to international leadership in the arts. His pluralist art policy stifled attempts by Party officials to

polarize Italian artistic culture in ideological terms, all the more since the Fascist look of that culture was by now assured. Finally, in September 1936, Propaganda Minister Goebbels asserted his authority by having the National Socialist Cultural Community absorbed by the Reich Chamber of Culture, curbing its quest for a distinct art to be sponsored by the Party. Unlike Bottai's, however, his corporate approach failed to net him an art of ideological conviction, as became apparent in the following year.

/ 3.1.3 **DICTATORS' INTERVENTIONS**

Stalin ostensibly abided by Lenin's well-known abstinence from state or party guidance of the arts, which had informed Soviet art policy until 1929. He kept mindful of standing back from any visible intervention even when, starting with the First Five-Year Plan, that policy was shed in favor of an activist control. His scarce judgments and choices in matters of art were cloaked in Party decisions. It was behind the scenes that Stalin endorsed the crucial term Socialist Realism as a label for an authoritative paradigm of style, first in an unofficial gathering of five participants which reportedly met shortly after the April Decree of 1932, and later in a discussion with a group of writers who socialized at Maksim Gor'ki's country house on October 26 of that year. Only as late as 1936 did architect Vladimir Ghelfreikh, in charge of developing the final project of the Palace of Soviets along with Boris Iofan, publicly acknowledge Stalin's leadership in the large building committee, although Stalin did not become a member of that committee until September 1938. This late acknowledgement may have been due to the Stalin cult burgeoning at that time.

Not unlike Lenin, Mussolini, on March 26, 1923, within a year of his appointment as prime minister, asserted in an opening speech for an exhibition of the Novecento group: "It is far from me to encourage anything which could look like an art of the state."⁽²⁹⁾ Accordingly, during the next five years, he ignored the Futurists' call for the setup of "a true and proper ministry of fascist art presided over by the Duce."⁽³⁰⁾ In 1928, however, Mussolini abandoned his detachment. He permitted his generic call for "a new art, an art of our time, a fascist art"⁽³¹⁾ to be placed over the entrance of the first exhibition held by the 'rationalist' faction of the architects' corporation. Henceforth he gave his personal approval to this faction, without, however, preempting the corporative allocation of commissions. Similarly, Mussolini's support for the ascendancy of the Novecento group, and for its leader's Mario Sironi's bid to shape the character of Fascist art, was channeled first through the informal network of his companion Margharita Sarfatti, and later through the corporative system where Sironi played a leading part. Finally, in 1936 he oversaw the E42 project, a government venture.

In blatant contrast to both Stalin and Mussolini, Hitler claimed a personal leadership of National Socialist artistic culture. Already in 1920, when he expressly changed profession from artist to politician, he had formed a political, that is operative, rather

than merely ideological understanding of the arts, which in 1925 he set forth in the first volume of *My Struggle*. Since 1933, when he came to power, he used his annual 'culture speeches' at the Nuremberg Party rallies to categorically chart the course German art was to take. He soon found out, however, that neither the Propaganda Ministry nor any party agency stood ready to implement his views. All the more overbearing was his intervention in important ventures of state and party architecture. When the persistent structural shortcomings of National Socialist art policy precipitated the crisis of early 1937, Hitler took personal charge in making the twin shows of approved and banished art in Munich the scene for setting the terms for German art to follow. These he spelled out in his opening speech of the Great German Art Exhibition. His leadership overrode all art institutions.

/ 3.2 **LIMITS OF ORGANIZATION**

/ 3.2.1 **REACH OF CONTROL**

In all three totalitarian regimes, initiatives aimed at organizing artists preceded those meant to fashion an art of the state. However, the first initiative did not feed into the second. Even the tightest organization could not make artists produce the innovative, ideologically compelling works all three regimes desired for their state art projects. For these, outstanding artists were needed. None of the responsible politicians was naïve enough to expect that state art could be made to order like in pre-modern modes of patronage, as foreign critics of totalitarian culture charged. The elaborate management of their organized artistic cultures was not conducive to delivering the desired excellence, at least not within the short terms of their monumental timetables. These politicians recognized that a representative state art could not be achieved by forcing artists into conformity along with the society at large. Neither could they wait for their academies to groom new artists in the spirit of their ideologies. They had to authorize extant artist's elites for leadership, in sync with the expansion of authoritarian over populist policies, underway since the middle of the decade.

With a decade or more of lead time for organizing their own artistic cultures, the Soviet and Fascist regimes never had to face a crisis of the kind the National Socialist regime incurred in 1937. Still, by 1932 they became impatient with the management of their artists' organizations and intervened with measures from above to force the pace of monumental art production. By means of the competitions for Palace of Soviets in 1931-1932 and the prescription of Socialist Realism in 1933-1934, the Soviet regime engaged in the most systematic, most drawn-out processes adopted by all three in setting the terms for a state art to be newly developed. The delivery of such an art was entrusted to a select group of overpaid, prestigious artists with personal ties to political leaders. In Fascist Italy, the corporate system allowed for a self-development

with only remote government supervision. Two outstanding artists—architect Marcello Piacentini and painter Mario Sironi—were entrusted with setting the course for the internal workings of their corporations, in which they held multiple assignments. Their work was rated so successful that by 1936, a Fascist style could be hailed as the style of the age (see Chapter 12/2.2.3).

It is because the National Socialist government was faced with having to fashion its organized artistic culture from scratch that the structural shortcomings of that artistic culture persisted unresolved throughout the decade. In 1937 Hitler exposed them in his devastating judgment on the submissions to the first Great German Art Exhibition under the slogan “They’ve had four years of time.” The Reich Chamber of Art might have pronounced guidelines of aesthetic, thematic and ideological conformity. The Prussian Ministry of Education, if not the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, might have framed academic curricula combining professional art instruction and political indoctrination. Competition juries might have spelled out categorical criteria of selection. Yet nothing of the kind was done. Thus, the launch of active planning for the reconstruction of Berlin, promulgated in Hitler’s Reichstag speech of January 30, 1937, entailed a trenchant change of art policy. Now Hitler, Goebbels, and a handful of subordinates, discarding institutional entitlements, entrusted the creation of state art to a small group of elite artists under their close-up supervision.

/ 3.2.2 **EFFORTS AT INSTRUCTION**

As they embarked on their monumental projects, all three totalitarian regimes found themselves unable to count on extant art schools and academies to prepare committed artists with integrated teaching programs that would have bundled professional with political education. Given the sudden urgency of their planning, whatever they undertook to remedy this deficiency came too late. Only the Soviet regime undertook a quick but thorough academic reorganization to deal with the deficiency. The Fascist regime, consistent with its policy of refraining from direct political guidance of the arts, desisted from interfering with the curricula or staff. In Germany, brutal but haphazard imposition of government-picked art professors could not make up for the lack of reasoned programs. In 1932 the Leningrad Art Academy was expanded into an art school, charging its conformist members with a teaching mission. The Prussian Academy of Arts, which had featured master classes all along, was repeatedly purged and re-staffed between 1933 and 1937, but without tangible result. Only Mussolini’s ‘Fascist Academy,’ newly created in 1929, had no teaching mission from the start.

In the spring of 1930 Soviet art instruction was shifted from the jurisdiction of the Education Commissariat to Party oversight. During the following years, it was twice revamped, first at the inception and then at the completion of the First Five-Year Plan. On both occasions, tightly organized technical curricula were meshed with

political indoctrination. In 1930, in accordance with the mission of having the arts contribute to the all-out industrialization of the Soviet Union, the aesthetically overdetermined Higher Art and Technical Institute (*Vkhutein*) in Moscow was split up into several separate schools for different professional practices. These schools offered technical along with political courses to a new generation of students recruited from the working-class. Four years later, in a policy turnabout from technology to aesthetics, the Leningrad Academy became a national teaching center. Its new curriculum revalidated traditional art instruction from pre-revolutionary times and combined it with a broad-based cultural education along Party lines. It took another four years to produce its first outstanding graduate, the painter Aleksandr Laktionow (see Chapter 10/2.3.3).

Although Hitler's government, within months of its accession, dismissed every one of the better-known modern artists from their teaching posts at academies and art schools, their makeshift replacements—either conservative artists with nationalist credentials or party artists with little distinction—proved incapable of installing a genuinely National Socialist art instruction. Moreover, the ideology of National Socialism—different from both Fascism and Bolshevism—included no articulate aesthetic tenets. Neither the Propaganda Ministry nor the Education Ministry even tried to inspire the restoration of traditionalist art instruction with a persuasive political mission. Hitler's views on art, no matter how often they were invoked could not make up for lacking academic guidelines. As a result, German academies and art schools shared in the blame for the art-political crisis of 1937. Now Hitler personally installed some of the elite artists working on his state art projects—such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak—as academy professors. These busy star artists, however, were disinclined to fill the ideological vacuum in the teaching routine of their schools.

/ 3.2.3 MARKET LICENSE

Masses of organized artists in Italy and Germany, where private art markets were largely intact and on their way to recovery from the Depression, were dispensed from aiming for official projects and encouraged to work for private demand. Both regimes even sought to ensure the economic viability of the profession by means of government-organized initiatives of market stimulation. Helping average artists in this way had from the start been on the art-political agenda of both regimes, with sales rather than political conformity as their prime concern. Throughout the decade, the Fascist regime kept numerous programs going to remedy the market slump brought about by the Depression. The National Socialist regime did likewise immediately upon its accession. Although both artistic cultures were still operating under constraining ideological requirements—tighter in Germany than in Italy—Culture Minister Bottai and Propaganda Minister Goebbels were obliged to mount elaborate rebuttals of recurrent attacks on the ideological vacuity of the commonplace art encouraged by such policies.

In the Soviet Union, by contrast, after the end of the New Economic Policy, the art market had been monopolized by an all-embracing system of state and party patronage, which provided expansive work programs for artists during the First Five-Year Plan. Even after these programs were fulfilled, there was no letup in the demand for ideological expression. In the viciously competitive environment of police-supervised artists' organizations predominant since 1936, all participants, including artists' of rank and file, exercised a bitter ideological control over one another, even when no official commissions were at stake. Debates about acceptance of work proposals were just so many pretexts for terrorizing artists into an uncertain conformity. It is to escape the omnipresent ideological control even of the non-institutional art market that leading modern artists—Filonov first and foremost, Malevich and Tatlin to a lesser degree—withdrawn from any public display of their work. Filonov, a self-declared Communist who refused Party accountability, piled up work after work for a personal museum to be built after his death.

Thus, for a variety of reasons, all three regimes dealt with the question of how far their political organization of artists was to ensure the ideological conformity even of work that was not intended for political use. This question was related to the totalitarian politicization of society at large. Bolshevik art policy, which alone was administered by the Party, went farthest in this regard. Artists' organizations had little if any say in the pursuit of monumental art programs, which in turn were losing the procedural clarity that had come with competitions and debates. As all three dictators became more prominent in their personal supervision or involvement, close-knit circles of politicians, art officials, and favorite artists negotiated decisions among themselves. Those artists who were the beneficiaries of the change gained the status of artistic elites like in pre-modern patronage by ecclesiastical or secular rulers. The political elites, in turn, treated them with admiration and showered them with inordinate privileges, awards, and fees. Their personal achievement thrived on their ideological conformity, exempt from political supervision.

/ 3.3 **ASCENDANCY OF ELITES**

/ 3.3.1 **FROM POPULISM TO ELITISM**

The preferential treatment which totalitarian regimes gave to artists' elites starting in 1936 departed from their initial coordination of professional artists with politicized society, backed up by the ideology of an artistic creativity arising from the people. In Italy and the Soviet Union, the transition was smooth, but in Germany it led to a division between a populist and an elitist art. In a speech of November 26, 1937 to the annual convocation of the Reich Chamber of Culture, Propaganda Minister Goebbels conceded that National Socialist ideas were "not yet ripe to be fashioned into art," and

that “the young generation, which will one day solve this problem, is still emerging.”⁽³²⁾ One year later, the SS Security Service regularly picked up complaints about the ideological vacuity of current art shows. After Hitler had personally censored the first Great German Art Exhibition of 1937, he claimed to have outlined a “newly-reached canon”⁽³³⁾ for the arts. And yet, in this and subsequent annual shows, works of Josef Thorak, Arno Breker, Werner Peiner and some others stood apart, surrounded by masses of ideologically nondescript, business-as-usual paintings and sculptures.

In the preceding decades, modern artists in the Soviet Union and Italy, led by writers Mayakovsky and Marinetti, had claimed the status of elites on the avant-garde paradigm (see Chapter 1.1/3), embracing Bolshevik or Fascist ideologies in a contentious self-promotion against their populist, traditionalist rivals. This claim was based on the premise that a genuine Soviet or Fascist art was still in a formative stage. Now this posture could no longer hold because both regimes, intent on consolidating their artistic cultures, were not prepared to grant individual artists any influence on cultural policy, all the less so since they had failed to deliver an art of mass appeal. In Germany, where modern artists, all of them expedient latecomers to the regime, lacked any political credentials, their offerings could be ignored. By 1936, in all three states, political leaders and their inner circles selected, groomed, and eventually lionized new artists’ elites of traditional observance. They granted them operative, but never political, leadership of agencies set up to implement large-scale artistic projects. Exempt from the uncertainty of competition, they were assured of choice commissions.

The rise of elite artists went hand in hand with the transition from populist to autocratic governance in all three totalitarian states. Their license to operate over and above the rules of their professional organizations was due to a recognition that efficient and imaginative art production could not be achieved by controlling artists, but only by empowering them. Whereas the Fascist regime limited itself to cultivating hierarchies of major and minor artists—such as formerly Futurist painter Gino Severini had accurately forecast in his book *Reasoning About the Figurative Arts* of 1936—Hitler extended the ‘Leader Principle’ that had guided National Social Socialist politics all along to artists who appeared to be inspired by his ideas. The Soviet regime, finally, loath to openly admit social hierarchies or political power structures outside the Party’s ‘democratic centralism,’ drew its favored artists into a select meritocracy of scientific and cultural achievers exempt from socialist equality. These artists were lavished with exorbitant financial rewards, enjoyed luxurious lifestyles, and were socially courted by Stalin and other Party leaders.

/ 3.3.2 LEADERSHIP POSTURES

Pre-eminence of elite artists in totalitarian regimes differed from the professional advancement open to career-minded party activists, regardless of merit. It was

due to the ambitions of political leaders to sponsor the arts, as pre-modern aristocrats or modern business tycoons had done, to exalt their prominence near the top of their political hierarchies. It was in Germany, where Hitler's claim to artistic leadership compensated for an underdeveloped political organization of the arts, that the ascendancy of elite artists was most spectacular. From the start of his rule, Hitler looked up to architect Paul Troost, then made Albert Speer his architectural plenipotentiary, and eventually drew sculptors Arno Breker and Josef Thorak into his innermost circle. In Italy and the Soviet Union, with a more thorough organization of the arts in place, pre-eminent architects such as Luigi Moretti and Boris Iofan were privileged with prime commissions over and above institutional procedure, while painters such as Mario Sironi or Isaak Brodsky so endeared themselves to political leaders that they came to exercise a de-facto art-political authority of their own.

The leadership of elite artists' over and above political organizations of the arts mirrored that of political leaders in governance who favored and promoted them, whose mode of dealing with them was one of admiration rather than condescension, and who even shielded them from accountability when their irresponsible political behavior got them into trouble. While Goebbels in his diary congratulated himself on showering Thorak with top commissions, a local party group rated him as politically unreliable, whereupon Munich Gauleiter Adolf Wagner summarily ruled, "that the political assessment of Professor Thorak can be regarded closed on account of the fact that he is one of the most important artists of our time."⁽³⁴⁾ Attacks on Pavel Korin's paintings extolling orthodox priests in the middle of Stalin's clampdown on the Church did him no harm, since he was a friend of War Commissar Kliment Voroshilov. "Voroshilov said: 'Korin, stop painting popes!'" Korin remembers from a visit. "We [...] began to wrestle [...]. I was pleased: Voroshilov commanded the army, but he did not command art."⁽³⁵⁾

Still, totalitarian elite artists owed their success less to their sponsors' preferences than to their own combination of talent and assertiveness within their political environment. Their self-assurance fitted in with the reckless self-promotion of totalitarian political elites. It prompted them to make the expression of power jibe with their creative self-fulfillment. They needed no conformity to serve. Consistent with their de-facto positions of leadership, Sironi and Breker were able to impose their personal styles of brutalized classicism as aesthetic hallmarks of their regimes and as paradigms for others. They rose above the multifarious literary attempts at defining Fascist or National Socialist styles in the debates and pronouncements of artistic culture. Sironi's and Breker's role-model standing remained unmatched by any Soviet elite artist, none of whom could escape some form of arbitrated competition. No personal accomplishment was permitted to stay aloof from Socialist Realism as a shared paradigm, authorized and supervised by Party leadership, while still allowing for personal preeminence.

/ 3.3.3 POWER, MONEY, SOCIAL STATUS

In Italy, elite artists tended to blend into the leadership of corporations and juries. They dealt with cultural officials on an all but equal footing, and issued programmatic declarations to back up their positions, sometimes even against party orthodoxy. Sironi, who promoted his views in a ceaseless stream of writings, came closest to policymaking, unmatched by any other totalitarian artist. Once Hitler in 1937 lost patience with political art institutions and took art policy in his own hands, elite artists rose to the highest institutional independence. Disregarding regular appointment protocols, Hitler appointed Thorak and Breker as academy professors. Unlike Italy, however, such artists had no authority on commissions and awards, and stood back from influencing policies. Only in the USSR was the ascendancy of elite artists channeled through existing art institutions. Brodsky rose to head the Leningrad Academy and Aleksandr Gerasimov to head the national artists' organization. Iofan's monopoly on the commissions for the Palace of Soviets and for the Soviet Pavilions at both World Expositions of 1937 and 1939 was masked by pro-forma competitions.

Skyrocketing financial rewards exempted elite artists in totalitarian states from the economic equity that artists' organizations had been meant to ensure. In the two capitalist dictatorships, they joined the big earners of other professions, not unlike their late 19th century predecessors. In the USSR, they joined a meritocracy of specialists allowed to crash socialist wage ceilings. Speer charged fees amounting to millions of marks for his work on the reconstruction of Berlin. The atelier he built for Thorak at Baldham near Munich was touted as "the world's largest atelier" in the national press.⁽³⁶⁾ Breker set up a private company for the production and marketing of his outsize sculptures. Hitler gave him a huge atelier next to a villa for living and hosting lavish parties of National Socialist high society. In the USSR, the 'Stalin Prize' was established in 1939, with exorbitant dotations of 100,000 and 50,000 rubles awarded to single artists for specific works. Iconic works such as Mukhina's *Worker and Collective-Farm Girl* were singled out for these awards. It was the culmination of an inordinate rise of fees for artists included in the so-called "new class" of a privileged intelligentsia.

Eventually, elite artists were drawn into the social networks of the totalitarian regimes' highest dignitaries, including dictators in person. Earlier claims to egalitarian lifestyles—advertised in the tales of Stalin's, Mussolini's, and Hitler's frugal lifestyles—were shed for a mix of pseudo-aristocratic and upper middle-class self-representation, whose cultural veneer elite artists were drawn upon to validate. The salon of Margharita Sarfatti, with Mussolini in attendance, even became the springboard for artists' careers. Sculptor Arturo Martini, unable to shed his low-class origins for the sake of this social posture, eventually fell from favor. Painter Aleksandr Gerasimov and sculptor Arno Breker, rewarded with large villas, entertained totalitarian high society

in their salons. Soviet painter Mikhail Nesterov, himself an overpaid elite artist and in 1941 recipient of one of the first Stalin Prizes, included four of his peers in a series of portraits he painted of the newly-ascendant cultural elite. In 1940, he pictured Vera Mukhina in her Sunday best, polishing the finished plaster model of a flying wind figure, done in 1938, in a spirited interaction with her work.



1/ Policies

1.1/ Traditional versus
Modern Art p. 20

1.2/ Totalitarian Art Policy p. 54

1.3/ Democratic Art Policy p. 88

1.3 / Democratic Art Policy

/1 **FRANCE VERSUS GERMANY**

/1.1 **DISPARITY OF STATE SUPPORT**

/1.1.1 **FRENCH EQUITABILITY**

Of all European states, democratic France had the most thoroughly organized state administration of the arts, with an institutional continuity dating back to the founding of the Third Republic in 1871 or even earlier. Detached from government oversight, the French Fine Arts administration operated on a fundamentalist concept of democratic culture impervious to electoral change. Normative, liberal, and representative concerns converged in the agency's enduring cultural policy, which derived its mandate from the institutional representation of its various professional constituencies. Reaching into academies, museums, monuments, and state collections nationwide, it regulated the arts and at the same time shielded them from passing political interference. As a result, fast-changing governments and their parliamentary factions pursued no art policy on behalf of any party program until the accession of the Popular Front government in July 1936. Education ministers who came and went wielded no authority over the Fine Arts Administration and its strong-willed directors, whom they appointed when the post was vacant but who stayed when they stepped down.

Maintaining a long-term bureaucracy over successive government officials, the Beaux-Arts Administration prided itself on its even-handed support of diverse, competing artistic tendencies, so long as it rated them as significant for its mission to foster an all-embracing, national artistic culture which would respond to diverse public expectations and demands. The Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, its consultative body, gave artists a voice and a share of votes, but only as representatives of duly constituted professional associations or other groups it recognized as relevant. Relying on a multitude of boards and commissions for narrowly circumscribed decisions, it strove to balance a plurality of corporative and political aspirations. The intricate organization of the Beaux-Arts Administration with its ever-adjusted consultative bodies managed to bring together whomever it recognized as leaders of artistic culture: administrators, artists, curators, critics, dealers, and even 'art lovers' of some standing, many of whom also sat in the 'art groups' of the Chamber and Senate of the National Assembly.

When it came to committee selections, purchases, and commissions, the Beaux-Arts Administration rated modern artists and their representatives as the minority they were, no matter how high their profile in the public sphere. Modern artists in turn acquiesced in their minority rating, because they cultivated it as a hallmark of their 'independence.' From the start of the century until well into the Depression, they could count on a flourishing private art market in steady expansion. They were assured of a clientele made up of educated segments of the upper middle-class and aristocracy. The less they needed state support, the more proudly did they parade their distance from the art that was supervised and promoted by the state. Until the Depression, therefore, a coexistence of traditional and modern artistic cultures, open to mutual overlaps in any case, prevented any trenchant confrontations on matters of cultural policy between the two. Their public debates were often ideologically framed, to be sure, but hardly ever translated into serious political conflicts pertaining to the art administration.

/1.1.2 **GERMAN IMBALANCE**

The Weimar Republic, founded in 1919 through a revolutionary system change, lacked the Third Republic's constitutional continuity of nearly fifty years and the ensuing uncontested legitimacy. Although it had to be stabilized by the military against workers' uprisings, as the Third Republic had been back in 1871, it started out with the deceptive political culture of a revolutionary beginning. And, just as the Third Republic had inherited its politically shielded art administration from the Second Empire, the Weimar Republic inherited an altogether different kind of art-political administration from the Wilhelmine Empire: direct government oversight of the arts through the culture or education ministries of its regional component states. The new democratic flexibility imposed on this perpetuated system gave elected state and city governments—with the steadily social democratic government of Prussia in the lead—an impetus to reshape their art policies in accordance with their party programs. By the same token, it exposed them to political attacks in parliament and in the public sphere and to changing majorities of the vote.

Social democratic and liberal art administrations of the Weimar Republic tended to privilege modern over traditional art, not only to rectify the unilateral support of traditional art by past imperial administrations in the direction of proportional equity, but in a preferential treatment meant to showcase their commitment to social modernization. Appointments of modern artists as academy professors, unheard of in France, as well as modern preferences in museum purchases, drew the competition between traditional and modern art into polarized art-political debates between liberal and conservative constituencies, debates which became more acrimonious the less stable the government's electoral base. Any disregard for traditional artists, real or

perceived, exposed cultural officials and museum directors to charges of passing over majorities of national traditions, made modern art vulnerable to unspecific, sweeping attacks by conservative parties and pressure groups, and thereby drew artistic culture into the bitter divisiveness of Weimar democracy.

However, the financial constraints under which the Weimar Republic had to operate throughout its existence prevented national and state governments from implementing their pro-modern art policies by substantial state commissions and acquisitions for public collections as in France. After the short-term, pre-inflationary boom of the German art market had subsided, modern artists' financial prospects turned precarious. Striving for academy professorships and other forms of state support, they started to promote themselves on ideological platforms of radical renewal, in polemical opposition to the conservatism of their traditional competitors. Because the artistic culture of the Weimar Republic suffered from a structural convergence of economic scarcity and institutional politicization, traditional and modern art were not pursued in disparate coexistence, as they were in the Third Republic, but in an ambience of heated controversy, which by the time of the Depression fed into the political struggles for the protection of democracy.

/ 1.1.3 **COMPETITION IN REVERSE**

When the declining art market of the Depression impelled artists, traditional or modern, to turn to state support, the conflictive competition between traditional and modern art in both democracies unfolded in reverse. In France it was modern artists, in Germany traditional ones who claimed to be disadvantaged by government art policy. At issue was the political rapport between modern art and democratic government. In France, support of modern art was somewhat increased because the number of its practitioners and adherents on the various boards of the Fine Art administration had proportionally grown. In Germany, a disproportionate preference for modern art by state agencies and institutions appeared to contradict democratic equity. While in France in 1932 a new center-left government responded to the newly-founded modern architects' and artists' pressure groups with incremental policy shifts, in Germany similar pressure groups of conservative architects and artists challenged government art policies to no avail. Ultimately, some of them supported the National Socialist electoral campaigns.

In France, incoming education minister Anatole de Monzie strengthened government influence on art policy by reinstating the post of sub-secretary of fine arts, abolished in 1917, as a liaison with the Fine Arts Administration, and engineered the replacement of traditionalist Fine Arts Director Paul Léon by Emile Bollaert, a more even-handed, open-minded public official. As part of his more inclusive art policy, de Monzie, who personally favored modern art, reshuffled the Beaux-Arts Council's elaborate

committee structure to give more representation to modern artists—including one of their most prestigious practitioners, Henri Matisse—so as to redress their disadvantage when it came to state commissions and acquisitions. As a result of these adjustments, new modern artists' pressure groups—the Union des Artistes Modernes, founded on May 15, 1929, and the Communist-initiated Association des Écrivains Révolutionnaires, including artists, founded in January 1932—operated within a still principled but now more elastic institutional framework whose legitimacy they found no grounds to question.

In Germany, by contrast, while the national government paraded its support of modern art in the international exhibitions of Barcelona in 1929 and Oslo in 1932, state and city governments, with mounting numbers of National Socialist deputies in their legislatures, found it necessary to retreat from pro-modern art policies in the face of growing right-wing pressure groups. The conservative architects' organization, 'Block,' founded in 1928, was still backed by the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP), which abided by democracy. But the larger, more activist 'Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur,' founded on February 26, 1929, under the aegis of National Socialist party leader Alfred Rosenberg, assaulted modern art as part of an overall attack on the Weimar 'system.' As soon as the NSDAP attained parliamentary pluralities, as in the state of Thuringia, where Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick banished modern art from art schools and museums in April 1930, and in the city of Dessau, where its majority in the city council was large enough to force the closing of the Bauhaus in August 1932, the pro-modern art policy of the Weimar Republic started to unravel.

/1.2 **POLITICAL DIVERGENCE, 1929-1934**

/1.2.1 **MODERN ART ON THE LEFT IN FRANCE**

As long as modern artists in France did well on the art market, their political engagement was limited to the circle of the surrealists, who did not care to be acknowledged by the Fine Arts Direction. Since 1930, reneging on their initial anarchism, they expressly sided with the Communist Party—at that time still a fringe group under police surveillance—in calling for an anti-democratic revolution. For all its stridency, however, the impact of the surrealists' engagement with Communism was minimal. When, starting in 1929, the Communist Party began to broaden its electoral base and embarked on devising practicable policies for parliamentary enactment, it rebuffed the surrealists even more categorically than did government art agencies, which had merely kept them at arm's length. Henceforth, the surrealists' political interventions fell short of affecting the political process, if not the public sphere. The political culture of modern art in France proceeded without them, on implicitly constitutional lines, in a persistent effort to secure and enlarge its foothold in a state-administered artistic culture, and therefore never disruptive for all its attendant polemics.

The Communist-sponsored Association des écrivains révolutionnaires (*AER*), with an affiliated artists' group, had been founded in 1932, the first year the Depression hit the French economy and the government started to curtail the arts budget. In 1933, its journal *Commune* published proposals for economic aid to artists which far exceeded those envisaged by the government. The AER's new interest in politics contributed to drawing even more artists into its ranks, so that in 1934 it renamed itself AEAR to include them on an equal footing with writers. Its proposals tied in with the Communist Party's pro-labor stance in framing its anti-Depression politics. Accordingly, its artistic initiatives were aimed at making the arts responsive to working-class concerns. As the Communist Party broadened its appeal to artists through its economic policy, it was quick to sever its ties with the surrealists, who had initially joined the AEAR but were soon expelled. André Breton dramatized the break when he refused to write agitational texts for the gas workers' journal from within his Party cell. Henceforth the surrealists went on to cultivate a Communism at odds with the PCF.

The rightist riots of February 6-7, 1934, and the ensuing formation of the Watch Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals (*Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes, CVIA*) on March 5, calling for a unity of action with the proletariat, precipitated the rallying of modern artists (other than the surrealists) to Communist cultural politics, not just out of economic self-interest, but out of anti-fascist conviction. Fernand Léger, who had already joined the AEAR in January 1934, was one of the most prominent new members of its painters' section, turning his earlier self-alignment with industrial workers on account of his machine aesthetics into a posture of proletarian solidarity. In July 1935, he would go as far as to proclaim his allegiance to Communism in a declaration titled "We are in the Light."⁽³⁷⁾ From 1934 on, the AEAR painters' section, eventually even boasting Picasso as a member, turned the 'Maison de la Culture,' the Communist cultural institute in Paris, into an expansive art center. It is here that all-embracing Communist platforms for the arts were hammered out, blending economic and political demands. Two years later, these demands were publicly touted in the so-called 'realism debates.'

/1.2.2 **TRADITIONAL ART ON THE RIGHT IN GERMANY**

By contrast to France, the struggle between traditional and modern art in the Weimar Republic fed into the wider-ranging political conflicts being fought out between Right and Left in the public sphere. It became exacerbated as some modern artists, in sympathy with the short-lived political ascendancy of their Soviet colleagues, stridently positioned themselves on the 'revolutionary' Left. Conservative groups of architects and associations of the building trades saw it in their interest to oppose the ascendancy of modern architects in public housing programs of state and municipal governments backed by the Social Democratic and Liberal Parties. Relying on the

labor-saving economics and functional practicality of modernized building, these programs canvassed an aesthetics of minimalist design. A call for supporting traditional against modern art in general, written into the first National Socialist Party program of 1920, remained inconsequential because of the party's insignificance until the start of the Depression. Meanwhile, it was the right-wing German National People's Party (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP*) that first included a defense of traditional architecture in its agenda.

The closing of the Bauhaus in Weimar by the incoming right-wing state government of Thuringia in 1925, and the short-lived suppression of its more moderate successor school at Dessau by an even more right-wing city government in 1930, were interventions against modern art that could boast democratic legitimacy. Their national resonance made art policy a propaganda issue for right-wing politics everywhere. In 1925, a coalition led by the DNVP, including a small faction of right-wing extremists, and in league with the regional 'Union for the Preservation of German Culture in Thuringia,' removed the Bauhaus faculty from the Weimar art school system and re-established the older art academy, albeit under the new directorship of Otto Bartning, a modern-minded architect. In January 1930, however, the NSDAP's plurality in Thuringian state elections entitled them to place one of its national leaders, Wilhelm Frick, as Minister of Interior and Education in a conservative government. Frick proceeded to suppress modern art in state institutions and appointed Party ideologue Paul Schultze-Naumburg to head a new but short-lived art school at Weimar.

In his speeches of 1928-1929 on cultural policy, Hitler promised for the first time to call on disadvantaged traditional artists for an anti-modern renewal of German art in general. As a result, the growing mass base flocking to him since 1929 from diverse social segments included such artists, their supporting critics, and their potential public, who did not always subscribe to his policies in general. The cultural organization developed to back up the NSDAP's electoral campaigns was the 'Combat League for German Culture,' its ranks swelling, and out to vilify modern art according to the original party program. Its annual congress, held at Weimar in June 1930 while Frick was Education Minister in Thuringia, chose Schultze-Naumburg as its principal spokesman on matters of art. During 1931 Schultze-Naumburg delivered his standard lecture 'Struggle for Art' at mass rallies in six German cities under the guard of SA platoons in uniform. Here the defense of traditional against modern art was made into a political campaign issue whose populist resonance exposed the tenuous political grounding of modern art's prominence in Weimar culture.

/1.2.3 **PARTING WAYS**

The demise of democracy in Germany at the hands of Hitler's government since January 30, 1933, on the one hand, and its constitutional survival in France after

the unsuccessful coup d'état attempt of February 6, 1934 on the other, enhanced the differences between the allocation of traditional and modern art in the political culture of both states as they had taken shape during the preceding decade. Because the suppression of modern art in Germany coincided with that of democracy, the relationship between the two became the foremost issue of art policy across the Rhine. For the government and the public sphere of the Third Republic, the new German art policy became one of the yardsticks for cultural detachment by the Left and cultural rapprochement by the Right. From 1933 on, democratic art policy remained an issue for France alone, albeit as a venue for strife. One year later, and three years after the Depression had started to affect France, the representational equity of the Fine Arts system started to be contested. In 1936, the Popular Front government reclaimed its democratic credentials for the benefit of modern artists.

Traditional artists sympathized with Hitler's government, ignoring the curtailment of civil liberties inherent in its anti-modern measures. The apparent revalidation of academic standards in the arts seemed to continue the policies of cultural restraint which had prompted conservative Weimar governments since 1930 to cut back on their support of modern art teaching. The failure of the extremist 'Combat League for German Culture' to influence the incoming government's political reorganization of the arts, and the unchanged mechanisms of state patronage and the private art market, even under political oversight, deluded modern artists into believing they would be able to work in their accustomed manner, without express allegiance to the new regime. Because the anti-Weimar polemics pervading the National Socialist denunciations of modern art pointed to the abolished Republic's revolutionary origins at the expense of its constitutional legitimacy, they appealed to artists who were fearful of Communism as a disruptive movement, overlooking the new regime's hostility to democracy as the basis of cultural freedom.

French modern artists, with the self-proclaimed revolutionary André Breton at the helm, rallied to the defense of the Republic when the coup attempt of 1934 put it under siege. However, the subsequent electoral restoration of more conservative governments did nothing to improve their standing, stuck in their proportional underrepresentation within the Fine Arts system. Thus, from 1935 on, driven by a mix of economic discontent and anti-fascist conviction, French modern artists started flocking to the Left. Many lent their support to the electoral campaign of the Popular Front, whose platform included far-reaching demands for widening state support of the arts as part of make-work measures and the expansion of leisure culture. It took the new strategy of the French Communist Party, which in turn was heeding the Comintern's policy change of 1934, to channel this leftward drift on the part of a growing artists' constituency into a democratic rather than revolutionary form of action, which nonetheless reclaimed the populist aspirations of the French Revolution of 1789 for a renewal of the Third Republic.

/1.3 **POLITICIZATION IN FRANCE, 1934-1936**

/1.3.1 **MODERNIZING TRADITIONAL ART**

Electoral shifts from radical to conservative governments in the wake of the riots of February 1934 entailed a recoil of art policy to the status quo, that is, official preference for traditional artists. This relative retrenchment affected the planning of the 1937 World Exposition, the major French venture of public-works art programs, cancelled and relaunched later that year. Throughout the following two years, until the accession of the Popular Front government in July 1936, entrenched institutional networks restrained the new Director of Fine Arts, Georges Huisman—a career political official appointed on February 4, 1934 by incoming radical Prime Minister Édouard Daladier—from acting on his modern preferences. Under the center-right governments of 1934-1936, the decline of the art market due to the Depression and the creeping curtailment of the state art budget, underway since 1932, exacerbated the competition between traditional and modern artists, particularly since Huisman's office promoted traditional styles, enhanced by modern features, for art ventures sponsored by the state.

In the 'Pavillon International des Beaux-Arts' of the Brussels World Exposition of 1935, four rooms were allotted to France. True to the principle of equitable representation observed by the Fine Arts Direction, three of them were assigned to the three leading artists' associations, and the fourth to "Independent Painting," that is, to unorganized artists of modern persuasion. The façade of the French Pavilion, designed by Jacques Carlu in a stripped-down classical style, featured three large-scale murals on the theme of "France at Work," which spelled out the conservative government's vision of integrating the arts into the economic process: *Art and Thought* by Jean Souverbie, *Commerce and Agriculture* by Natacha Carlu, and *Industry* by Roger Chastel. Thus, when it came to illustrating the French economic policy of dealing with the Depression, the government turned to organized professional artists who delivered on pictorial clarity, as long as such artists did not cling to academic conventions but enhanced their traditional forms with a 'modern' veneer of decorative abstraction. This incremental modernization conveyed its cautious industrial policy.

Concurrent with the preparations for the Brussels world exhibition, it was decided to build a new Museum of Modern Art for the extant state collections, to be opened at the next world exposition in Paris three years later. The competition for the building, announced on September 15, 1934, turned into the widest-ranging display to-date of the Third Republic's diversified artistic culture. Over 300 architects submitted 128 projects to a jury composed of 51 members, including the leadership of the Expo organizing committee, as well as politicians representing state and city governments.

The participating architects elected six additional jury members among themselves. The competition thus turned out to be an exemplary venture of democratic art policy implemented by institutions. On December 24, 1934, the first prize was awarded to a team of four academic architects—Dondel, Aubert, Viard, and Dastugue—in studied disregard for modern competitors such as Le Corbusier and Mallet-Stevens. Covered and surrounded by sculptures of classical appearance, the new museum embodied the incremental modernization of traditional art as a democratic consensus project.

/1.3.2 MODERN ART IN POLITICAL OPPOSITION

The democratic credentials of conservative art policy made it difficult for modern artists to oppose it, particularly when it presented itself flexible enough to discard a merely academic art without some ‘modernizing’ features. Hence, the “Manifesto of Mural Painting” and another manifesto of the ‘Union des Artistes Modernes,’ both issued in 1934, demanded no policy change, only a more flexible acceptance. A more deliberate challenge to the government, founded on political arguments rather than professional grievances, came from the leftist response to the February riots. It started with the ‘Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes,’ founded on March 5, 1934, and was joined by numerous modern artists, resulting in an unofficial network coalescing one year later in the Communist Maison de la Culture. Flocking to the shows and events of the Communist-led ‘Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists,’ modern artists combined their bids for professional recognition with their anti-fascist convictions. In their ideologically charged-up public debates, they questioned the self-proclaimed impartiality of the Fine Arts Direction and agitated for a change of government in the forthcoming elections.

The Maison de la Culture, founded in April 1935 under Communist auspices as an all-arts cultural institution, offered the professional disgruntlements of both traditional and modern artists an organizational venue and a shared ideological platform for turning their disappointment with the art policies of conservative governments into political opposition. The stepped-up cultural activities of the French Communist Party under its new inclusive policies impelled by the Comintern were centered in this institution with its ambitions for national outreach. The Maison’s secretary-general, formerly surrealist writer Louis Aragon, organized various programs for its arts section aimed at making modern art part of leftist culture. The Maison de la Culture succeeded in pooling modern artists’ long-standing but diffuse drift to the left, when Henri Matisse joined three figurative painters on the honorary governing board, when André Masson and Fernand Léger taught well-attended art classes to lay students there, and when Le Corbusier propagated his *Ville Radieuse* within its lecture program.

However, the inclusive shows and mass debates held during 1934-1936 under the auspices of the Maison de la Culture obliged modern artists, supported by a well-to

do clientele, to forego their habitual claims to a self-validating counterculture, and to measure up with traditional artists in a style- and class-transcending culture of political partisanship. The exhibition organized at the Maison de la Culture to follow up on a debate held on May 9, 1935, under the catchword "Where is Painting Headed?" presented no more than a medley of pre-existing works in heterogeneous styles ranging from the realist to the abstract, and in little or no thematic or stylistic compliance with the demands that had been raised in the debate. In his essay "John Heartfield and Revolutionary Beauty," written on occasion of a show featuring Heartfield's anti-National Socialist photomontages and sponsored by the 'Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires' in April 1935, Aragon invoked mainstream realism and caricature aesthetics to exalt Heartfield's press collages to the distinction of Courbet and Daumier.

/1.3.3 **COMMUNIST ART PROGRAMS**

Starting in 1934, of all political parties in France, only the Communist Party worked to frame a comprehensive art policy to match its expansive platform for the general electorate. It strove to develop an art beyond its customary class base, to reinvigorate ideological traditions of the Left in the most inclusive terms, and to redefine French artistic culture along populist rather than elitist lines. This strategy was implementing the new, inclusive Comintern policy, first of the United Front, and, since 1935, of the Popular Front, which released parties abroad from heeding the strictly anti-modern line of current Soviet art, as long as they could make modern artists subscribe to its domestic and international policy goals without necessarily making them heed their organizational discipline. The Comintern's elastic art policy under the Popular Front allowed for the promotion of modern art in Western Europe as a potentially revolutionary culture, in line with the leftist ideological leanings that modern art had cultivated since the beginning of the century, provided it toned down its exaggerated revolutionary rhetoric to meet the test of popular acceptance.

Both traditional and modern artists came under scrutiny for their relevancy to the PCF's new political agenda within the Popular Front coalition. But when modern artists eagerly embraced the charge by stressing their alignment with industrial technology, they fought a losing battle against traditional artists on the issue of their styles' communicative potential. Eventually, a thematically focused, ideologically sharpened version of 'realism' prevailed in PCF-sponsored exhibitions such as 'Return to the Subject' of January 1934 and 'International Exhibition About Fascism' of March 1935. Its potential for political agitation was highlighted in the Heartfield show of April 1935, followed, in the same year, by one-man shows of George Grosz and Frans Masereel. The most prominent modern artist to publicly side with the PCF was Fernand Léger, who joined the AEAR in January 1934, and in July 1935 publicly pledged his Communist allegiance (see above, 1.2.1). However, the ideological update

of his cubist abstraction, offered under the cachet of labor-friendly technology, met with Aragon's unremitting criticism.

The Communist Party's management of guided debates on the plurality of styles, along with its axiomatic partisanship of Soviet domestic and foreign policies, put the Surrealist writers and artists, until 1930 the only ones to manifestly side with it, under so much pressure to forego their own political judgment that in 1935 Breton led most of them to abrogate their Communist posture. The surrealists' breakaway was inaugurated by Aragon's attendance at the Second Congress of the 'International of Revolutionary Literature' at Kharkov in October 1930. Although Aragon had a motion vindicating Surrealism passed upon his arrival, by the time of his departure he signed a letter disavowing the Second Manifesto and calling for Party censorship of surrealist literature. At the Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture, held in Paris in May 1935, with Aragon amongst the organizers, Breton was barred until the last minute from speaking to defend his stance. In immediate retaliation, he and Paul Éluard, in their anti-Soviet Manifesto "When the Surrealists were Right,"⁽³⁸⁾ led a public walk-out of most surrealists from the Communist Party.

/ 2 **ART OF THE POPULAR FRONT**

/ 2.1 **CAMPAIGNING WITH THE ARTS**

/ 2.1.1 **DEMOCRACY VERSUS DICTATORSHIP**

In the art of the Popular Front, the long-term convergence of artistic culture and the public sphere that characterizes 20th-century art in democratic states attained its peak. For the first time, the arts were attuned to electoral politics, as artists were encouraged to forge ad-hoc coalitions between the disparate cultural constituencies of parties on the center and on the left. The art of the Popular Front was an attempt at a democratic response to the politicization of the arts underway in totalitarian states for several years. However, neither in France nor in Spain did the public culture of democracy allow the arts to be politically directed, no matter how zealously government agencies strove to exceed their predecessors in this respect. Most interventions into artistic culture by the parties, and later governments, of the Popular Front were orchestrated with an ideological rhetoric that sounded the more self-assured the less certain their results turned out to be. Their principled reasoning was meant to match the totalitarian semblance of political will, but it lacked a comparably coherent ideological platform.

Even though they were constrained by the economic and political limitations of their short and tenuous hold on government, the Popular Front coalitions of both France and Spain sought to match the arts programs of the Soviet Union and Germany in public appeal. They were tacitly drawing the line against the former and openly

directed against the latter. The difference stemmed from the geopolitical alignments of both democracies in the accelerating military conflict of the decade, which barred them from an ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union. French defense policy was anchored in the Soviet military alliance against the German menace. In its civil war, Spain was the recipient of Soviet military assistance and the target of German military attacks. Because of these foreign policy constraints, the art of the Popular Front was bound to fall short of an equitable determination of what an art of democracy under totalitarian challenge might be like. While its denunciation of German art policy was part of its public appeal, its detachment from Soviet art policy, hardly ever expressed, was to ensure its freedom.

Artists flocked to the Popular Front driven by an ambition to transcend the commercially encased, upper-middle-class artistic culture on which they had been thriving before, but whose economic viability was now imperiled by the Depression. To make up for the loss, they sought various forms of political patronage, championing the significance of art for society at large. Starting in 1934, these artists were drawn into expanding networks of party agencies and newly-fashioned artists' organizations, set up to enlist them to work toward a change of government in the upcoming elections. The organizations were modeled on workers' unions, publicized in meetings and journals, animated by supportive intellectuals, and financed by party funds. To what extent they tended to align artists in a new political conformity of its own remained an open question. In his *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* of 1938, Breton summarily denounced the cultural endeavors of the Popular Front as a juggernaut subjecting them to political management and compromising their freedom of judgment.

/ 2.1.2 **ART UNDER DEBATE**

Popular Front art policies were intended for traditional as well as modern artists to share. They were debated back and forth within an intense political culture of public discussions, lectures, shows and journals. Such debates were to broaden the social scope and political relevancy of the arts, and thereby to increase artists' opportunities for work. Their elusive ideal was a majority culture of the Left. This artistic culture of debate was promoted as an alternative to 'fascist,' and to some extent even Soviet, government guidance. It was focused on the question of how the arts could be made politically functional without compromising the artists' creative independence and aesthetic integrity. The underlying ideal of democratic freedom in France was never spelled out as such, however. Those debates were aimed at reinvigorating artists' civic engagement according to a republican tradition of almost one-hundred and fifty years whose immediate relevancy was at issue. A stronger Communist leadership and the urgency of wartime politics in Spain, which lacked such a tradition, narrowed the debates to defining a mission of support for the Republic under siege.

In France, art-political debates were centered in the newly-founded, communist-directed Maison de la Culture. Its secretary, Louis Aragon, promoted an ideological medley of John Heartfield's poster photomontages with the grand tradition of French 19th-century realism in the wake of Courbet, while opposing the machine aesthetics of Léger and Le Corbusier. Between May 14 and June 20, 1936, on the eve of the Popular Front's election victory, the 'Association of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers of the Maison de la Culture' organized and publicized a series of three mass debates, attended by almost 2,000 representatives of the Paris art world. Ostensibly focused "on realism," these debates envisaged the fundamentals of art policy in general. In a speech at one of these meetings, the art official of the incoming government, Jean Cassou, took pains to safeguard the electoral coalition of traditional and modern artists by reassuring them that the imminent politicization of the arts would entail no choice between the two.

In Spain, communist-led artist groups spearheaded an activist engagement for leftist electoral politics. Already in 1932, photomontage artist Josep Renau founded the 'Union of Proletariat Writers and Artists' in Valencia, followed in 1933 by the 'Spanish Association of Revolutionary Artists' in Madrid and Barcelona, both affiliated with their Paris namesake. The Valencia art journal *Nueva Cultura*, edited by Renau, and several other art journals issued by both associations, sought to give shape to the propaganda activism they demanded from the arts. After the February election brought the Popular Front to government, their political line changed from Communist class struggle to an inclusive republican culture. This political platform was more articulate and more activist than the coalition umbrella of the French debates with its axiomatic promise of freedom from government control. It insisted on committing 'abstract' art—the generic term for modern art—to an unequivocally anti-'bourgeois,' if not outright revolutionary, mission that would complement, if not exceed, the populist appeal of traditional art.

/ 2.1.3 COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP

In both Popular Front movements, it was the Communist parties that gained a disproportionate amount of leadership in the politicization of artists on the Left—despite being minority partners to socialists and radicals, and hence with a limited influence on shaping policy—because their professional networks, unmatched by those of other parties, welcomed fellow-travelers with ideological elasticity. The new Comintern policy of forging coalitions required that Communist parties in democratic states desist from the oppressive political control of the arts practiced in the Soviet Union since the April Decree of 1932. Hence these parties, although their preferences were traditional, encouraged long-standing claims of modern art as a venue of 'revolutionary' dissent. In both France and Spain, party politicians took a back seat to artists

and writers of Communist convictions with ambitions to leadership—figures in the mold of Mayakovsky, who had long been disempowered in the USSR. Such personages were better suited to forge coalitions and strategies whose appeal beyond party orthodoxy depended on foregoing discipline.

It was on the question of Popular Front art policy that the two leading surrealist writers with emphatic allegiance to Communism, Louis Aragon and André Breton, came to clash. While Aragon rose to oversee the art programs of the Maison de la Culture, Breton became a bitter opponent of the Popular Front on the issues of party supremacy and self-serving subordination. The split between the two came to a head in November 1934, after Aragon's attendance at the Kharkov writers' congress and subsequent manifest disavowal of Surrealism. While Breton clung to the group's fierce unyieldingness as a minority, Aragon returned to Paris with his authority in art policy confirmed, all set to forge a majority culture of the Left. From his office at the Maison de la Culture, Aragon attempted to construe a French national tradition of socially committed realism as an alternative to the art of the First Five-Year Plan. Stopping short of Socialist Realism, it was a coalition platform meant to attract both artists of traditional persuasion and artists adhering to an aesthetics of modernization.

In Spain, it was Josep Renau, an erstwhile anarchist graphic designer turned Communist, in 1931, who rose to uncontested leadership as an organizer and political writer—all the way from forging alliances between artists' groups on behalf of the Popular Front's electoral campaign to enacting national art policy as a Director of Fine Arts in both the first and second Popular Front governments. Being an artist, Renau, unlike Aragon, had a functional grip on the conduct of art policy as an effort at making artists of disparate tendencies collaborate. The ideological platform he outlined for that purpose likewise combined Soviet-style propaganda art with a national tradition of realistic painting, with Jusepe de Ribera and Francisco Goya as models from the past. Renau was the only artist in any democratic state whose career during the Depression ran the complete trajectory from politically engaged practitioner to organizational leader and on to all-but plenipotentiary government official. In France, with its semi-autonomous Fine Arts Administration, such a career would have been unachievable under any government, right or left.

/ 2.2 **FROM MOVEMENT TO GOVERNMENT**

/ 2.2.1 **EXPANSIVE ART POLICY**

Once Popular Front coalitions had formed governments in France and Spain, they carried their art-political campaign activism into expanding and reorganizing state art agencies for new political missions. They acknowledged what their cultural constituents had contributed to their election victories. Propaganda culture, including

the arts, became a steady feature of governance. The newly created or expanded government agencies were charged with developing and enacting new art policies. They went beyond the equitable political management of artistic culture by which previous governments had abided, not only because their adherence to fair and equal treatment had been challenged during the campaigns, but also because it was rated as falling short of populist ambitions. Thus, in the summer of 1936, the two foremost democratic states of continental Europe belatedly attempted to match the cultural activism pursued by the three totalitarian ones since the first years of the decade. In politicizing their artistic cultures, they positioned themselves against Germany, their adversary, while keeping an unacknowledged alignment with the Soviet Union, their ally.

Incoming French Education Minister Jean Zay, of the Radical Party, even planned to split off a Ministry of Arts from that of Education, and when that proved unfeasible, envisaged a 'Ministry of Cultural Life,' subdivided into branches for 'National Education' and 'National Expression.' The ideological designations of these hypothetical ministries betray their propaganda purpose. However, the severe financial crises that brought down the last of three successive Popular Front governments on April 8, 1938 reduced Zay's augmentation of the arts account within the overall credits budget to a passing stopgap measure. The last-minute, substantial enlargement of the Paris World Exposition remained his only art-political achievement. Severe budget cuts in the Fine Arts administration made the adjustments of purchase policy envisaged by Director Huisman and supported by Education Ministry liaison Cassou illusory. Zay's new appointments of sympathizers to purchase committees added only some scattered works by socially committed or modern artists to state art collections.

In Spain, Communist Education Minister Jesús Hernández presided over the creation of a comprehensive 'Superior Council of the Culture of the Republic,' plus a 'National Institute of Culture,' to be followed by a sub-secretariat, later Ministry, for Propaganda. All these new institutions were charged with promoting a politically activist art of the Republic in the making. As a result, the social and political networks of artistic culture on the Left were expanded and restructured to a degree unheard of in France. Hernández' policies enabled the government to cooperate with artists' unions, party or army cultural agencies, and other professional groups, all bent on animating an art to flank the propaganda for the defense of the Republic. It was on the basis of such interactions that Undersecretary of Fine Arts Josep Renau, who was also Director of Fine Arts in personal union, held a position of authority unmatched by his two separate homologues in France, who acted independently from one another. As a result, the art of the Popular Front in Spain could be politicized in order to contribute to a public culture of the Civil War.

/ 2.2.2 **SOCIAL PROGRESS AND CIVIL WAR**

The Spanish Civil War became the defining event of ideological divergence between the art policies of the Popular Front governments in France and Spain. Since the Third Republic felt obliged to abide by neutrality rather than come to the aid of the Spanish Republic, internal struggles on this issue compromised the anti-fascist credentials of its culture. The numerous pavilions added to the Paris World Exposition of 1937 by the French Popular Front government and its affiliated unions dwelt on the convergence of scientific, technological, and social progress, promoted on the premise of a peace that at this moment was already in jeopardy. They ignored the lurking military threats apparent in their totalitarian counterparts. The Spanish Republic, on the other hand, used its state-run propaganda agencies to make its pavilion a double-edged statement flying in the face of the Expo's peace platform. It advertised both its social policy of progress and its military policy of dealing with its nationalist insurrection, no matter how irreconcilable both policies turned out to be.

The French Popular Front government's self-representation through the arts was emphatic but temporary. It was concentrated on its many last-minute additions to the Paris Expo—the Pavilion of Railways, the Pavilion of Air, the Palace of Discovery, the Solidarity Pavilion, the Pavilion of Labor, and the Peace Column, all of which gave it international exposure, but only for the duration of the Expo. Taken together, these six temporary buildings and their art work visualized the Popular Front government's largely utopian projections of having social and labor policy, technological progress, and international pacifism all converge on a consistent platform on which no previous French government had ever set its sights, and which subsequent governments were quick to shed. Its presence at the Expo, keyed to the exhibition's pacifist façade, seemed forgetful of the simultaneous work on the World War I monuments flanking the construction of the Maginot Line, (see Chapter 10/3.1), long-term projects launched by previous governments. By contrast to the three totalitarian states, but also to its Spanish counterpart, the French government played down its rearmament for self-defense.

Spanish artists eager to cooperate with the government were drawn into a culture of state projects with set programs or into poster printing agencies, complete with distribution networks. Taking the form of a democratic rally to a common cause, this cohesive artistic culture matched those of the totalitarian states in the underlying political will, but without political coercion. Different from the subjugation of organized artists in the Soviet Union, Renau's art administration kept the debate culture of the electoral campaign afoot, even under conditions of wartime censorship, so that the enlistment of the arts for the Republic presented itself as a spontaneous cooperation, even though it may have been prompted by professional necessity. The loose but efficient pooling of sympathizing Spanish artists culminated in the setup

of collective ateliers for producing the bulk of the works for the art exhibition in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo, assembled under Renau's personal direction. Its thematic coherence did not restrain participating artists from indulging in their widely disparate personal styles.

/ 2.2.3 THE CIVIL WAR DIVIDE

Right from the start of the Civil War, the Spanish government planned to organize an elaborate war art program, staffed by little-known, mostly traditional artists, through collaboration between artists' unions, government workshops, and army propaganda units, all pooled to make the arts politically operative in public campaigns. Its primary venue was the poster, which became an art form of its own. A professional poster designer, Renau adopted John Heartfield's poster concept as a model to follow for painters rather than photographers. Painters were enjoined to conceive of posters as a popular art form, persuasive enough to extol the defensive war with messages of righteousness, determination, and endurance, but keeping hollow assurances of victory to a minimum. Renau did use photographic material in the first systematically conceptualized self-representation of a democratic state, whose constitutional tenets he illustrated one by one. This series of color photomontages illustrating Prime Minister Juan Negrin's *Thirteen Points* for a settlement of the Civil War was to be displayed at the New York World Fair of 1939, but by then the Republic was no more.

In the summer of 1937, the Communist Maison de la Culture in Paris mounted a show called "Spain 1930-1937: They Will Not Pass," intended to promote French arms aid for Spain, as Aragon demanded in his preface for the catalog. The show featured works by well-known realists such as Edouard Goerg and Frans Masereel along with photographs from the front. Six months later, government art official Jean Cassou co-organized another war art show at the Billiet-Vorms gallery entitled "Cruel Art," whose defeatism was blatant. The show was dominated by Pablo Picasso's and André Masson's symbolic equations between the bullfight and the Civil War, which Cassou in his catalog text extolled as testimonies of an unflinching will to fight. These two shows of defiance and despondency in quick succession indicate the contradictions in the government's neutrality policy toward the Spanish Republic, a policy which was opposed by the Communists, part of its own parliamentary majority. At a time when the Republic appeared on its way to defeat, all the French government was ready to do was to provide a venue for pro-Spanish artists to muffle their helpless ire.

The divergence between state-sponsored and private art about the Civil War in Spain and France suggests that, by now, only traditional artists could be prompted to produce an affirmative war art in defense of democracy. Modern artists, on the other hand, were no longer confident to picture the Civil War as a winning cause in

the absence of any political support. The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition was the only venue where the Popular Front ideal of committing traditional and modern artists to a common program was implemented, because Spanish ambassador Luis Araquistain was able to enlist sympathizing Spanish modern artists living in France—Miró, González and Picasso—to work alongside traditional artists from their home country. In the end, however, only Miró with his *Reaper* and González with his *Montserrat* came up with vigorous personifications of the people's unbroken will to stand up to aggression. Picasso, on the other hand, in his publicly documented, step-by-step elaboration of *Guernica* over several weeks, ended up with a gloomy lament of military loss and civilian mayhem.

/ 2.3 MODERN ART IN COALITION

/ 2.3.1 ALIGNING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN ART

In both France and Spain, the attempted coexistence of traditional and modern art on a shared political platform was intended to affirm the democratic pluralism of artistic culture as part of a broad political coalition. While in France this coexistence was a mere ideological end in itself, in Spain it served the political purpose of strengthening democracy against the nationalist insurgence. The mass exhibitions held under the auspices of the AEAR at the Maison de la Culture and the Billiet-Vorms gallery in Paris, just as the union-sponsored exhibitions at Barcelona and Madrid, paired 'realist' and 'abstract' art, as they were called, more as a parallel display of common allegiance to a political cause than as a clarification of their relationship within a program. In the end, such efforts at reconciliation could not prevent the antagonism between traditional and modern art from resurfacing as an issue of the popular accessibility, and hence political efficacy, of art in the public sphere. It was this issue more than any other which kept the long-term competition between the two alive in the artistic debate culture of the Popular Front.

The cultural policy of Communist parties in both France and Spain favored traditional art, not so much because of its ascendancy in the Soviet Union since the start of the Depression, but because the art of socialist movements in Western Europe had long been conceived to address a mass public, and hence to stress social veracity, ideological clarity, and political persuasiveness. Cassou and Renau, policy-formulating spokesmen of their respective governments, as well as Aragon, arts director of the Maison de la Culture, transfigured this long-term socialist preference into a class-transcending ideal of popular art reaching back into the past, from the Le Nain brothers and Velázquez in the 17th and Courbet and Goya in the 19th centuries all the way to Heartfield's photomontages of the day. Such revalidations of traditional but non-academic art were aimed at avoiding the codified academic traditionalism that had served

the art policies of conservative governments. The populist credentials ascribed to this alternative traditionalism were to posit national heritage as the springboard for an activist art rooted in history but without institutional constraints.

It was this updated traditional orientation of socialist or communist art that Popular Front coalition policies strove to reassert vis-à-vis left-leaning modern artists, who had long opposed state-sponsored traditional art because they deemed it intrinsically conservative but had counted the art of Goya and Courbet amongst their own paradigms of independence. In France, a growing opposition of modern artists against what they deemed an undue state preference for traditional art of academic pedigree, as in the Palais de Chaillot and the Musée d'Art Moderne, found a political platform in the Popular Front's election campaign. Now these artists were duly rewarded by an increased if still limited share of state commissions. By contrast, there was no express antagonism between government art and modern art in Spain's politicized artistic culture. Since most Spanish modern artists of some standing had moved to Paris for lack of opportunities at home, they missed the chance to join the Popular Front electoral campaign. Still, for the Paris Expo, the new government could count on them as quasi-exiles.

/ 2.3.2 **DEMOCRATIC COEXISTENCE**

In both states, cultural politicians of the Popular Front continued to harbor their doubts as to whether modern artists who were rallying to the movement out of their sympathy for the Left would be able to deliver valid contributions to a populist artistic culture intended for the promotion of social progress and anti-fascist resolve. It was their prestige that made them politically desirable. In France, it was the growing popularity of modern art with a liberal-minded, upper-middle-class public, a constituency of the Radical Party, that made its inclusion relevant for broadening the movement's electoral appeal beyond communist and socialist working-class voters. Minister of Education Jean Zay, who was steering art policy towards the modern, was a member of that Party. In Spain, on the other hand, there were neither outstanding modern artists to rally nor significant interest groups of the modern art scene to attract. Nor was there an upper middle-class public of any consequence whose tastes for modern art could translate into support for the Republic. As a result, modern participation in art policy was contested or minimized.

Between Zay and Cassou at the Education Ministry and Huisman at the Fine Art Administration, no policy addressing the relationship between traditional and modern art was ever reasoned out. It was left to Aragon at the Maison de la Culture, a Communist party ideologue without political standing, to set the terms for the pertinent debates, where he for his part kept a distance from modern art. In Spain, by contrast, Education Minister Hernández gave Renau, in his capacity as Fine Arts Director,

authority to stage debates between traditional and modern artists in the public sphere, and in his capacity as Under Secretary, to shape government art policy accordingly. The urgency of a wartime artistic culture prompted Renau to draw modern artists into co-operation with traditional ones. Never during the tenure of both Popular Front governments did any one of their officials clarify the political reasons for modern art as such to be espoused. That they should have nonetheless embraced it to a limited degree was mainly due to its generic cachet of freedom and its anti-fascist posture by default. To that extent, they ignored objections from dogmatic Communists.

That the Popular Front should have admitted modern art to official artistic culture, though not to an equal extent with traditional art, was also a democratic response to its suppression in Germany, in line with its anti-fascist posture. It pertained to the Popular Front's principled rejection of enforced conformity, which also prompted it to draw the line against the Soviet rejection of modern art. Within these transnational relationships, modern art was still far from being made into a paragon of democracy, as it was after the Second World War. Its coexistence with 'realistic' art—itself intended to be innovative rather than traditional—suited a pluralist culture composed of diverse constituencies, fundamental for the democratic legitimacy of the Popular Front. The two comprehensive modern art exhibitions mounted at the Petit Palais and the Musée du Jeu de Paume during the Paris Expo in the summer of 1937—with Cassou sitting on both organizing committees—certified the official acceptance of modern art in France, albeit at the price of a thematic vacuity in the choice of the exhibits, which obviated any controversy.

/ 2.3.3 **MODERN FIGUREHEAD ARTISTS**

Already in 1934, Henri Matisse had participated in an exhibition organized by the AEAR. In 1936, he was co-opted into an honorary committee of AEAR painters, along with three others, including social realist Marcel Gromaire. Yet neither through any of his works nor by any of his pronouncements did he ever substantially confirm his prominence in the culture of the Popular Front. To oblige, Aragon extolled Matisse's work in a programmatic lecture delivered in the summer of 1937, as well as in many other statements collected in a book of his about Matisse the following year. Without a word about the artist's politics, he celebrated his work as a humanist achievement embodying the essence of French art, part of a perennial national heritage. Aragon's transfiguration of Matisse, in disregard for both his pioneering early break with traditional art and his categorical abstinence from any political expression, is the most flagrant example of how a modern artist, as long he harbored some political sympathies, could be co-opted by a Popular Front politician because of his popularity with an upper-middle-class public.

Quite different was Aragon's treatment of Fernand Léger, since 1934 an activist member of the AEAR, and since 1935 a Communist Party member. Along with architect

Le Corbusier, Léger became a vociferous advocate of a socially progressive message of modern art in its capacity as the epitome of modern technology, a visual confirmation of the workers' world. What is more, Léger's participation in the activities of the Maison de la Culture, where he invited workers of a Renault automobile plant to attend his art classes, suited the populist outreach of its programs. His commitment promised to redeem some modern artists' long-standing ambition of having their leftist convictions validated by working-class acceptance. Despite all this, Aragon rejected Léger's machine aesthetics with the argument that it transfigured capitalist production but still fell short on the class-transcending mission he ascribed to a seemingly non-political art such as Matisse's. Unflinchingly, Léger retorted that modern art would be accessible to the working-class upon the abolishment of educational privilege.

Most salient of all were Picasso's contributions to key political projects of both the French and the Spanish Popular Front governments, although, unlike Matisse, he had never engaged himself in any artistic ventures of Popular Front organizations. It was because he counted for the leading modern artist of his time that both governments were eager to enlist him. When Cassou, the incoming education ministry official, got Picasso to design the curtain for a performance of Paul Claudel's play about the French Revolution, to be staged at the inauguration of the Blum government on Bastille Day (see Chapter 2.2/1.3.1), he had already published a book about him. Government press releases touted Picasso's consent as a major coup. In an even more spectacular measure of co-optation, Education Minister Hernández in September 1936 appointed Picasso honorary director of the Prado in Madrid, and in January 1937 Prime Minister Largo Caballero's office, through the Spanish ambassador in Paris, commissioned him to paint a mural in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo, which turned out to be *Guernica*.

/ 3 **THE PARIS WORLD EXPOSITION OF 1937**

/ 3.1 **A DEMOCRATIC ENTERPRISE**

/ 3.1.1 **PLANNING, CANCELLATION, RE-LAUNCH**

The Paris World Exposition of 1937 was the outstanding art-historical event of the Depression. It was here that the fast-changing governments of France, the foremost democratic state of continental Europe, embarked on a long-term attempt at reconfiguring the arts within the totality of economic and technological relations on an international scale, and, eventually, on a peace platform in the face of the approaching war. Working with the International Bureau of Expositions, a sequence of French politicians and officials exerted themselves to showcase a political coexistence of economic and technological interests capable of overcoming the world-wide slump. A dazzling

convergence of art and technology within a public spectacle was to extol the peaceful international competition required for such a task. For this purpose, the various agencies of the Third Republic in charge of organizing the event had to accommodate rather than confront the self-displays of the three totalitarian states, whose regimes claimed to have already remedied the failure of a free market economy by policies opposed to theirs, that is, by curtailing free enterprise and abolishing democracy.

On November 19, 1929, less than two months after the New York stock market crash, a World Exposition in Paris was first proposed in the National Assembly. During the subsequent four years, alternating conservative and radical governments kept revising its program, scope, and title, without ever clearly defining, much less consistently applying, any coherent cultural policy fitting the fluent historic situation. Cultural policy, in fact, took a back seat to the staunchly deflationary finance policy maintained by those governments until the accession of the Popular Front in July 1936. When, on October 25, 1932, Commerce and Industry Minister Julien Durand officially committed Paris as a site to the International Bureau, it was in disregard of Prime Minister Edouard Herriot's budget planning. As a result, the numerous adjustments which the Exposition program underwent over a period of four years were made on an uncertain, if not hypothetical, financial calculation. In January 1934, two years after the Depression had started to affect the French economy, the incoming conservative government of Prime Minister Gaston Doumergue finally opted out of the project altogether.

However, the French business community, in particular the building trades, lobbied to have the Exposition re-launched by the Paris City Council. On May 15, 1934, the City signed an agreement with the national government declaring the Expo an autonomous 'Public Establishment,' exempt from inclusion in the state budget, which by this time had slipped into the red. The City underwrote the lion's share of a combined budget of public support, private investment, lotteries, and loans taken out on the anticipated revenue. The Expo became a belated instance of the government-sponsored public works programs launched throughout Europe two years earlier, when governments turned from austerity to deficit spending. These unstable political and financial arrangements fell short of accommodating both the building trades, under duress from the Depression, and a strike-prone labor force, fighting underemployment. Recurrent political conflicts, financial impasses, and technical delays prevented a timely completion. On the day of the opening, May 25, 1937, the Expo was still under construction.

/ 3.1.2 **LABBÉ'S VISION**

Edmond Labbé, the commissioner newly appointed in 1934 for the re-launch of the Expo, was a 'Director of Technical Education' in the Ministry of Culture. His adjunct commissioner in charge of the arts was Paul Léon, the conservative former Fine Arts Director, whom radical Education Minister Anatole de Monzie had forced from

office two years earlier, and who was now allowed to reassert his traditionalist views. Changing the Expo's title to "Arts and Techniques in Modern Life," Labbé envisioned the show as a composite display of investment and commodity production on the one hand and the fine and decorative arts on the other. It was to span handicraft and machinery, traditional or advanced, with an aesthetic appeal untrammelled by the technological aesthetics of self-modernizing industry. Although Labbé derived his ideas of a comprehensive artistic culture rooted in the crafts from earlier socialist schemes of cultural change, he had to rely on an intricate web of existing organizations and corporations, all keen on holding on to their established entitlements. The city government's ambition was to reinvigorate them in defiance of the current market slump.

In consultation with the International Exhibitions Bureau, Labbé's office drew up a comprehensive classification of the arts and crafts to be showcased at the Expo. The new Commissioner brought his familiarity with the bureaucratic organization of the arts in French cultural policy to bear on the task. His adjunct Léon's experience as a former Fine Arts Director helped to implement his strategy. In an appendix to its convention of 1928, which regulated the scope of world exhibitions, and which was modified as late as October 1936, the International Bureau had listed no less than 162 artistic activities, subsumed under 42 overarching classes. Labbé's General Commissariat condensed the list, pooling 75 activities into 14 major groups. In this wide-ranging panorama of technical practices, architecture, painting, and sculpture seemed to take an unproblematic preeminence among the multifarious productive endeavors to which they were related. They promised to dissolve the competition between traditional and modern art, and the ideological confrontations it entailed, in the ideal of a non-antagonistic, economically viable artistic culture.

Labbé and Léon relied on professional organizations and institutional networks of traditional artists and artisans with claims to proportional recognition in their bureaucratic regulation of state patronage. These were first in line to benefit from the Expo's declared purpose of providing work for as many artists as possible. Long-established networks of recognized experts and critics sat on the selection committees. The long lists of French painters, sculptors, and artisans commissioned with a plethora of works for the Palais de Chaillot and other French buildings are awash with names not well-known even at the time and forgotten today, because most commissions were based on their standing in accredited institutions and associations, not on any proven market success. Since most 'independent' artists had flourished outside those institutional networks, Labbé's ideal system of the arts marginalized them, and their supporting critics often contested the ensuing traditionalist preferences. For all his inclusive aspirations, Labbé had failed to address the social and cultural reality of the enduring split between traditional and modern art, which now resounded in the public response to his project.

/ 3.1.3 CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Following the trend toward an incremental modernization of traditional art, Jacques Gréber, since 1934 chief architect of the Exposition site, devised a set of guidelines for a monumental scenery in the central area that would harmonize it in appearance with the centuries-old monumental topography of the capital, while still bearing the distinctive look of 'modern times.' Gréber defined what he called the "new tendency of architecture" as a balance between classical appearance and sober form, of traditional ornateness and 'modern' simplification. Still, shying away from what he called "the excess of absolute stripping" in some buildings from the previous decade, he insisted on a "sculptural or pictorial décor," which was applied in abundance everywhere.⁽³⁹⁾ Thus, the "simple and classical grand volumes,"⁽⁴⁰⁾ covered with hard stone, of the Trocadéro [i.e. the Palais de Chaillot] and the Museums of Modern Art, key buildings of the area, were not built with academic techniques of classical origin. Their shells of steel and concrete were merely sheathed with classical surfaces as a backdrop for a floating imagery of statues and reliefs.

The Paris city government, which dominated the steering committee, was mindful of making the core of the Exposition site a lasting component of the capital's monumental architecture. Its landmark buildings were expected to coalesce in a historic topography shaped by Baron Haussmann's reconfiguration of the cityscape under the Second Empire. The quest for monumental continuity preempted the design of the Expo's architectural centerpiece, the Palais de Chaillot, which was to replace the Trocadéro, a composite theater and museum building dating from 1878, on an identical ground plan. Fine Arts Director Huisman, overriding three earlier competitions, saw to it that academic architects Jacques Carlu and Léon Azéma were awarded the commission. Huisman's personal decision made the Palais de Chaillot the target of a drawn-out art-political controversy in the public sphere. An apologetic press campaign by the Expo's publicity bureau exalted the Palais de Chaillot as the first representative building of the Third Republic undertaken in many years. Modern artists, on the other hand, led by Picasso and Matisse, signed a letter of protest against it.

Gréber aimed for make-work styles. His preference for traditional architecture tied in with the resistance of construction workers' unions to labor-saving techniques of modernized building, just as the profusion of sculptures and paintings was due to the social policy of maximizing artists' employment, administered by Fine Arts Director Huisman's large selection committee. Commissioner Labbé might well boast of the "850,000 workers' days and 150,000 days for architects, engineers, designers, artists, painters or sculptors"⁽⁴¹⁾ expended on the Palais de Chaillot, and compare the enterprise to the state-supported construction of the giant ocean liner *Normandie*. Yet eventually a rash of strikes defied his timetable and pushed him to the brink of

resignation. This classical building in the service of social policy became subject to so much public controversy between hesitating authorities, uncooperative business, and recalcitrant labor that its daily progress was filmed from the top of the Eiffel Tower for public accounting. On the Expo's opening day, it stood unfinished, only to be completed a year later, after the Expo had long closed.

/ 3.2 **THE TOTALITARIAN CHALLENGE**

/ 3.2.1 **FROM COMPETITION TO CONFRONTATION**

Less than a year after the London conference of June 12, 1933, had failed to restore the gold standard (or any other stable rate of exchange), abolish currency controls, and foster free trade by reducing customs tariffs, the Paris World Exposition was launched for an international community of states to display their products as if it were a world-wide marketplace of free trade. Predictably, therefore, exports and imports negotiated at the Expo lagged far behind expectations. Most if not all governments represented held on to their customs barriers, currency regulations, and other trade restrictions to shield their national economies, some of which were already overburdened by rearmament efforts aimed at their prospective trading partners. Falling short of stimulating trade, the Paris Expo turned into a competitive demonstration of each state's ostensible resurgence of economic productivity and social well-being, credited to each government's political measures of dealing with the Depression on their own. Intervention by strong governments for the recovery of national economies was to guarantee their reliability as trade partners.

Nowhere was the preeminence of government proclaimed more blatantly than in the pavilions of the three totalitarian states, each of which claimed to have overcome the pitfalls of a free market economy by a thorough political restructuring of their economies and societies. The didactic displays of their political systems distinguished them from their democratic counterparts. Their pavilions appeared to demonstrate that totalitarian states were capable of building temporary exhibition structures with lavish techniques of steel and stone, which endowed them with the look of being meant to last. They were designed by the architects of their capital reconstruction projects, triumphant stand-ins for those projects' eventual completion. Observers were amazed to notice that on opening day the three pavilions stood complete in all their splendor, while the crisis-ridden Palais de Chaillot, partially hidden behind scaffolds, was still under construction. It seems as if such epitomes of economic resourcefulness, organized planning, and technical efficiency were only within reach of the strong governance they put on show.

Some commentators were sensitive to the challenge these three pavilions presented to the political culture of French democracy, which, it seemed to them, fell

short of matching their underlying political will of pooling economic resources, popular support, and artistic achievement under the banner of assertive ideologies, even more so since no French pavilion was there to meet their challenge. The author of an article about them in the Catholic journal *Étude*, entitled “Images of Totalitarian Civilizations,” professed to be overawed by the political self-assurance they exuded, and, by contrast, anguished by the lack of political cohesion he perceived in France. Stopping short of putting forth a term for France’s own political system, be it democratic or republican, the author credited the perceived superiority of the three totalitarian pavilions to their regimes’ mobilization of what he called “the masses,” whose energy and enthusiasm on display he took at face value, ignoring their underlying oppressiveness. A similar resolve of mass support in France would be needed to overcome its current “restless hostility” and “uncertainty,” he thought.⁽⁴²⁾

/ 3.2.2 **TOTALITARIAN PAVILIONS**

The propaganda publications flanking the three totalitarian pavilions explained how they had been fashioned according to the art policies of their respective regimes, often at great length and with much technical detail. Spelling out those working processes was meant to account for their claims to high accomplishment, which in turn was meant to prove the viability of their government systems. The Soviet pavilion was featured as the result of a collective process of competitions and consultations, with several outstanding artists responsible for its component programs of imagery and decoration. The Italian pavilion was presented as the outcome of a covenant between two coequal architects leading rivaling professional factions, and now presiding over a corporative cooperation of diverse artists. The German pavilion, by contrast, was credited to one architect alone, Albert Speer, who in turn professed to have merely carried out Hitler’s ideas, and who directed a small team of artists of his choice according to the National Socialist ‘leadership principle.’ As an exception to the Expo’s rule that only French labor was to be employed, Speer was permitted to bring his own skilled workers from Germany on a special train.

The Soviet pavilion’s propaganda scheme was a didactic display of the USSR’s political order according to the new constitution of December 1936. Ubiquitous quotes from that document in French translation, backdrops for equally ubiquitous Lenin and Stalin portraits, amounted to a literal self-description of the Soviet state as a tightly regulated working society. The German pavilion, by contrast, lacked any texts or images explaining its underlying government system, since the National Socialists, for all their disavowal of the Weimar ‘system,’ had never found it necessary to frame a constitution of their own. Although the ‘Führer State’ was legitimized by Hitler’s personal authority, it featured not a single portrait of him. In the Italian pavilion, finally, explicit propaganda displays were altogether absent, in contrast to the grand political exhibitions

being mounted at the time in Italy itself. Its symbolic imagery, derived from Roman imperial art, defiantly maintained Italy's imperial status, proclaimed after its conquest of Ethiopia in 1936, an action which had almost cost Italy its Expo participation.

Only the German and Italian pavilions, but not the Soviet one, took the form of classical architecture—the German pavilion in a most straightforward emulation, the Italian one in a calibrated inflection, 'modernized' by plain geometry. The Italian pavilion's monumental appeal was further reduced by tucking it away at the opposite bank of the Seine, out of sight from the central plaza. Speer's towering façade with its stretched piers followed the Hitler-sanctioned paradigm of Paul Ludwig Troost's 'House of German Art,' of which a plaster model was on view inside. But since Speer had adapted its overall shape from the war memorial tower at Montauban, it could also be perceived as a German response to the sobered-up classicism of the Palais de Chaillot. The Soviet pavilion, lacking piers or pediments, merely incorporated some classical elements as components of 'Socialist Realism in Architecture,' a self-avowedly eclectic synthesis of various historic styles. The meshing of architecture and sculpture that this synthesis required, evident here in the upward sweep of the tower into the steel figures above, contradicted the classical tradition.

/ 3.2.3 THE MONUMENTAL SCENARIO

Whatever their differences, the three totalitarian pavilions shared with the Palais de Chaillot the preference for traditionalist architectural form resurgent everywhere during the Depression. International juries of art competitions, awarding medals to items from all four states, certified the aesthetic compatibility of democratic and totalitarian art and architecture. Chief architect Gréber managed to coordinate the Palais de Chaillot with the Soviet and German pavilions on a vertical slope in horizontal symmetry. While the Palais de Chaillot closed the central plaza off against the hill, the unequal pair of pavilions screened it off against the river bank, forming a gateway to the central avenue which led southward across the Iéna bridge to the Eiffel Tower and beyond. Their monumental configuration was brought to life by the sculpted figures atop and before all three buildings, pictorial components of an *architecture parlante* according to academic tradition. Free of any encasing architectural structures, they appeared to move forward from their settings, proclaiming their ideological messages with performative aplomb.

Iosif Chaikov's steel relief surrounding the plinth of the Soviet Pavilion placed the people's leisure under military protection. Josef Thorak's bronze groups flanking the staircase of the German pavilion paraded the family and the military as basic social bonds. On the rooftop of the Italian Pavilion, a row of statues personified the corporations, pillars of working society. Vera Mukhina's steel figures atop the Soviet pavilion embodied the "Workers' and Peasants' State" of the new Soviet constitution.

Kurt Schmidt-Ehmen's bronze eagle and swastika atop the German pavilion made the state emblem a forbidding protective avatar. George Gori's gilt rider before the Italian pavilion, titled *Genius of Fascism*, endowed the fascist state with a nameless emperor's statue. Thus, all three totalitarian pavilions used a statuary-laden 'talking architecture' for pictorial scenarios, each one proclaiming its own version of the convergence between state and society. They made their countries' representations at the Expo into triumphant political self-proclamations, most blatantly in the Soviet pavilion's textbook rehearsal of the Stalin Constitution for visitors to study.

The two bronze statues before the wings of the Palais de Chaillot, which never came to be gilt as had been intended, were mythological personifications of *Arts et Techniques*, the Expo's title terms. Henri Bouchard's *Apollo* on the right, holding up the harp and accompanied by smaller figures of the muses, was the god of the arts. Albert Pommier's *Hercules* on the left, subduing the bull with just one hand, was the hero of work. Since the Palais de Chaillot was no national pavilion, but the crowning building of the Expo as a whole, it would have been inappropriate for it to match the totalitarian pavilions in extolling the host country's political system. Thus, when it came to representing democracy, the political self-projections of the three totalitarian states were facing a pictorial void that was compensated nowhere else. A last-minute substitute for political iconography, after a projected bronze statue of Apollo by Charles Despiau had not materialized, was the bronze-colored plaster cast of Antoine Bourdelle's *La France*—an armed Athena figure—facing the center court of the Museum of Modern Art. Here it seemed to check Gori's *Genius of Fascism* across the Seine, albeit far from the center of pictorial confrontations.

/ 3.3 **THE POPULAR FRONT CONTRIBUTION**

/ 3.3.1 **THE NEW POLITICAL AGENDA**

No sooner had the Popular Front governments of France and Spain been elected in the summer of 1936 than they made the Paris World Exposition a project of top priority. At the last minute, they undertook to match, or even confront, the totalitarian pavilions by adding buildings of political propaganda, focused, respectively, on social reform and the defense of Democracy. Prime ministers Léon Blum of France and Francisco Largo Caballero, and later, Juan Negrín of Spain oversaw construction of the new buildings, either in person or through high-ranking officials directly reporting to them. They turned these buildings into political showpieces, every bit as explicit as the pavilions of the three totalitarian states which both governments were now confronting militarily. In order to draw the line against totalitarian politics, their art programs observed the Popular Front coalition policy of featuring traditional and modern art side by side, assigning different propaganda missions to each one. Still, controversies

about the inclusion of modern art could not be avoided, not only because its provocative form, but also because of its thematic license

To animate the Expo with its activist policies of public works, social welfare, and cultural mobilization, the French Popular Front government drew up a new agreement with the Paris city administration which substantially augmented state funding, increased the number of state employees, and installed a standing parliamentary control commission for the show. The interventions enlarged the Expo area by a third. Besides encouraging additional private exhibitors, the government, in league with the major trade unions that had supported its election, added no less than six official pavilions, which so profusely showcased its policies that guided itineraries were offered to sympathizing visitors' groups for popularizing their message. Over and above deficit investment for the benefit of industry and trade, to which the Expo's domestic funding had been limited before, the new government made it into a public works program exempt from inclusion in the final balance sheet. It would even have prolonged its support through 1938 had the Senate not rejected the entire budget. As a result, the Expo closed by the end of 1937 with a deficit of 495 million francs.

Compared to the French re-casting of the whole Expo, the Spanish pavilion was a minuscule undertaking, but it was promoted with a similar political urgency by a panoply of high officials from the prime minister on down. It was driven by the mission to transfigure the makeshift building into the lighthouse of a socially progressive democracy under military siege but poised to win. Although the Spanish tourist office in Paris was amongst the participating agencies, the Pavilion was devoid of any commercial export pitch. Personally overseen on site by General Director of Fine Arts Josep Renau, it presented itself as a combined art exhibition and didactic propaganda show about key themes of Republican governance and warfare. It was the Expo's most overtly political pavilion. Large letter panels over the entrance spelled out pronouncements by President Manuel Azaña asserting the Republic's military resolve and the non-communist inclusiveness of its democracy. In his opening speech of July 12, 1937, ambassador Angel Ossorio y Gallardo foregrounded the Civil War's potential danger for the prospects of peace in Europe.

/ 3.3.2 PROPAGANDA BY TRADITIONAL ART

The preponderance of traditional artists in the commissions of the Popular Front governments in both France and Spain for their buildings at the Expo jibed with the insistence on mass appeal in both the traditionalist artistic culture of the labor movement and the communist-inspired advocacy of realism in current art-political debates. Inclusion of modern art was only due to occasional interventions. Only in France did numerous well-trained academic artists—often tested in previous state commissions—stand ready to be enlisted for the new political tasks. The Spanish art

administration, on the other hand, had to fall back on assembling a heterogeneous group of little-known artists and poster designers—some of them of scant accomplishment—to work on pre-set themes. Only a few modern artists were enlisted, provided they abided by thematic prescriptions and did not let their lack of realism compromise the public message of their works. Their presence testified to the flexibility of Popular Front artistic coalition politics, whose tolerance the preceding realism debates had widened because of modern artists' political allegiance.

In two of the three buildings added to the Expo under the auspices of the French Popular Front government—the Pavilion of Solidarity and the House of Labor—cycles of mural-size paintings extolled the accomplishments of organized labor, now confirmed as government policy. Six over-life-sized portrait busts lining the walls of the House of Labor heroized historic labor leaders. Both academic painting cycles—in the Pavilion of Solidarity twelve panels by different painters, in the House of Labor six panels all by André Hervault—gave democratic answers to the exaltation of totalitarian social policy in the pavilions of Italy, Germany, and the USSR. When it came to meeting their challenge, academic clarity prevailed over incremental modernization. The third building of the Popular Front, the Pavilion of Peace, was overseen by Air Minister Pierre Cot, a proponent of military support for the Spanish Republic but unable to sway Blum's government. Two foreign graphic artists, Max Lingner, a German, and Frans Masereel, a Belgian—both active in the Maison de la Culture and regularly featured in communist journals—filled it with their agitational imagery.

The art administration of the Spanish Republic could not draw on a similarly diversified array of accomplished professional artists for the imagery of its pavilion. It had to set up special workshops, first in Madrid and later in Valencia, to have a disparate group of little-known artists make small-scale works for an art show at the top floor rather than a coherent pictorial decoration of the building. These art works mostly dwelt on war imagery, either in an anecdotal fashion or according to propaganda stereotypes, often reminiscent of pictorial reportages, posters, or caricatures. They fell short of making good on the programmatic claims to a topical realism advanced by France and the three totalitarian states, and aspired to in Spanish artists' debates. In a clear-cut separation of media on Soviet precedent, the propaganda show of the government's social and political achievements was kept apart from the realm of painting as an art form. It was installed on the ground floor according to a modern exhibition design, featuring press photographs, didactic photomontages, and pictorial graphs, all making the case for the Republic.

/ 3.3.3 **SHOWCASING MODERN ART**

Neither one of the Popular Front governments was able to sponsor for the Expo a solid, representative building in the CIAM-promoted style of modern architecture

in the short term. Still, each one supported one pavilion which—regardless of their rough and ready makeup—stood out as a testimony to the ideology of modern architecture as a progressive social agent. Three years earlier, Le Corbusier had altogether rejected the concept of the planned Expo, opposing his radically functionalist urbanism to commissioner Labbé’s inclusive arts and crafts philosophy. Now, at the last minute, he was granted a location on the outskirts of the Expo for a makeshift, multi-colored ‘Pavilion of New Times,’ with only half the cost underwritten by the government, where he demonstrated his dissent. Josep Luis Sert’s Spanish Pavilion was also designed as a low-cost exhibition structure, this one in a black, white and grey color scheme, a backdrop for the flashy modern art works at key points outside and inside. In 1931 Sert had collaborated with Le Corbusier. Now he showed his principles of design by the exhibit of a ‘Ville fonctionnelle’ in the ‘Pavilion of New Times’.

An Air Ministry engineer designed the Pavilion of Aviation to look like a “a big airship, in aerodynamic forms.”⁽⁴³⁾ Prime Minister Blum in person saw to it that modern painter Robert Delaunay got the opportunity to apply his abstract machine aesthetics to the décor of its interior, the multicolored semblance of an air space, with a real plane suspended within cut-out circular orbits from the ceiling. Fernand Léger, politically well placed because of his ties to the Maison de la Culture, was commissioned to deploy his stripped-down, quasi-emblematic fusion of technological and natural forms in no less than five pavilions, most conspicuously in his wall painting *Power Transmission* for Le Corbusier’s ‘Pavilion of New Times,’ where he blended abstract shapes with realistic photo clips. Yet such works were but a small contingent compared to the abundance of traditional commissions issued by the Popular Front government in many places. Extolling machine technology at the expense of labor, the primary issue of the Depression, they appeared at odds with the muscle-packed personifications of human strength and toil predominating at the Expo, including the totalitarian pavilions.

When the Popular Front governments of both France and Spain enlisted famous modern artists for programmatic commissions with set themes of anti-fascist propaganda, they banked on these artists’ high profile for the sake of their own publicity. Ensuing controversies, however, quickly reminded them that modern art still represented a contested minority within public culture. Cubist sculptor Jacques Lipchitz was charged to fit a plaster blow-up of his anti-fascist *Prometheus* group as an emblem for technological progress over the entrance of the Grand Palais. After a rabidly anti-Semitic press campaign against it, the sculpture, meant to be cast in bronze and sited on the Champs-Élysées, was destroyed after the Expo closed. Even more spectacular was the enlistment for the Spanish Pavilion of three Spanish and Catalan leading modern masters, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, and Juli González. The far more prominent positioning of their work than that of the bulk of traditional works from Spain distorted the

balance of coalition art politics. Predictably, Picasso's *Guernica* was quickly taken to task for its lack of popular appeal.



2/ Ideologies

2.1/ Art of the People p. 122

2.2/ Revolutionary Art p. 156

2.3/ Ideologies and Policies p. 190

2.1/ Art of the People

/1 POPULIST ART BY THE STATE

/1.1 THE QUEST FOR MASS ACCEPTANCE

/1.1.1 THE ISSUE OF ART FOR THE PEOPLE

The issue of art for the people was the primary ideological motivation for reconfiguring the relationship between traditional and modern art during the Depression. For the art policies of the three totalitarian states, it was fundamental from the start. In democratic France, it surfaced only as late as 1936 under the government of the Popular Front. Tightened state management of the arts followed from increased state support. It was aimed at making them boost the popular allegiance claimed by all regimes, in an inverse proportion to their oppressive governance. Thus, in the Soviet Union and in Germany the idea of an art for the people became an enforceable guideline, while in Italy and France it was more mildly tied to fascist and republican ideologies respectively. True to the ambivalence of populism—that is, the dressing up of imposed policies as responses to the demands of the people—the ideology of an art for the people claimed to be giving the people the art they had wanted all along. It followed the age-old ambition for art to be successful with large publics, either as propaganda or as merchandise. What was new was the mission for art to promote social cohesion.

Since the turn of the century, the claim to represent the views and tastes of common people had been a rallying cry for the traditionalist opposition to modern art. In response, modern artistic culture often advanced its own hyperbolic claims for an elementary understanding whenever it strove to transcend its upper middle-class market base and appealed for state support. In 1918, Vladimir Mayakovsky linked traditional art to the disempowered ruling class and exhorted workers to embrace modern art instead. In 1924, Paul Klee conceded in a speech before a museum public⁽⁴⁴⁾ that “the people don’t support us,” asserting nonetheless that modern artists at the Bauhaus, where he taught, were “seeking a people,” not addressing the people as they were. In 1937, finally, Hitler, in a speech at the opening of the House of German Art in Munich, settled the alternative to the detriment of modern art with a standard populist decree: “An art that cannot count on the most joyful and most heartfelt assent of the healthy broad mass of the people, but depends on small cliques—partly with a stake in it, partly blasé—is unbearable.”⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, it was one thing to discredit modern art because of the incomprehension it encountered within large parts of the populace, and quite another to frame an art of popular acceptance that would not just relapse onto the traditional themes and forms of old but would be refashioned to fulfill the task of conveying ideologies to the masses in a modernized environment. None of the totalitarian regimes quite succeeded in framing an art for the people any more than they succeeded in securing total popular support for the policies they still had to enforce. Rather, the notion of an art for the people became the contested yardstick for a supervised artistic culture, designed to cast their ideologies of change and renewal into accustomed forms of facile understanding. In the process, modern art had its disingenuous claims for an elementary appeal disproved, most painfully in the Soviet Union, where its representatives—with Mayakovsky in the lead—initially had enough political clout to frame institutional debates about the issue of an art for the people on their own terms. It took almost a decade to disabuse them of their claims.

/1.1.2 **TOTALITARIAN MASS ART**

By invoking a supra-constitutional mass support—the proletariat, and later the classless people (*narod*) in the Soviet Union, the people (*Volk*) in Germany, and the nation (*nazione*) in Italy—totalitarian regimes claimed to represent a unified popular base over and above social divisions, which they presented as a challenge to democracy's legitimacy as a mere majority rule. The vehement enforcement of such claims in the Soviet Union and, to a lesser degree, in Germany gave a new political urgency to the alternative between elitism and populism as a validation for artistic culture. An art enjoined to be responsive to an undivided populace, rather than to any social segment, had to abide by political prescriptions rather than heed the experience of acceptance or rejection. The Fascist regime stayed clear of any apodictic correlation between art and the people, because its ideology of a unified nation was founded on the corporative coordination of diverse economic and social interests recognized as such. This is why it refrained from any effort to define the populist appeal of Fascist art in exclusionary, let alone oppressive terms.

Only in the Soviet Union and in Germany did the popular acceptance of government-supported or government-approved art become the unqualified premise of public pronouncements and professional debates. The underlying ideologies of class or race were so fundamentalist that any deviation could be denounced not merely as lacking artistic merit, but as politically detrimental. Since the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in the fall of 1928, a monolithic concept of the proletariat as the recipient of traditional art was held up against the equally monolithic idea of the 'bourgeoisie' as patron of modern art. As a result, the preference for traditional over modern art became part of the renewed class struggle justifying the violent enforcement of the

Plan. In his speech of September 1, 1933 to the Nuremberg Party Rally, where he outlined the guiding ideas of his art policy, Hitler asserted a pre-established harmony between an unerring aesthetic instinct of the common people and a timeless art capable of transcending historic change. Such an art, he said, was biologically rooted in the Aryan race and had to be shielded against modern art as an alien threat.

In all three totalitarian states, the structural contradictions between populism and dictatorship inherent in their concepts of a state-ordained art for the people could cause divisions of opinion or policy adjustments in the pursuit of state art projects. The more populism gave way to autocracy, the less an art for the people would be sufficient for the exaltation of state power. Throughout the first half of the decade, in Italy and the Soviet Union the balance between popular representation and acclaim to authority kept shifting to the detriment of the former. Only Hitler, overriding short-lived populist aspirations of some Party circles, opted for a monumental art of power from the start. Four years into his regime, he recognized that populist art could not deliver on this expectation. When that moment came, in the spring of 1937, Hitler's personal oversight of art policy facilitated a swift decision on the shortcomings of such an art. In the other two totalitarian states, the protracted, conceptually overdetermined pronouncements on art policy made for contrived equations between the popular will and the authority of state or Party.

/1.1.3 **PEOPLE'S ART WITHOUT DEMOCRACY**

Because their constitutional legitimacy flowed from the popular vote, democratic governments had, before the First World War, never attempted to define an art for the people preempting their diverse constituencies. Whenever they wished to broaden the popular appeal of artistic culture, it was by making the extant art accessible to a larger public. Such policies pre-dated democracy. Since the early 19th century at the latest, ever-larger social segments were drawn into museums and academies. Toward the end of the century, cultural agencies of worker's unions and leftist parties sought to popularize academic art as a medium of social acculturation. Their ideal of an aesthetic education was to appreciate its standards. As late as 1936, efforts by the Popular Front government in France to let a working-class public partake of the arts abided by that earlier tradition, but also included an unsuccessful public revalidation of modern art beyond its class limitation. Yet, unlike totalitarian governments, the Popular Front never sought to fashion an art for the masses different from the art at hand.

The anti-democratic impetus inherent in the ideology of art for the people emerged most fiercely during the last four years of the Weimar Republic. A newly-founded 'Combat League for German Culture' aggressively demanded government support for traditional art in the name of the people, merely as an argument for denouncing the Weimar governments' support of modern art. In his campaign speech

“National Socialism and Art Policy” of January 26, 1928 (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.2), Hitler extended the political franchise of the electorate to include a quasi-plebiscitary right to determine the art policy of an elected government. This hypothetical demand was part of his tactics to undermine Weimar democracy by exposing its supposed failure to satisfy the people’s aesthetic preferences. Less than five years later, now heading his own government, he made good on this demand. In his first ‘Culture Speech’ at the Nuremberg Party Rally of September 1, 1933, he invoked the people’s “most natural, instinctive world view” as an aesthetic criterion. He promised to “take care that from now on the people will be summoned to be the judges of their art.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

The intent to fashion an art that could address masses of people, to win their ideological assent along with their aesthetic appreciation, and thereby to be of use as a propaganda tool, was inherently totalitarian. It required incessant efforts at definition, supervision, vigilance, and oppression, which were most rigorously pursued in the Soviet Union, and, at least verbally, in Fascist Italy. Since their revolutions of 1917 and 1922 respectively, inconclusive programs of a state-directed art aimed at a mass public had been under constant consideration. It is only since the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in late 1928 and the start of the Depression in late 1929 that such programs were framed coherently enough to produce tangible results in distinctive styles. Only in National Socialist Germany was the ideology of an art for the people proclaimed with no program whatsoever, merely as a slogan for the combat rhetoric of system change. By 1937 it had proved so hollow that the government had to own up to its failure of sanctioning the mere preference for traditional art as a starting-point for an art of National Socialism.

/1.2 **ART BY AND FOR THE PEOPLE**

/1.2.1 **POPULAR ART AND PROFESSIONAL ART**

During the first five years of the Depression, when the Soviet regime reorganized its artistic culture and the German regime followed suit in 1933, both qualified their demand for a popular art overriding class divisions by insisting on professionalism against the ideologically overzealous but dilettante art promoted by the cultural organizations affiliated with their parties. At issue was not only how clearly government-supported art was apt to be understood by mass audiences in order to effectively convey ideological messages to them. More fundamentally, it was how firmly a newly-framed artistic culture could be anchored in the social fabric by developing it out of a traditional artistic practice to which people were accustomed. Although both regimes were smart enough not to hand art policy over to amateurs, they were so keen on refashioning a populist artistic culture that they made the people’s preferences a criterion for acceptance, in disregard of art-critical conventions, but not at the

expense of academic professionalism. In this regard, the Soviet art administration was more successful than its German counterpart.

In the early years of the Soviet regime, the Proletkult movement, organized to sponsor lay art, had been suppressed because spontaneous, self-sufficient art-making eluded ideological supervision by the Commissariat of Education. However, with the First Five-Year Plan, encouragement of lay artistic practice returned with a vengeance, this time under the Party's organizational control. In November 1930, the Education Ministry licensed numerous workers' associations of so-called "self-taught artists" whose works were shown in separate sections of professional artists' group exhibitions. In 1931, even the Tretyakov Gallery acquired some of these works. Under the slogan "connection to the masses," those associations linked up with organized professional artists, albeit as separate entities. Soviet art policy reached the high point of non-professional populism when on July 18, 1931, the second round of the Palace of Soviets competition was opened to all Soviet citizens regardless of professional status. Most of the submissions dwelt on pictorial shapes—a man raising a torch to the sky, a map of the Soviet Union—in disregard of functional and technical requirements.

Hitler, on the other hand, dispatched party-sponsored lay art organizations united in the 'Combat League for German Culture' within a year of his accession. He revalidated traditional artists precisely because of what he deemed to be their professional superiority over the supposed dilettantism of modern art. Nonetheless, for several years, he and Goebbels had to excuse low quality with ideological good will. Four years later, during the festivities of the first 'Day of German Art' in Munich, the rhetoric of the folk community, as applied to artists and their audience, transfigured economic recovery measures into a show of popular art, even though academic artists organized the event. The four-day pageant was reported to have provided employment for 33,821 persons working 690,000 hours in all. The restoration of a late 19th-century practice of pageantry on this occasion was ideologically updated with the racist notion of an artistic creativity rooted in the people's biological heritage. Modern art, by contrast, was branded as biologically deviant from natural norms. Still, when Hitler severely juried the submissions to the First Great German Art Exhibition, it was for their lack of academic skill.

/1.2.2 **PEOPLE'S JUDGMENT**

While the Fascist regime, relying on the corporative self-regulation of the arts for ensuring their popular appeal, refrained from any plebiscitary pressure on the arts, the Soviet and National Socialist regimes, whose artists' organizations were directly supervised by the party or the government, made the common people pose as arbiters of art policy at crucial moments of its state enforcement. It was

the principled alternative of traditional versus modern art that guided the enactment of such measures. In both regimes' anti-modern diatribes, the charges that modern art remained inaccessible to the Soviet masses and made a mockery of the German people were commonplace. Both charges had been fully developed before, but it is only after 1930 that they were turned into policy. These policies had different premises. In the Soviet Union, the common people were enticed to dispute modern artists' claims that their recondite abstractions best conveyed Bolshevik ideology to a spontaneous aesthetic sensibility. In Germany they were encouraged to "judge" what was presented as the fraudulent posturing of modern artists and expose their work as a subversive cultural sham.

When in 1918 Lenin, in pursuit of what was billed as a 'Monumental Propaganda' program, had plaster "models of new monuments" to the victorious revolution installed all over St. Petersburg, it was in order to submit them to a "judgment by the masses" about whether these monuments should be installed. Yet such a judgment was never recorded, and none of the models was ever cast in bronze or carved in stone. Thirteen years later, the Palace of Soviets competition revived this charade of popular judgment. In November 1931, the international entries to the second round were exhibited in the Stalin Automobile Factory in Moscow to 2,500 workers who duly rebuffed them. The propagandistic publication of the event added to the subsequent anti-internationalist turn of the competition. On March 13, 1932, soon after the final competition had been decided, Le Corbusier wrote a protest letter to former Education Commissar Lunacharsky where he dismissed the relevance of popular judgment. "But what should the thinking leaders of the Soviet Republic do," he wrote, "move forward, or patronize and cultivate tastes that only attest to human frailty?"⁽⁴⁷⁾

When in July 1937 the German government staged the twin shows of approved and banished art in Munich, both opening speeches—Hitler's at the 'Great German Art Exhibition,' and Reich Chamber of Art President Adolf Ziegler's at the 'Degenerate Art' show—asserted that the German people were invited to pass judgment on the alternative between traditional and modern art. While on July 18 masses of visitors were herded as a fictitious community into what was billed as a "temple of art" for paying homage to government-approved art, one day later they were called as an equally fictitious jury into a non-museum environment to which modern art had been relegated, as if to verify that the government's anticipated judgment had been carried out on their behalf. "I also know, therefore, that the German people, in perambulating through these rooms, will acknowledge me here, too, as their speaker and counselor," Hitler asserted in his opening speech at the 'House of German Art.'⁽⁴⁸⁾ "As their speaker," Hitler claimed to enact the German people's will, and "as their [...] counselor" he claimed to have shaped it. Such a reciprocal self-legitimization characterized totalitarian leadership.

/1.2.3 THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

In 1935, heeding the Comintern's new democratic coalition policy, Communists in the Popular Front movements of France and Spain started to substitute the term 'people' for the term 'class' in their ideological rhetoric. French Communists backed the substitution up with a constitutional vocabulary derived from the Republic's revolutionary origins.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Once in office, both Popular Front governments embarked on multiple initiatives of art instruction for lay persons, educational programs for museums, and other popularizing ventures of artistic culture. Their basic policy of improving working-class life, with its emphasis on leisure time along with education, included aesthetic acculturation. The Popular Front venue of mass debates about artistic issues seemed to enhance public impact on art policy-making, but merely served to make government institutions appear responsive to popular interests. To preempt the decisions of such institutions by plebiscitary mandates would have jeopardized the rules of democratic governance.

Participation of artists in the 'street art' of demonstrations and rallies was the first step towards forging an activist community with the people, an axiomatic demand of Popular Front culture. However, the making of banners and placards in clearly readable modes was incidental for these artists' professional self-understanding and their contribution to an artistic culture of the people. In their public pronouncements and interventions in debates, artists and art officials professed their openness to the people's concerns just as assiduously as they insisted on shielding their work from political interference. In art, there would be no "people's commissars," education ministry official Jean Cassou reassured them in the *Dispute on Realism*,⁽⁵⁰⁾ expressly drawing the line against Soviet practice. Modern artists, newly enfranchised by the Popular Front's inclusive art policies, would rather reaffirm the unbridgeable gap between their work and public understanding, a commonplace in modern art criticism, than regard the lack of popular response to their work as a political liability, as happened in the Soviet Union. Whenever the issue arose, they turned defensive.

Le Corbusier's inscription on his 'Pavilion of Modern Times' at the Paris World Exposition (see Chapter 1.3/2.3.3)—"Dedicated to the people to understand, judge, and reclaim"—contradicted the self-assurance of inclusive cultural policy by the government proclaimed in Valéry's golden-lettered inscriptions on the four façades of the Palais de Chaillot (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.3). The utopian message of his largely artless makeshift structure, visualized in urbanist blueprints and statistical graphs which never stood a chance of being followed through, prioritized social well-being, especially housing, not only over the arts-and-techniques idea propagated by the Expo, but also over the government's concurrent rearmament drive. Ironically, the "conversation room," a space for viewers to read and discuss the issues raised, was left bare for

lack of funds. Its sole contents were four large painted screens by Fernand Léger and others, depicting the four essential venues of social life in an ideal city—lodging, work, transport, and recreation—in a photo-collage technique, the opposite of the artistic heritage extolled by Valéry.

/1.3 **TRADITIONAL ART FOR THE PEOPLE**

/1.3.1 **TRADITIONAL ART RIGHT AND LEFT**

It was the revalidation of traditional over modern art during the Depression which, more than any other issue, determined the ideology of art for the people. The professional majority status of traditional art, its long-established popular appeal, and its proven capacity for ideological stabilization promised to suit all governments' cultural policies that were aimed at mass assent. The revalidation extended across the political spectrum from Right to Left. Just as in pre-Depression times, Labor movements pursued it just as did government authorities or social segments intent on upholding the economic and social status quo. All four political systems shared it, no matter how diverse their arguments. Only its oppressive enactment distinguished totalitarian from democratic governments. Although popular preference for traditional over modern art during this period is hard to verify, it cannot be dismissed as a self-validating ideological precept of its imposition. Rather, it was an appropriate expectation of public response which all four states heeded in their political recalibration of the arts, borne out by an un-enforced if stage-managed appreciation.

An art "of the people" could never be their own, impoverished as their majority tended to be, during the Depression in particular. It could only be offered to them for admiration in public places designed for mass attendance, such as government or party buildings, museums, or exhibitions, and it could be mass-reproduced in books and journals affordable to a public with limited means. In any event, the arts took a relatively minor place within comprehensive visual propaganda cultures dominated by the mass media of press photography and cinema. They had to rehearse the technically produced imagery provided by those media, yet to be elevated over them by their hand-crafted artistry and their emulation of the arts of the past. The resurgence of traditional art as a populist ideal thus contradicted Walter Benjamin's contention, first advanced in a lecture of June 1936 at the Maison de la Culture, that photography and film were the most suitable media of an art for the people. The arts, in their traditional shape, managed to retain their mass appeal as components of monumentalized environments and propaganda venues.

Such an art with a mass appeal, however, was not to be automatically obtained from the traditionalist artists' profession such as it was. Totalitarian regimes sought to contrive it by leapfrogging over their academic establishment and seek out earlier

traditions, which they partly revalidated and partly updated for the purpose. In the Third Republic, traditional art was recast in a modernized look. At a time when photography had become technically fit for producing images of reality that could be selected and manipulated to suit any ideology, mere academic traditionalism from the turn of the century lost any representational advantage. As a result, art in traditional modes had to be aesthetically elevated over mere pictorial accuracy. This is what the debates about the limits of realism were about. The need to strike a balance between the two sides of mass assent—the identification of the common people with an art that seemed to mirror their social self-experience, and their admiration for the superiority of an artistic achievement credited to the sponsoring authorities—prompted simultaneous efforts at making art both accessible and distant.

/1.3.2 **TOTALITARIAN TRADITIONALISM**

It was only during the second phase of the Depression, starting in 1932, that totalitarian regimes began to promote traditional art as an art for the people. Their reorganized artistic cultures, designed for aesthetic appreciation by mass publics just as much as for ideological indoctrination, were meant to illustrate an absolute political stability that grounded social security in state power. For such purposes, a mere return to the ideologically neutral standards of academic or commercial art from the turn of the 20th century would not do. Traditional art had to be adjusted to display the style of the new dispensation. Therefore, hostile critics who charged the revalidation of traditional art with anachronistic regression were missing the point. Only Soviet and German art policy had to tackle the question of how mass acceptance of traditional art could be ideologically activated by re-focusing it on the canonized art of the remote past. In Italy, on the other hand, erstwhile modern artists who turned to Antiquity and the Renaissance on behalf of the regime's historic self-legitimation needed little guidance about where to look for paradigms.

Socialist Realism was to some extent promoted on the precedent of late 19th-century Russian painting, particularly of the 'Itinerants' group. The reconstitution of the Leningrad Art Academy in 1934 canonized the populist style of that movement, although its leading artist, Ilya Repin, had refused Soviet entreaties to return from Finnish exile as long as he lived. In 1936, the Party Committee on the Arts commissioned the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow with developing a national propaganda program of research, publications, congresses and exhibitions for popularizing Repin and other late 19th-century Russian painters. The program culminated in a mammoth show traveling through numerous Russian cities, featuring no less than a thousand of Repin's works. Toward the end of the decade, populism and traditionalism were merged in the new concept of *narodnost* ("national character"). This term invested the notion of the people with a historic pedigree. It was amplified with an array of precedents for

the development of ‘Socialist Realism,’ reaching far behind the ‘Itinerants’ tradition to include artists and periods from Rembrandt back to classical Greece.⁽⁵¹⁾

Why didn’t German art politicians likewise promote a school, or a single artist, from the realist tradition of German 19th-century painting as historic models? If Wilhelm Leibl did not lend itself to such a role because of his politically indifferent themes, Adolph von Menzel, the painter of Frederick the Great’s military exploits, surely would have filled the bill. That no such grand tradition was even attempted to be forged may have been due to the inept cultural policy, particularly regarding art academies, which so incensed Hitler when he discovered the low quality of submissions to the Great German Art Exhibition of 1937. Here his prediction that a new art would naturally grow from the people’s community, unspoiled by academic schematism, stood disproved. When, as a result of the 1937 art-political crisis, a new elitist turn of state patronage disowned the populist ideology of an art by and for the people, its protagonists—Albert Speer, Arno Breker, Werner Peiner, and some others—drew not on any tradition from the German past, but to the remote historic arts of Greece, Rome, and even the Orient, all of them devoid of populist credentials.

/1.3.3 **POPULAR FRONT TRADITIONALISM**

In democratic France, it took the ascendancy of the Popular Front to make popular preference for traditional art the ideological tenet of a revised art policy moving beyond academic convention. It abided by the Comintern’s cultural policy change of 1934, aimed at reanimating national heritages for a class-transcending political culture, apt to homogenize left-liberal constituencies. The Popular Front government’s initiatives of making the French ‘patrimony’ accessible to a working-class public, part of its mass acculturation programs, culminated in the huge exhibition ‘Masterworks of French Art,’ initiated by Prime Minister Léon Blum himself, with which the newly-built Museum of Modern Art was incongruously inaugurated on June 1, 1937. However, its less than two-year term in office did not give the Popular Front time to foster a traditional art of its own design. It was powerless to steer the long-term teaching of traditional art by state institutions, starting with the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, toward a politically progressive alternative to historicism. And the realist artists who flocked to it never influenced art policy.

In a programmatic lecture entitled “Socialist Realism and French Realism,” delivered on the occasion of the inaugural show at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Louis Aragon declared realism to have been a characteristic of French painting since the 16th century, an apt historical foundation for a “true” realism of the present time which would speak to the common people. The speech revised what Aragon had written two years earlier in his collection of lectures, published in 1935 under the title *For a Socialist Realism*. Here he had still limited his invocation of earlier French traditions

to non-academic 19th-century painters such as Daumier, Courbet, and Manet, relating them to John Heartfield's photomontages in a 'revolutionary' short circuit. Finally, on June 1, 1938, Communist Party leader Jacques Duclos adopted Aragon's amplified traditionalist posture in a speech on "Communism, Science, and Culture," delivered at the Centre Marcelin-Berthelot to nearly a thousand intellectuals and artists.⁽⁵²⁾ Aragon had organized the event in his capacity as general secretary of the 'Maison de la Culture.'

During the Popular Front government's two short terms in office, no populist art derived from French tradition according to Aragon's or anybody else's ideological prescriptions could be initiated, much less accomplished. In its commissions for the Paris World Exposition, the government fell back on the networks of academic artists on whom the Fine Arts Administration had long relied. In the Pavilion of Solidarity, six leading academic painters, selected along with six modern ones according to Popular Front coalition custom, illustrated six set themes from the traditional repertoire of the labor movement in a didactic fashion, unaffected by the grand tradition of French realism. Their idealist detachment from everyday experience enhanced their propaganda appeal. Even more monolithically, the communist-dominated CGT trade union commissioned for its Pavilion of Labor six murals with themes of labor history from one academic painter, André Hervault. These epitomes of idealization adhered to the long-established half-historic, half-allegorical imagery taught at French academies. Thus, even communist patronage remained immune to Aragon's prescriptions.

/ 2 **NATIONALIST VERSUS INTERNATIONALIST ART**

/ 2.1 **NATIONALIST ART IN A CLASSICAL STYLE**

/ 2.1.1 **COMPETITIVE CLASSICISM**

During the second phase of the Depression, since 1932 at the latest, nationalism and the classical tradition became ideologically aligned throughout European art. This alignment made some of the monumental projects of democratic and totalitarian states look similar, so that the Paris World Exposition of 1937 gave the four states concerned an opportunity to measure up against one another. The classical tradition had long conveyed two distinct ideologies. The paradigm of ancient Rome had been drawn upon to shape an art of power since the times of Charlemagne. On the other hand, the art of classical Greece had since the 18th century been drawn upon to visualize upper middle-class ideals of subjective independence. Henceforth both variants coexisted uneasily. During the Depression, classical styles were promoted to affirm a nationalist political stability. All four political systems devised ideological platforms that

championed classical art as an art of the people whose standards of corporeal beauty could be shared by everyone. Such standards emphasized individual physical strength over hierarchical subordination.

A principled difference between the art of France and that of the three totalitarian states on this issue is that only the latter construed fundamentalist ideological equations between antiquity and their underlying populations. In France, on the other hand, classicism was revalidated on the grounds of an unbroken tradition of republican ideals dating from the Revolution of 1789. In Soviet art, 'proletarian classicism' was only one of several options, advanced in 1925 and in 1933 by several artists, but without official endorsement. In German art, Hitler's racist idealization of ancient Greece construed an 'Aryan' blood tie between Greeks and Germans. In Italian art, the classical ideal guided a nationwide physical education drive to re-fashion the people into a Fascist 'New Man'. Those distinct mass classicisms were anchored in distinct paradigms of ancient art for an idealized humanity. Compared to academic realism, they would have jarred with the people's life experience. But they were used to align ideals of corporeality with age-old schemes of exalting power. All four states, including France, applied them within the different parameters of their nationalist political cultures.

The three thematic venues of classical transfiguration were at first work and sports, and later war. Whereas the classical tradition in the imagery of sports and war, rooted in the convergence of both in the Olympic art of ancient Greece, was of long standing, its application to the imagery of work dates from the late 19th century. In the art of the Depression, it was enhanced in all three venues. Louis Berthola's metope relief *Metal* on the north-west wall of the Palais de Chaillot shows a nude, muscular giant in the midst of a composite industrial plant. His physical strength enables him to hold a steel-cooking kettle in full blast, balanced between his thighs, which form the anatomical equivalent of a pouring winch, subordinating mechanical equipment to manual labor. The exaltation of labor by means of classical figures with an exaggerated physique, pursued in the art of all four states, was rooted in the propaganda art of the 19th-century labor movement, where classical forms were used to express the quest for self-empowerment against the ruling class. In the art of the Depression, it was appropriated to convey a merely ideological dignification of labor.

/ 2.1.2 **POWER CLASSICISM**

In democratic France, the adaptation of classical styles during the Depression drew on an unbroken tradition in which the dominating power figure was that of the French Republic. In the three totalitarian states, on the other hand, it was newly conceived for invoking ancient national epochs of state power, whose world-historical standing they claimed to have re-attained. Those epochs—Imperial Rome, the Russian

empire of Peter and Catherine the Great, the Prussian and Bavarian kingdoms after the Wars of Liberation—had all been shaped by monarchies that totalitarian regimes, for all their emphasis on absolute leadership, were loath to emulate in order not to compromise their claims of being empowered by the people. All three regimes promoted a monumental architecture in classical or classicizing shape, designed to stage manifestations of people's assent through mass assemblies, be they sovereign, as in the Roman republic, or authorizing dictatorship, as in the Roman empire. The corresponding political behavior maximized enthusiasm and minimized obedience.

Already in 1925, Hitler, in the first volume of *My Struggle*, had called for a public architecture on the model of Greek and Roman cities as the hallmark of a strong state. In 1926, he sketched sixteen such public buildings in a classical style. After his ascendancy, he presided over the most reckless version of populist power classicism in the architecture of the Depression. One of the ideological sources of this version of populist classicism was Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's book *The Prussian Style* of 1916, which founded the ideal of monumentality on a populist ethics. "The unity of artist and people builds itself, [...] and a rule of its forms will expand, which is, above all, self-rule and can become world-rule," Moeller van den Bruck had written.⁽⁵³⁾ When Albert Speer adapted two of Hitler's sketches of 1926—a domed assembly hall and a triumphal arch—for his design of a power center in the reconstructed capital of Berlin, one—the People's Hall—was to dwarf the 'Führer's Palace' at its feet, the other—the Triumphal Arch—was to be inscribed with the names of millions of German casualties of the First World War. Both buildings exalted the people over the leader.

In Italian and German sculpture of the time, power figures of classical pedigree were predominantly male figures in action, derived from Greek and Roman images of athletes and warriors, guided by female personifications or allegories of national ideals. Since 1936 at the latest, their form foregrounded Hellenistic emphasis on muscular strength over classical restraint. Led by Mario Sironi, Italian artists expanded this kind of muscular classicism to include representatives of the people in the pedestals and walls of public buildings. When, on the other hand, German sculptors Josef Thorak, Arno Breker, and Georg Kolbe attempted to devise a similar imagery, they stopped short of any multi-figure grouping. Since Soviet iconography excluded mythology as a matter of principle, Soviet artists did not draw on any thematic substance carried by the classical tradition. Artist's impressions of entries to competitions for huge public buildings were peopled by an abundance of multi-figure sculpture groups in classical form, depersonalized representations of the 'masses.'

/ 2.1.3 POPULIST CLASSICISM

Starting in 1925, Soviet architects Ivan Fomin and Ivan Zholtovsky invoked the political ideal of ancient Greek citizens' democracy for a "proletarian classicism"

cleansed of "aristocratic elements."⁽⁵⁴⁾ In 1927, Aleksandr Matveyev styled his iconic bronze group *October*, comprising the proletarian triad of worker, peasant, and soldier, as classical nudes, incongruously decked out with caps and arms. In 1931, the minutes of the jury for the second stage of the Palace of Soviets competition, of which Zholtovsky was one of the winners, stipulated: "We think that no architect can conceive the Palace of Soviets otherwise than in the most perfect and hence most classical forms."⁽⁵⁵⁾ Mass gatherings watching over Party delegates were likened to citizens' assemblies in the agora of ancient Athens. Even after Socialist Realism had subordinated the classical tradition to an enhanced expression of contented life experience, Soviet art literature maintained the ideological reference to Greek democracy. "We want the Acropolis to be on our territory, we are its heirs," stated *Arkhitektura SSSR* in 1937,⁽⁵⁶⁾ long after the sobriety of 'proletarian classicism' had been discarded.

In his annual speeches on art policy pronounced between 1933 and 1937, Hitler, heeding Party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg on this point, hailed the ideal of Greek art as an instinctive mastery of organic form, 'biologically' rooted in the 'Aryan' race which Greeks and Germans had in common. In this most populist, and most emphatic adaptation, the Greek ideal was stripped of any historic substance. In his speech of 1933, Hitler recalled the Olympic Games held in Berlin the year before. Werner March's stadium complex had been designed by analogy to the original site at Olympia with its grooves and scattered sanctuaries. In her documentary about the games, Leni Riefenstahl interlaced Greek sculptures with live athletes. Yet the brutalist sculptures on the stadium grounds had nothing classical about them. Already in his speech of 1933, Hitler had called his party's power struggle during the Weimar Republic a 'heroic' endeavor comparable to Greek battles. Since 1937, this belligerent version of the classical ideal moved German state art toward the corporeal pathos of Hellenistic sculpture as the bearing of a people ready to fight, no longer rooted in the classical ideal of equilibrium.

The Fascist program of shaping the nation into political conformity included a nationwide sports organization, the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), for which architect Enrico Del Debbio was commissioned to design a huge training and administration center on the model of the Roman *palestra*. Construction began on February 5, 1928, and the first segment was inaugurated on November 4, 1932. The core of the complex was the so-called 'Stadium of Marbles,' ringed by no less than 130 giant athlete statues. These had been selected from a national competition in which sculptors submitted half-size models to be enlarged by marble craftsmen of the Carrara quarries. Each one was inscribed with the name of the designing artist and the name of the province sponsoring its making. The resulting schematization of the ensemble did not elude the selection committee. Not only did the repetitious depictions fail to characterize the

sponsoring provinces, they also let the specific corporeal postures of each sport disappear behind their would-be classical bearing. Athletic diversity appeared submerged in a mass-produced, populist classicism.

/ 2.2 INTERNATIONALISM UNDER ATTACK

/ 2.2.1 RESURGENT ANTI-INTERNATIONALISM

In all three totalitarian states, as well in democratic France, the nationalist revaluation of traditional art, in classical or any other form, was argued as an ideological defense against the principled internationalism of modern art. As all four states became more protective of their national economies, modern art was denounced as adverse to the national interest. The argumentative reciprocity of nationalism and internationalism had long been an ideological ingredient in the competition between traditional and modern art. But when shrinking markets made artistic culture aim for increased state support, it tended to align itself with government and party politics, and modern internationalism became an even greater liability. In 1931, *Izvestija* denounced entries by modern architects to the Palace of Soviets competition for their “Americanism and Corbusianry [...] hostile [...] to us.”⁽⁵⁷⁾ In 1934, a French right-wing critic hailed the selection of a traditionalist design for the Museum of Modern Art in Paris as a defeat of “the fervent adherents of integral cubism, so dear to certain architects of recent import.”

Because business in early 20th-century Europe subscribed to an internationalist ideology of trade, unfettered by national limitations, the upper-middle-class looked favorably on the internationalist cachet of modern art. Political elites advocating strong states, in turn, defended traditional art for the sake of national autarky. In Germany, a veritable “Struggle for Art” was fought out in 1911 on those terms. When the First World War confronted France and Germany, whose modern artistic cultures had fraternized before, nationalist opposition against modern art on both sides gained the upper hand. In both states, attempts at upholding the internationalist affiliations of modern art were denounced as cultural treason. Numerous modern artists expediently turned nationalist themselves. Although the decade after World War I brought a limited rebound of modern internationalism, in tandem with the governments’ and ruling elites’ need for international accommodation, it was often contested by domestic nationalism. Likewise, state-supported foreign promotion of Soviet constructivism under the catchword of an ‘International of Art’ incurred anti-Bolshevik hostility.

The relapse to anti-internationalist ideologies in the art of the Depression was fanned by the growing confrontation of political systems. The farther the three totalitarian states went in politicizing their artistic cultures, the more stridently did they brand modern art as a deviation from, or even as a threat to, the political cohesion of their underlying societies. In democratic France, which lacked a one-party ideology of

governance, anti-internationalist attacks on modern art, though rampant in the public sphere, stopped short of being carried over into politics. In Italy, where the Fascist movement had been launched in opposition to the Left, they were limited to denunciations of Bolshevik influence in debates about architecture. It was in the Soviet Union and in Germany, with their relentless enforcement of monolithic ideologies in mutually hostile terms, that anti-internationalist polemics against modern art were used to back up the enforced development of an art to suit their political systems. In Italy and France, where the nationalist credentials of artistic culture were not tied to foreign confrontations, such polemics were scarce.

/ 2.2.2 **ANTI-IMPERIALISM, ANTI-SEMITISM, ANTI-BOLSHEVISM**

The Soviet charge of internationalism against modern art was cast in anti-‘imperialist’ terms. It pertained to the ideological confrontation with the alliance of capitalist states which refused admitting the USSR into the world trade system. Although the First Five-Year Plan depended on US and German technical assistance, its flanking political culture was fiercely nationalist. After Germany turned National Socialist in 1933, the Politburo responded by framing the ‘Third Period’ assessment of international relations. According to its long-term forecast, the Depression would eventually prompt capitalist states to confront “socialism in one country” by force of arms, a replay of their military intervention in the Russian Civil War of 1918-1919. It was in accord with this assessment, that Osip Beskin, head of the critics’ section in the Moscow Artists’ Council and editor of its two art journals, *Iskusstvo* and *Tvorchestvo*, in his book *Formalism in Painting* (see Chapter 3.2 / 2.1.3) argued his rejection of modern art with the interrelated terms “internationalist,” “bourgeois,” and “imperialist.”

Unlike the Soviet ideological correlation of internationalism in art with imperialism in world politics, the National Socialist branding of modern art as one of the tools of a Jewish world conspiracy to sap the cultural health of the German race was an imaginary proposition, part of the regime’s rabid anti-Semitism, based on neither historical experience nor political assessment. Already in a speech of 1923, Hitler had addressed rampant German anti-Semitism when he said: “Everything international in the arts and sciences is tantamount to kitsch: we only need to look at these so-called artistic creations of the cubists, futurists, and the like in order to recognize at once that here we deal with the corruption of art by Jewish, alien spirits.”⁽⁵⁸⁾ Thirteen years later, addressing the Nuremberg party rally of 1936, he warned that “the tale of an ‘internationalism’ of art is [...] just as stupid as it is dangerous.”⁽⁵⁹⁾ “We all know that it is the goal of Bolshevism,” he said earlier in the speech, “to eradicate existing national leaderships based on the organic blood community and to replace them with [...] the Jewish element.”⁽⁶⁰⁾ Hitler overlooked that Soviet art policy was just as anti-internationalist as his.

The approximation of anti-Semitism to anti-Bolshevism was uniquely German. Since 1936 at the latest, the regime inserted the anti-internationalist campaign against modern art into the mounting political confrontation with the Soviet Union. Thus, the national tour of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition was paired with anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic propaganda shows (see Chapter 1.2/1.3.3). Anti-Bolshevism was a common ingredient in the nationalist opposition to modern art in all three capitalist states. Thus, during the debate on the first Palazzo del Littorio competition in the Italian Chamber of Deputies on May 26, 1934, former party general secretary Roberto Farinacci condemned modern architecture as Marxist, Bolshevik, and "German" all at once. The anti-Bolshevik polemics against the internationalism of modern art was a belated response to the earliest Bolshevik government's support for the promotion of an 'International of Modern Art,' which, during the years 1919-1922, was linked to the Comintern's strategy of international subversion. By 1923, after Communist uprisings in Germany had come to nothing, it was abandoned.

/ 2.2.3 SPECIOUS CHARGES

The anti-internationalist charges against modern art which the Soviet and German regimes advanced after 1932, were politically obsolete, since modern art had long abandoned its claims to spearhead revolution. Now they branded modern art as unfit to partake of a national, or nationalist, culture because of its lacking popular acceptance, the ideological allegiance of modern artists notwithstanding. Although Soviet architects and artists such as Ivan Leonidov and Kasimir Malevich played down the internationalist underpinnings of their early work, which for a while had suited a cultural policy that was now discarded, emphasizing instead its 'proletarian' substance, their refurbished ideological conformity did not make up for their political obsolescence. Similarly, although German modern artists and their supportive critics tried to vindicate the national character of their work with contrived references to German art of centuries past—in 1934 a short-lived journal named *Kunst der Nation* (Art of the Nation) was launched for just this purpose—the regime rebuffed them, all the more harshly the less it was able to specify its own prescriptions.

The internationalism issue was raised with a vengeance in the viciously competitive debate culture of Soviet art of that time. On January 8, 1935, architect Mikhail Okhitovich delivered a speech at a conference of the Moscow architects' association entitled "The National Form of Socialist Architecture," intended as a critique of the prevailing nationalism.⁽⁶¹⁾ Calling constructivist architecture "a-national," Okhitovich defended it as a revolutionary achievement which had brought Soviet building up to European standards, hailed its lack of "hierarchy"—that is, of traditionalist decorous symmetry—as egalitarian, and likened its current rejection on nationalist grounds to Fascist and National Socialist practice. The assembled architects denounced him

for Trotskyism. Chairman Alabian—whose trend-setting Red Army Theater, currently under construction, was a paragon of everything Okhitovich had attacked—presided over his expulsion and subsequent official denunciation to the NKVD. Okhitovich was arrested and seems to have perished in a prison camp.

Unlike the nationalist ideologies of artistic culture in France and Italy, which entailed no principled rejection of modern art in general but merely flanked professional quarrels, those of the Soviet Union and Germany had a trenchant political significance. As they were fitted into the propaganda of both states against one another, they became ever more specious. Compared to the National Socialist phantom of a Jewish world conspiracy in league with Bolshevism, the Soviet dread of capitalist encirclement and its 'fascist' advance to the threat of an imminent war was politically more to the point, even though its connection to modern art was no less imaginary. For artists to be curbed, these doctrines were framed as beyond appeal. Ironically, at the Paris World Exposition of 1937, the traditionalist make-up of the Soviet and German Pavilions was so compatible, not just between the two but also with the French Palais de Chaillot, that all three could be viewed as monumental achievements of a truly international art in a fleeting panorama of peaceful world relations.

/ 2.3 THE FRENCH EQUATION

/ 2.3.1 LIMITS OF INTERNATIONALISM

In 1929 academic painter Léon Bérard became President of the 'League for the Defense of Art' (*Ligue pour la défense de l'art*), which was "to protect the French tradition, in artistic matters, against international influences."⁽⁶²⁾ This goes to show how easily, even within the culture of the Third Republic, opposition to modern art could be advanced on nationalist grounds. Under Bérard's two tenures as Minister of Education between 1919 and 1924, modern art, in recognition of its prominence on the international art market, had received some state support, limited, to be sure, in proportion to its minority status within the totality of diverse tendencies due to be recognized by the Third Republic's even-handed art policy. Here, however, the issue of national versus international art was not related to the antagonism between traditional and modern art, as heatedly as the press tended to debate it in those terms. When the issue was raised in the contest for funding at the start of the Depression, it was in the nationalist terms of French superiority, not of popular response.

Seven years later, the emphatic internationalism of the Popular Front should have surpassed the timid efforts of preceding arts administrations at reconciling democratic pluralism with cultural nationalism in their recognition of modern art. However, its recalibration of the balance between the alternatives of traditional versus modern art and nationalism versus internationalism remained limited. Léon Blum's new

government drew on the working-class-based internationalism of the Second and Third Internationals to fashion a new, ambitious cultural policy whose ideological mass support was focused on the irreconcilable issues of pacifism and the Spanish Civil War. Under the coalition premise, traditional as well as modern art were encouraged to address both issues. The first International Congress for the Defense of Culture, held in Paris on June 21-25, 1935, had set the ideological terms for backing up the Popular Front's interrelated goals of combating 'fascism' and fostering a class-transcending culture. Here, some sympathizers of modern art changed course towards revalidating traditional art in order to address 'the people.'

It was the inherent contradiction of French Popular Front culture that it claimed to be internationalist and national—albeit not nationalist—at once. For propaganda, to be sure, the government would rely on the international credentials of modern art. Domestically, on the other hand, with Comintern encouragement, it promoted traditional art of a national pedigree for the sake of popular appeal. That the two lengthy debates on painting in 1935 and on realism in 1936 should have addressed the alternatives of traditional and modern art in terms of popular response, without resorting to nationalist arguments, was due to the movement's internationalism as a tenet of conviction. It was the conservative opposition in the public sphere which took up such arguments again. However, ideological controversies had little if any impact on public art policy, which, because of its long-term pluralist premises, stayed clear of any principled controversy. It was no different under the conservative governments, which in 1938 replaced the policies of the Popular Front but kept Education Minister Jean Zay and Fine Arts Director Georges Huisman in their posts.

/ 2.3.2 **AGGRESSION OR COOPTATION**

Even within the culture of modern art in France, anti-internationalism had been rampant since the early twenties, spearheaded by modern art critics Camille Mauclair and Waldemar George. Since the start of the Depression, it gained in popularity. Now both writers drew on anti-Semitic, anti-Bolshevik and pro-fascist arguments in 'defense' of French art, yet without turning on modern art per se. Mauclair's and George's rightist stance did not prevent incoming Education Minister Anatole de Monzie from appointing both to his newly-created, large commission charged with overseeing state purchases in 1932, nor Fine Arts Director Huisman from appointing them to the art selection committee for the Palais de Chaillot at the Paris Expo in 1937. In both assignments, Mauclair and George surely worked to keep French art policy preponderantly traditional, but committee pluralism tempered their ideological intransigence. Neither did their public resonance through the art press net them the kind of political backing that it would have taken to steer official art policy toward a more traditionalist course.

The concurrent staging of the two first state-sponsored exhibitions of modern art in Paris during the summer of 1937 was tailor-made to squelch the debate on internationalism in modern art criticism. The exhibition at the Petit Palais was limited to artists of French nationality. In response, the exhibition in the Orangerie was devoted to foreign artists practicing in Paris. That Jean Cassou, Education Minister Jean Zay's Fine Arts representative, should have served on the boards of both shows suggests official support for the pairing. It acted as an institutional self-correction of a potentially exclusionary nationalism that would not have suited the culture of modern art. Thematically, both shows were kept devoid of politically controversial works. A concurrent exhibition of modern French art in the Berlin Academy of Arts, jointly sponsored by the Popular Front and National Socialist governments, did not heed this balance. It was focused on established masters such as Matisse and Braque and excluded immigrant and Jewish artists. The generic internationalism of modern art in France was diplomatically elided.

Only with its commission of Jacques Lipchitz, an immigrant Lithuanian sculptor of Jewish descent, to create the Prometheus figure over the entrance of the 'Palais de la Découverte' as its most ambitious symbol at the Paris Expo did the Popular Front government provoke a nationalist backlash against modern art, whose ascendancy coincided with its fall from power (see Chapter 1.3/3.3.3). The temporary placement of the makeshift, albeit giant, plaster figure of deliberately raw appearance, smack into the middle of a continuous string of graceful gilt bronze statues from the turn of the century that covered the façade of the old Grand Palais, could not but fuel the anti-modern resentment of the conservative press. Lipchitz, a veteran of modern sculpture, must have been aware of the inevitable provocation. When plans transpired to place *Prometheus* on the Champs-Élysées after the closure of the Expo, the right-wing newspaper *Le Matin* launched a petition against what it called a "specimen of an art as the Popular Front conceives of it."⁽⁶³⁾ Although the petition received few signatures, it stirred up enough public sentiment for the Seine Prefect to have the sculpture discarded.

/ 2.3.3 **SURREALIST INTERNATIONALISM**

The most internationally-minded artists' group active anywhere in Europe, the Surrealists in France, subscribed to the ideology of internationalism without reference to any social or political base. They refused to serve the interests of the working-class and rejected the efforts of both the Second and Third Internationals to forge an electoral majority for the Popular Front. In his speech to the 1935 Congress for the Defense of Culture in Paris, Breton denounced the Communists' accommodation to electoral politics as a replay of the *Union Sacrée* at the start of World War I, which had broken the international organizations of working-class parties in their pacifist fraternization and the international community of writers and artists in their quest for modernism.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Three years later, the Surrealists' proclamation *Neither Your War Nor*

Your Peace, written by Breton, restated this categorical denunciation in view of the approaching war. Denouncing the “scandalous complicities of the Second and Third Internationals”⁽⁶⁵⁾ as a betrayal of the working-class, Breton in effect dismissed all operative forces of the Left.

While the Popular Front, keen on revalidating national traditions for an enlargement of its cultural constituencies, never assembled artists in any internationalist project, the Surrealists staged two exhibitions—1936 in London and 1938 in Paris—with the term “International” in their titles. Both shows were unique in featuring artists from all over the world. Although both shows lacked any political message, Breton wrote that it was an ominous, historic synchronicity that the London exhibition should have coincided in time with a general strike in France, during which the surrealists called for armed workers’ militias and for a violent takeover of power. He made it appear as if both events had an analogous political significance. In a scathing critique of the London show, Anthony Blunt, at that time a committed Communist, contrasted what he rated as an anti-rational, anarchist, marginal art on view with a hypothetical “new art [...] beginning to arise, the product of the proletariat, which is again performing its true function, that of propaganda,”⁽⁶⁶⁾ as envisaged by the Popular Front.

Breton’s attempt in late 1938 to unite his few remaining adherents with several other artists and writers in a minuscule ‘International Federation of Revolutionary Artists’ (FIARI), which fizzled away even before the start of World War II, no longer envisaged a popular response. The founding manifesto he had written in far-away Mexico, together with Lev Trotsky (see Chapter 4.2), was only concerned with artists. If Diego Rivera, co-signer of the Manifesto, had participated in the writing, his long-lasting, successful efforts at using his public murals to win over peasants and workers for revolutionary politics could not have been ignored. However, the text ignores the common people, and this at a time when totalitarian regimes boasted mass popularity of their state-sponsored art in traditional form. In signaling a deliberate detachment of revolutionary art from any public impact, the Manifesto marks the point in time when the ideology of revolutionary art stood defeated, while that of an art for the people stood triumphant. More generally, it unwittingly acknowledged the political irrelevancy that its class-based marginality had bestowed on modern art at the end of the Depression.

/ 3 **TOTALITARIAN ENFORCEMENT**

/ 3.1 **MASS BASE OF ART POLICY**

/ 3.1.1 **COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW**

“Art for the People” as a policy meant art for the people to view rather than to own. It was promoted to make up for the decline of private art markets catering to

middle-class buyers, as the purchase of art fell to the public domain—most severely in the Soviet Union, inconsistently in Germany, and even less in Italy. “Art for the People” became a synonym for art of the state. Claiming to represent their underlying populace in its entirety, totalitarian regimes sought to foster art not just as an aesthetic medium of government propaganda, but as a binding paradigm for a national culture no longer diversified by educational privilege. Because the people were meant to be politically homogeneous, their art was supposed to be appreciated by all. The achievement of this goal depended on the enforcement of a classless society. Because the Soviet regime went farthest in this regard, it stressed the populist appeal of Socialist Realism. Because the German regime did not, its promotion of traditional art as popular art yielded no socially relevant results. And because the Fascist regime merely politicized extant class structures, it did not push the idea.

The different terms for a mass art public—“the masses” in the Soviet Union and “the people” (*Volk*) in Germany, with no corresponding term in Italy—suggest the different social structures and educational levels of their populations, which both regimes had to consider in their attempt to prescribe forms for a general acceptance of the ideologies art was to convey. While the ruthless doctrinal logic of Socialist Realism pertains to the campaign for a renewed struggle to do away with class divisions, which started with the First Five-Year Plan and lasted until the end of the Great Terror in 1938, the tentative imposition of an unspecified traditionalism by the National Socialist regime pertains to a social policy which did not envisage an alternative social order. The Fascist regime, by contrast, never construed the relationship between artistic culture and the populace as discrepant enough to require any political adjustment, because it allowed a pluralist art market to obviate the style of official commissions. As a result, neither the party nor the government preempted art policy as heavy-handedly as in the other two totalitarian states.

Enforcement of populist art policies by both the Soviet and German regimes followed totalitarian strategies of incremental coercion, extending a perceived majority support by segments of the populace into the semblance of a total mass acceptance which allowed for no more dissent, and was subsequently invoked in institutional measures of state intervention. This seemingly social cohesion of style is what so impressed the author of a critical reportage about the Soviet, German, and Italian pavilions at the Paris World Exposition of 1937 in the French Catholic newspaper *Etude*, titled “Images of Totalitarian Civilizations,”⁽⁶⁷⁾ in contrast to what he perceived as the social disparity weakening French democracy. The author took the mobilization of enthusiastic masses by their governments at face value. Ignoring the political oppression, to which it was due, he credited it with the cultural self-assurance the totalitarian pavilions exuded. He could not hold back his grudging admiration for the spontaneous commitment to a common cause, a unity of political will that a democratic government could no longer inspire.

/ 3.1.2 USSR

In the propaganda drive for the First Five-Year Plan, Soviet art was enjoined to address itself to an artless mass of peasants and laborers nationwide, far away from the cultural centers at Leningrad and Moscow. The pictorial journal *USSR in Construction* (*USSR na Stroike*) was launched to promote the required acculturation drive, which the regional Party leadership was judged unqualified to lead. The social ascendancy and political empowerment of this kind of leadership had long been the goal of an educational policy which included the arts, and which had motivated their initial subordination to the Commissariat of Education. Modern art had proved incapable of serving such tasks because of its lacking mass acceptance. Modern artists, such as Rodchenko and El Lissitsky, soon switched to photography. When in 1929 the Party organized its own, propagandistic art programs for the enactment of the First Five-Year Plan, the service of the arts for political education was made the foremost goal of art policy. The rise of realism, underway for several years, became a matter of political practicality, not just of ideological preference. It shaped art for the people as a means of indoctrination.

Art policy was now reassigned from the Education Commissariat, newly headed by Andrei Bubnov, a minor official, to the Party's Central Committee and its Secretary, Andrei Zhdanov, a man of higher rank, who made it part of his quasi-populist campaign of mobilizing the regional rank-and-file for self-assertion against their entrenched but ineffectual leadership. Under Zhdanov, art policy was redefined and activated to suit a newly-ascendant, educated intelligentsia, graduates of party schools, polytechnics, military academies and other institutions of higher learning. These so-called 'cadres' were to spearhead the interrelated processes of fictitious democratization of the populace in all the Soviet Republics. For such a purpose, the people's aesthetically unencumbered appreciation of government-sponsored art had to be secured in a binding fashion, so that it could be addressed with ideological consistency. Art came to be charged with projecting an inspiring image of the social and political environment shaped by the Party, which validated art itself as a Socialist accomplishment.

Zhdanov's achievement was to pool his competencies as enforcer of an obedient 'party democracy' and as overseer of an artistic culture that had to be essentially populist. In the latter function, he pressed for programs of an art whose message was exhortatory and triumphant at the same time, praising the masses for their accomplishments and glorifying Party leadership. When Zhdanov, in his opening speech to the first Congress of the Writer's Union in August 1934, officially launched Socialist Realism as a "true and historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development, [aimed at] educating the workers in the spirit of Communism,"⁽⁶⁸⁾ he charged the arts with an educational mission far exceeding their role under the Education Commissariat. Henceforth, the significance of Socialist Realism was elaborated in a host of conferences,

journal articles, and books, yet it was never officially spelled out in any binding form to guide the ever more rigorous political regulation of the arts. It did not have to do so because it was enforced through a personal policy of party purges which engulfed art institutions and artists' organizations, the sole venues of artistic practice.

/ 3.1.3 **GERMANY**

Fundamentally different from the Soviet situation, Hitler and his cultural politicians applied the term "people" to a society whose cultural education they found fully formed. This precondition guided first their pursuit of voting majorities during their rise to power and later their formulation of art policy when they governed. It prevented them from framing any binding paradigm of style. Most segments of German society, from working-class through middle-class to aristocracy, no matter how diverse, had at least a superficial familiarity with, and preference for, traditional art in all its forms. Meanwhile, representatives of modern art, who fancied themselves as a closely-knit elite ahead of their times, tacitly recognized this majority preference. Therefore, during the Weimar Republic, the National Socialists' opposition to modern art could count on the assent of these social groups. Pertaining to their appeal as a catch-all party with no socially circumscribed constituency, it contributed to enlarging their voting base between 1928-1932, when they rose to become a class-transcending mass party. Mass rallies devoted to art policy were part of their campaigns.

Because Hitler, once in office, was sure of this pre-existing mass base for his art policy, he put a stop to efforts by the Party official in charge of artistic culture, Alfred Rosenberg, to subject the arts to a narrow doctrine. Instead, he assigned art policy to Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, who took care not to overcharge art with ideology, his title notwithstanding. On January 24, 1934, Hitler adjudicated the ensuing power struggle between the two cultural politicians by appointing Rosenberg to the newly-created 'Office for the Supervision of the Entire Intellectual and Ideological Schooling and Education of the NSDAP.' Such a restriction of authority to party culture was the opposite of the Bolshevik Party's expansive mission aimed at the Soviet people. Some marginal exhibitions and cultural events, launched during the following two years by Rosenberg's office and affiliated organizations, advanced what he took for paradigms of National Socialist art but failed to attract any significant resonance. Meanwhile, Goebbels' Ministry, promoted traditional art in a flexible fashion with an eye on majority acceptance.

By 1937, mass attendance at the first Great German Art Exhibition confirmed a lasting majority support for traditional art in its government-approved versions. Although some party stalwarts deemed this art politically irrelevant, Goebbels never jeopardized its success by strict demands for ideological contents, although this and every subsequent show included a smattering of propaganda works. Without the

assurance that traditional art would count on majority approval, Hitler and Goebbels would not have risked inviting “the German People” to “judge” modern art at the concurrent ‘Degenerate Art’ show. Although the invitation was a mere rhetorical ploy to ratify a pre-ordained policy judgment, the overwhelming mass attendance of the show seemed to deliver the expected response. Christian Zervos, editor of the *Cahiers d’Art* in Paris, acknowledged this much in a two-part article in April 1937, entitled “Reflections on the Third Reich’s Attempt at a Guided Aesthetics.”⁽⁶⁹⁾ Despite the tentative title, he took the National Socialists’ claims for a mass acceptance of their art at face value, resigning himself to the minority status of modern art as the price to pay for its superiority.

/ 3.2 **PROPAGANDA ART**

/ 3.2.1 **FUNCTIONAL MISSION**

The pursuit of art policy as a priority of totalitarian governments was due to their expectation that the ideological appeal of an artistic culture with guaranteed mass acceptance would contribute to the populist assent they sought and claimed. Only the reliance on such an artistic culture would stand a chance for making art into a propaganda tool, for converting aesthetic appreciation into political concurrence. This reciprocity of assent and propaganda was at the heart of totalitarian art policy. While its political intention was to make art fit for service as an instrument of indoctrination, its ideological rhetoric maintained that the government was giving the people the art they had wanted all along. This contradiction was part of the totalitarian doctrine asserting that the people want dictatorship. It was not just a question of how art works should look and what they should show. For maximum political impact, all three totalitarian regimes publicized their management of artistic culture as a whole—competitions, exhibitions, prizes, speeches, publications—to create an atmosphere of popular participation. High attendance statistics were regularly published to confirm it.

However, totalitarian cultural officials would not have spent as much effort as they did on the professional management of artistic culture just for making art into a propaganda tool on a par with other media. The assignment of art to propaganda depended on debates and decisions that weighed the relationship between art and propaganda as a critical issue to calibrate. All three regimes took care to allocate artistic culture its distinct place within a wide array of visual propaganda techniques. They were aware of its professional conditions and political efficacy compared to the mass media of photography and cinema, both of which they recognized as having a much wider public appeal than traditional visual arts could ever attain. The aesthetic standards these regimes wished to see upheld and developed for the arts were meant to preserve their essentially idealist determination. Only in Soviet art of the First Five-Year Plan were paintings and posters officially aligned. With the switch

to Socialist Realism, the Party returned to keeping the visual arts above the look of mass publicity.

Between 1929 and 1932, when both the Bolshevik and the National Socialist parties embarked on campaigns for sweeping political change, they were ready to determine what kind of art could be made operative for their propaganda objectives: implementation of the First Five-Year Plan in the USSR and winning the fast-repeating elections of the Weimar Republic. Both campaigns excluded modern art. However, while Soviet art authorities staged a pre-determined contest between various artists' groups in order to decide upon the most effective propaganda, National Socialist politicians, unable to draw on any artistic accomplishment by members of their party, merely exploited popular aversion against modern art for their efforts to delegitimize the Weimar 'system.' While the ruling Bolsheviks could rely on a panoply of institutions capable of organizing artists and steering their work toward their goals, the National Socialists, still in opposition, had no institutional clout and counted no artists of any standing among their ranks. As a result, they had to fall back on attack politics by their affiliated cultural organizations, which offered no positive paradigms.

/ 3.2.2 **THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR THE ARTS**

In the Soviet Union, the transfer of political responsibility for the arts from the government to the Party in 1929 was prompted by the determination to activate the arts as functional components of an all-out cultural mobilization drive to promote the premature fulfillment of the First Five-Year Plan. To that end, a special 'Five-Year Plan for the Arts' was drawn up. Soviet artists and intellectuals, as well as Western European sympathizers such as Louis Aragon and Walter Benjamin, viewed the propagandistic concentration of Soviet art upon the Five-Year Plan as the ultimate political vindication of artistic engagement with social progress. It seemed to them to vindicate the avant-garde ideal of making art move into life. In the competition between Soviet artists' groups to outdo one another in compliance with their new mission, the 'Association of Revolutionary Artists' even replaced the catchword "Art to the Masses" by "For a Proletarian Art." The change suggested that artists were ready to reduce their work from an offering to the people to a mouthpiece for the people's aspirations.

The most consequential undertaking of the new policy consisted in nationwide programs of sending 'artist brigades' to factories and agricultural combines. By listening to workers and their party representatives on location, they were to work out a tailor-made propaganda art. Although these 'brigades' were established by a government decree on July 15, 1929, their oversight fell to Party agencies. The collective organization of artists for close cooperation with industry and agriculture at minimal fees was aimed at aligning the economics of art production with the planned

economy in general. The political control of art production at the source made it appear as if artists worked directly for the people, their sole source of support after the abolition of a private art market. In an article entitled “Proletarian Artistic Culture and the Bourgeois Reaction” of 1929, Pavel Novitsky, head of the Moscow State Art School, called the art of the Five-Year Plan “production practice,” cancelling its distinction as a productive activity of its own. Reviving the productivist turn of constructivism eight years earlier, he elevated the artist into an “artist-engineer, leader and organizer-propagandist.”⁽⁷⁰⁾

In the course of this political subordination, artists working in traditional media faced the question of how to measure up to tasks better served by films, posters and other mass-reproduced propaganda media. In numerous debates about how traditional arts could be reframed to suit the objectives of the Five-Year Plan, the crucial issue was their reproducibility. In 1931, the Central Committee’s ‘Resolution on Posters’ transferred the oversight of poster production from the Education Commissariat to the Party’s own Department for Agitation and Mass Campaigns. The poster format was set up as a paradigm for both painting and photography, and the commissioning of works was made dependent on how they would come across in print. The mechanized weaving of colorful textiles with images and emblems of the Five-Year Plan was the ultimate fulfillment of a reproducible art, not just to be seen, but to be worn. Made into personal apparel, these textiles turned the people into a live propaganda medium. The pictorial stylization of their workday became the pattern of their Sunday best.

/ 3.2.3 THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF 1931

The closest the National Socialists came to the populist propaganda drive in Soviet art during the early phase of the Depression was the staging of mass rallies devoted to art policy in their 1931 national election campaign. Speakers exploited their audience’s resentment against modern art as part of their attacks on the political culture of the Weimar Republic. In June 1930, the Party’s cultural organization, the ‘Combat League for German Culture,’ had adopted architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg’s (see Chapter 1.3/1.2.2) broadside on modern art and architecture, advanced in his book *Art and Race (Kunst und Rasse)* of 1928, as its art-political platform. In 1931, the Party featured him as principal speaker on a nationwide propaganda tour. Schultze-Naumburg delivered his lecture ‘Struggle for Art’ at mass rallies in six German cities, chaired by the Party’s cultural official, Alfred Rosenberg (see Chapter 2.1/3.2.3). Here he denounced modern-style housing projects as Bolshevik and juxtaposed slides of modern paintings with photographs of asylum inmates. Yet Rosenberg fell short of advocating any art policy of his own.

The enthusiastic response triggered by these rallies was out of sync with Hitler’s own take on art policy in the public speeches he delivered after 1929, which

were also aimed at garnering electoral majorities, though still with less success. Here he denounced the Weimar government's support of modern art as yet another instance of their unresponsiveness to the people's needs and wishes. Hitler now put aside the ideological charges of biological degeneracy, Jewish conspiracy, or Bolshevik subversion he had leveled against modern art in earlier years, both in his book *My Struggle* of 1925 and in his public speeches—charges still echoed in the pamphlets and journals of the 'Combat League for German Culture' and in Schultze-Naumburg's speeches. Instead, he advanced the hypothetical demand for a direct accountability of art policy to electoral majorities, which he found lacking in the Weimar governments, to the detriment of traditional artists and their public, which he held to be in the majority. Thus Hitler replaced an ideological line of argument with a political one, which pertained to his appeal for economic justice.

The populist resurgence of National Socialist negative art policy during the four years before 1933 pales beside the Soviet 'Five-Year Plan for the Arts,' because it lacked any programmatic practicality. Not only was it launched from opposition rather than authority and hence remained without any tangible achievement, it also could not attract a single artist of some standing to embody what it preached. The conservative, nationalist, and racist clichés lacing Rosenberg's and Schultze-Naumburg's denunciations of the pro-modern art policies of Weimar governments may have had some resonance with their audiences, but their demands for change were not founded on professional considerations, only on ideological precepts for reshaping national culture. No wonder then, that the ideological divide between Hitler and the 'Combat League' was tantamount to an alternative between resentment and practicality, which Hitler immediately decided once in office as he barred the 'Combat League' from the conduct of art policy. Yet, until 1937, his government, with Propaganda Minister Goebbels in charge, proved unable to foster an ideologically articulate, representative art for the people.

/ 3.3 **POPULISM ENFORCED**

/ 3.3.1 **FROM AGITATION TO GUIDANCE**

Between 1932-1933, all three totalitarian regimes enlarged their political mass base by drawing high numbers of new members into their parties and the parties' subordinate organizations. In Germany and Italy, party membership was expanded; in the Soviet Union, repeated purges replaced older members with younger ones. Here they were groomed for a modernized economy in tandem with ideological indoctrination. It was mainly for these new, indoctrinated constituencies, not just for nondescript publics, that the three regimes envisaged a politically charged artistic culture. As was to be expected, part of this culture was devoted to overt propaganda. But

another part was exempt from such tasks, dwelling on enjoyable subject matter in traditional styles, solely for aesthetic satisfaction. This encouragement of an art without political function responded to the longing for a better life in the general societies after the hardship of the first Depression years. Particularly in the Soviet Union, the Party gave up on its attempts at a collectivist social transformation of the working populace and came around to accepting, though not fulfilling, its wishes for a petty-bourgeois lifestyle.

The April Decree of 1932 had established the unified organizational network for framing Socialist Realism as a triumphalist array of pictorial and decorative forms expressing—or pretending to express—people’s contentment with their ostensibly improved living conditions. Its ubiquitous sense of cheerful elation ran concurrent with tightened measures of police terror. At the first All-Soviet Architects Congress in Moscow, which opened on June 16, 1937, people’s delegations from across the nation demanded in unison an architecture designed beyond utility. “The proletariat does not only want to have houses; it does not only want to live there in comfort; it also wants these houses to be beautiful,” Politburo member Lazar Kaganovich asserted in his speech.⁽⁷¹⁾ While committees of construction combines sent messages such as “Create for us the great art of socialism!” to the assembled architects, the congress never addressed the enduring housing shortage. It extolled instead the affective merits of traditional styles, which were mostly applied to official buildings. The populist demand for beauty really meant eliciting admiration for the regime.

In the internal speech of November 26, 1937, to members of the Reich Chamber of Art, where Propaganda Minister Goebbels declared National Socialist ideas as “not yet ripe” for being adequately conveyed by artists (see Chapter 1.2/3.3.1), he resigned himself to downgrading the task of the arts to a non-political enjoyment for the common people, which should not be ideologically overtaxed. “The people,” Goebbels maintained, “want to see and enjoy the beautiful and the sublime. [They want to see] what life so often and so stubbornly withholds from them. Most often we hardly get a proper idea of what a joyless course the life of the people generally takes [...], a world of wonder and sweet appearance is to open up [in art] before its amazed eyes.”⁽⁷²⁾ A joyful art was not to illustrate but only to stage-play a joyful life. With this separation of political indoctrination from aesthetic appreciation, Goebbels took the opposite position to the fusion of the two in Socialist Realism, which was aimed at extolling the political preconditions of the people’s happy life. Given their actual discrepancy, what would Zhdanov have said in a similar internal assessment?

/ 3.3.2 **POLICY CONSOLIDATION**

Between 1938-1939, both the Soviet and the German government adjusted their policies regarding the issue of art for the people to their current social policies

and the attendant propaganda, albeit in different ways. While the USSR had an ideologically persuasive art for the people in place, German art authorities allowed for a popular art without an express ideological message. In the Soviet Union, artists, deprived of a private market, had no choice but to work for government or party agencies, the military, and their associated organizations. These ubiquitous institutions stood for the people whose life they were meant to manage. They were in a position to ensure the popular appeal of art production at the source. Themes and styles were under control. In Germany, by contrast, government commissions now went mostly to elite artists, while ordinary artists, all organized in the Reich Chamber of Art, were dispatched to the open market to make a living. Their work had to be ideologically nondescript in order to sell. It was placed under secret surveillance only to monitor the degree of its adherence to government-approved quality standards.

The Party's new articles regarding the attainment of a classless society, approved by its XVIII Congress in March 1939, endowed the ideology of *narodnost* (from *narod*, i.e. "people") with an enhanced political mission. The term, which had been invoked in the debates on Socialist Realism since 1934, sealed the totalitarian uniformity of the populace, as if their social distinctions had disappeared. Within artistic culture, *narodnost* mandated an overriding orientation of the arts toward the supposed needs and preferences of the people, which meant a thematic focus on ordinary social life under Party guidance. A decorous and realistic appearance of art and architecture, elaborated over and above functional and thematic requirements, was to convey a contented lifestyle soaring over the fulfillment of basic needs. The concept entailed an inclusive appropriation of past traditions, national traditions first and foremost, but also other European traditions, making Socialist Realism look familiar. The widened scope of style paradigms was balanced by the narrowed scope of themes. As a result, the variety of traditions drawn upon did not prevent Socialist Realism from looking uniform.

Hitler's government, at first unable and then unwilling to coax organized artists into producing work to suit its representative or propagandistic needs, desisted from similarly setting the terms for what they produced. However, starting in early 1938, it placed the entire artistic culture, artists and public alike, under surveillance by the SS Security Service (SD) so that it could adjust its art policies to the popular mood (see Chapter 1.2/1.3.3). The *Reports from the Reich*, compiled by the SD, not only recorded how artists and the public reacted to the art policies of the regime, but also submitted assessments of their economic, social and ideological success or failure. Propaganda Minister Goebbels assiduously studied them in order to fine-tune the relationship between art policy and social policy. From the start, SD agents registered artists' complaints about the lack of government commissions and supportive measures. Unconcerned about political control, artists were missing political guidance.

Their dissatisfaction implicitly touched upon the elitist turn of National Socialist state art now in the making (see Chapter 1.2 / 3.3.1), which discarded the ideal of an art by and for the people.

/ 3.3.3 POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

Since 1938, the ideology of *narodnost* replaced the rhetoric of class struggle which had flanked the large-scale, murderous repression, now attenuated, if not suspended, after the last show trial in Moscow had been settled. Socialist Realism was no longer to be a projection of future accomplishment, but a celebration of current achievement. This is what the Soviet art show at the New York World Fair of 1939 (see Chapters 1.1 / 3.1.2, 3.3.3, 4.2 / 2.2.2) purported to display. "Soviet painting is optimistic, it speaks of joyous feelings," said the catalog. "Landscapes show the changing aspect of the country. Portraits show its new people."⁽⁷³⁾ Such a peaceful vision covered up for the lagging arms production, for which the Hitler-Stalin Pact had bought a two-year respite. Still, when the Stalin Prizes in art were newly created in the same year, none of them went to work depicting the contented lives of ordinary people. Familiar icons of government acclamation such as Sergei Gerasimov's *Stalin and Voroshilov in the Kremlin*, Vasilii Efanov's *Unforgettable Meeting*, and Sergei Merkurov's Stalin statue at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition monopolized the awards.

The surveillance reports by the SD on the German art scene, which likewise started in 1938, suggest that art authorities were less interested in fostering political propaganda than in ensuring quality in the rendering of ordinary themes. They were concerned with maintaining professional standards for a recovering art market, by now in steady expansion. Accordingly, though Goebbels and his officials had to read complaints recorded by SD agents from visitors to the Great German Art Exhibitions, about the scarcity of political imagery, they never attempted to encourage an ideological focus of submissions, at least not until 1941, when war propaganda was in demand. It was the ever-growing number of visitors alone that counted for success. That nothing was done to correct the predominance of quasi-idyllic subjects at the trend-setting Great German Art Exhibitions of 1938 and 1939, goes to show that Goebbels rated those shows as venues of popular taste rather than of political indoctrination. It was sufficient for them to confirm the people's likings to be in sync with official preference. Works commissioned by the government were shown in separate rooms.

In both states, the unrelenting suppression of modern art during the five preceding years had readied art production for a match between approved offerings and public approval. This success of art policy was pre-conditioned by a spontaneous, if not loudly voiced, ideological conformity on the part of a majority which had been spared political oppression. While the published attendance figures for the Great German Art Exhibitions, which attained upwards of several hundreds of thousands,

seem to bear out the government's assertion of overwhelming public acceptance, comparable Soviet assertions of mass acceptance were not backed up by any numbers. It may be for this reason that they sound more hyperbolic than their German counterparts. Both the Soviet and the German regimes invoked the will of the people to justify their severe if different clampdowns on artistic culture. Were their claims to have accomplished an art for the people borne out by 1939? It seems so, but since in totalitarian cultures the balance between imposition and demand is hard to calibrate, the question remains open.



2/ Ideologies

2.1 / Art of the People

p. 122

2.2 / Revolutionary Art

p. 156

2.3 / Ideologies and Policies

p. 190

2.2 / Revolutionary Art

/1 APOGEE TO ECLIPSE

/1.1 THE FIRST WAVE OF REVOLUTIONARY ART

/1.1.1 MODERN ART OF REVOLUTIONARY REGIMES

In the time between the two world wars, the ideology of a revolutionary art in the political sense of the term—neither in its metaphorical sense of breaking with tradition, nor as a medium to convey revolutionary themes—became widespread and culminated in the Great Depression, until it was overshadowed by the ideology of an art of the people. Long before, an ambivalent understanding of revolution in either political or artistic terms had been commonplace in the tradition of modern art on the part of both its advocates and its adversaries. Aggressive attempts to discard prevailing conventions in the name of intellectual or creative freedom were styled as ‘revolutionary,’ even if they lacked any political intent. In the long run, however, the ideological potential of the term could not be restricted to its metaphorical significance as an innovation breaking with a norm. Modern artists took to linking professional issues to political dissent, and their critics branded their work as politically subversive. In this way, modern art could serve as a stand-in for political opposition, real or perceived.

This development had its roots in the association of art and social dissent dating back to the late 18th century in France. Within the expert culture of exhibitions and art criticism fostered by the upper middle-class, social conflicts were underscored with an ideological rhetoric that resonated with the social and political movements leading up to the French Revolution. Professional challenges to artistic conventions began to sound like political interventions in the general culture. Shy of organized political activity, they did not reach beyond a self-assertive freedom discourse. Throughout the 19th century, revolutionary movements sought expression in traditional art, no matter how assiduously modern artists sympathized with them. Thus, before the First World War, the revolutionary penchant of modern art was limited to an opposition against the social order without taking roots in any political constituency. Since modern art never challenged any political institutions except for opportunity or censorship, it was spared oppression, quite differently from the oppression endured by literature.

It was only after the First World War that the revolutionary posture of modern art came to be politically acknowledged by the Bolshevik and Fascist regimes. Both

legitimized the coups-d'état that had brought them to power over parliamentary governments as 'revolutions' on account of their populist backing, and both valued modern artists for their revolutionary aspirations, at least in the beginning. The institutional ascendancy of modern art in Bolshevik cultural policy appeared to validate those aspirations, and in return exposed modern art in capitalist states to ideological attacks. Even after modern artists' initial predominance had been curtailed, they stuck to the government as closely as it allowed them and continued to profess their revolutionary credentials. The Fascist regime, on the other hand, conceded modern artists no political clout. Although in 1919 Futurist leader Marinetti and his group had participated in the foundation of the party, they were shut out of cultural policy when Mussolini formed his first government two years later. Their hyperbolic calls for an upset of the social order did not jibe with Mussolini's wooing of big business.

/1.1.2 **RETREAT TO THE USSR**

Emulating the uncompromising leadership claims of the Bolshevik Party, with which they shared the avant-garde ideal of a trail-blazing minority, modern artists were the only segment of their profession to support the Bolshevik overthrow of the parliamentary government emerging from the February Revolution. As a reward, they instantly received official dominance. These modern artists now declared the challenge to traditional art they had advanced before the First World War and styled as revolutionary in the commonplace non-political sense of the term, as a move now ratified by the October Revolution. In the words of their leader, Vladimir Tatlin: "What happened in '17 in a social sense had been carried out in our fine craft in 1914."⁽⁷⁴⁾ Within three or four years, however, political leaders steered them away from their utopian social schemes of life and labor toward serving their own drive for a propagandistic culture of state consolidation. Yet, even after they had sidelined, and eventually dislodged, modern artists from institutional authority, Soviet art policy continued to be styled as 'revolutionary.'

At first, Russian modern artists even engaged themselves in the Third International's promotion of a Communist world revolution in Western Europe. As early as January 1919, three months before the founding of that agency, a group of them, attached to the Arts Section of the Commissariat of Public Enlightenment, launched an 'International of Art,' with Tatlin as their spokesman.⁽⁷⁵⁾ At the Comintern's Second Congress, held in the summer of 1920, Tatlin re-dedicated his model of a 'Monument to the Soviet Revolution,' built in December 1919, to the Third International. He grafted the ideology of the 'International of Art' onto the expansive political agenda of the Comintern, currently pursued by the military invasion of Poland which was soon to fail. Thus was the generic internationalism of modern art made to serve the Comintern's political design of a world revolution spreading from Russia to the industrialized states of the

West, a reversal of the direction Karl Marx had envisaged it to take. This turnabout was based on Lenin's and Rosa Luxemburg's projections of a transition from imperialist to class wars.

During the last two years of the First World War, the political radicalism of numerous German modern artists and art critics had sharpened to the point of embracing the November Revolution of 1918, and after that even the Communist-led revolutions of January and March 1919 in Berlin and of May 1919 in Munich, as political fulfillments of their cultural aspirations. By 1923, however, the Comintern had to resign itself to the successful defense of a post-war capitalist order against a string of Communist uprisings not just in Germany, but in other states of Central and Western Europe as well. Withdrawing its support for an 'International of Modern Art,' it started to back the promotion of traditional art by workers' cultural organizations under Communist control. It was in reaction to this retreat that surrealist writers and artists in France forged and sustained the most dogmatic revolutionary posture devised for modern art during the post-war decade anywhere in Europe. Independent of the Comintern, and with no ties to Soviet artists' groups, they nonetheless professed their allegiance to the Soviet regime. Some of them even joined the Communist Party.

/ 1.1.3 FROM REVOLUTION TO MODERNIZATION

Emboldened by their political empowerment, 'Futurist' artists in Russia sought to altogether replace traditional with modern art in institutions of teaching and research, and even in museums. In a poem of 1918, Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote: "You find a White Guard/And put him to the wall./But have you forgotten Raphael?/[...]/It's time/For bullets/To rattle the Museum walls."⁽⁷⁶⁾ Four years later, the same artists followed the turn to Constructivism as an imaginary corollary to the reconstruction ideal of the New Economic Policy. "The destructive revolutionary activity which laid bare art's fundamentals, brought about a change in artists' consciousness and faced them with the problem of construction as a purposeful task," declared Warwara Stepanova in 1921.⁽⁷⁷⁾ In 1923, finally, War Commissar Lev Trotsky presented a reasoned rebuke to the Futurists' revolutionary claims. "There is no revolutionary art as yet," he wrote in his book *Literature and Revolution*. In a reversal of positions, the traditionalist 'Association of Revolutionary Artists' (AKhRR), founded in the same year, defined its own ideal of revolutionary art in opposition to modern art.

Still, long after modern artists' domestic ascendancy had been curbed, Soviet foreign cultural policy, capitalizing on the leftist ideological tendencies inherent in modern artistic culture, continued to enlist some of them—El Lissitzky first and foremost—for its schemes of promoting Communism in the arts abroad. Now they were to champion Soviet culture as an ideal environment for modern design. In his *Literature and Revolution*, Trotsky singled out Tatlin's *Monument of the Third International* as a

case for his rejection of any revolutionary claims by modern artists. He chided it for the specious projection of a building that would never function and therefore made no political sense.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Henceforth, the famous work served Soviet propaganda with a different message. One year later, when translations of Trotsky's book into Western languages began to spread his political put-down of the *Monument* throughout Western states, Tatlin was commissioned to build a smaller, streamlined, and vertically straightened version, to be placed in the center of the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1925 as a paragon of Soviet design.

Before the First World War, Italian Futurism had been the only European art movement to mount an all-out 'anti-bourgeois' challenge to the social order. Short-circuiting the concepts of revolution and artistic avant-garde, Marinetti, in his book *Beyond Communism* of 1920, advanced a seeming paradox: "Power to revolutionary art and artists [...] The vast proletariat of geniuses will rule."⁽⁷⁹⁾ However, at the Second Fascist Party Congress, held the same year, Mussolini, rejecting Marinetti's demand for an exclusive support of such a paradoxical artists' proletariat, pursued the opposite policy: an agreement with the upper middle-class under the catchword 'restoration.' In defiance, Marinetti and his Futurists publicly split off from the Party. Thus, the Futurists were unable to profit from Mussolini's successful coup d'état, which was promoted as a political revolution without class antagonism. They were kept at arm's length when it came to fashioning the revolutionary culture of Fascism. When they returned to the fascist fold in 1924, they were restricted to embellishing technological modernization.

/1.2 THE SECOND WAVE OF REVOLUTIONARY ART

/1.2.1 REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE

During the first four years of the Depression, all three totalitarian regimes re-fashioned the term revolution for cultural programs intended to promote a coercive restructuring of society from above. Aggressive drives for social change, aimed at enhancing the political control of their populations and the authority of their leaders, were labeled revolutionary in order to mask their illegitimacy. That this rebound of revolutionary ideology should have accompanied a consolidation of personal dictatorship makes it appear cynical. It propagated a short-circuit between populist and dictatorial politics. The dynamic quest for system change and the challenge to power inherent in the term made rule from above appear as a popular movement from below. The resurgent appropriation of the term 'revolutionary' for the new cultural policies of all three totalitarian regimes drained it of any oppositional significance. Modern artists espousing revolution as a hypothetical extreme of cultural dissent found that it had been converted into its opposite—official enforcement of uniform assent.

The intervention of the Soviet government in all aspects of social life, as it pursued its new policy of a planned state economy with the stated goal of achieving 'socialism in one country,' was expressly featured as yet another revolution, one even more radical than that of October 1917. It coincided with the start of the Stalin cult, which steadily grew in tandem with the terrorization of the populace. In Italy, the exhibition to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Fascist Revolution, staged in Rome in 1932, coincided with Mussolini's reshuffling of his government, which secured him personal oversight of the most important ministries and direct command of the armed forces. The mass base of these policies, intended to strengthen the dictatorship, was to be monumentalized in a new party headquarters, the Palazzo del Littorio. Unlike the other two regimes, the National Socialist regime had no revolutionary ascendancy to celebrate, only a regional coup-d'état squashed in Munich in 1923. Yet, after its parliamentary ascendancy of 1933, it briefly fashioned a revolutionary ideology to flank its breakneck abolition of democratic governance, only to discard it just as quickly upon accomplishing that task.

Only the Soviet regime promoted the second wave of revolutionary art with permanent consistency. The art of the First Five-Year Plan, announced as 'cultural revolution,' sought to shape the entire visual culture into a propagandistic environment to mobilize the working population. No artists' or architects' group failed to imbue their aspirations with a revolutionary cachet. In Italy, on the other hand, the 10th-anniversary show was a one-time event that gave a new lease on life to the ideological ambitions of modern architects and artists, most prominently in the addition of commemorative features to Giuseppe Terragni's 'Casa del Fascio' at Como. Yet the exhibition inspired no long-term effort to develop a revolutionary art of Fascism. The National Socialist short-lived invocation of a cultural revolution including the arts appeared the most trenchant but turned out to be most superficial. Modern artists claiming to join it were instantly rebuffed. On November 15, 1933, in a speech to the newly founded Reich Chamber of Art, Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels defined revolution in the arts as subordination to Party guidance.

/1.2.2 **REVOLUTIONARY MOBILIZATION OF THE ARTS**

Of the two totalitarian regimes in existence before 1933, only the Soviet infused its organized artistic culture with the ideology of revolution. It used the destructive potential of the term to justify its violent abolition of lingering class divisions as a precondition of implementing the First Five-Year Plan, although the visual focus of the Plan was on an accelerated growth of industry and agriculture. Competing for work, artists' organizations rushed to include the label 'revolutionary' in their names. At issue was the contest between old-style realism, as championed by the 'Artists of the Revolution' (AKhR), so renamed in 1928, and the techno-stylization promoted by the

'Revolutionary Front of the Arts' (REF), re-founded in 1929 to succeed the 'Left Front of the Arts (LEF). Pursuant to efforts at destabilizing foreign capitalist states now viewed as hostile, the long-discarded program of an International of Art was revived in 1930 by the foundation of an 'International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists.' In 1929, El Lissitzky, the preeminent artistic emissary abroad, adjusted his mission of promoting Soviet design by publishing his book *Architecture for a World Revolution*.

In the Weimar Republic, the resurgence of the term revolution since the end of the twenties by artists affiliated with the Communist Party retained its original significance of extra-constitutional opposition, which the Party had actively pursued after the First World War. Its cultural policy expected the Depression to inaugurate an imminent demise of capitalist democracy. In March 1928, prodded by the Party, an 'Association of Revolutionary Pictorial Artists' (ARBKD) was formed from the Communist faction of the All-German Economic Artists' Association. It claimed affiliation with the Soviet AKhR. When in 1930 an 'International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists' was founded in Moscow, the ARBKD became its German section. Subordinated to the Party's 'Interest Community for Workers' Culture,' the ARBKD launched numerous educational programs of lay drawing, poster making, and design of agitation materials. Its wide range of activities matched that of Soviet artists under the Five-Year Plan, but in a subversive rather than constructive understanding of its revolutionary aspirations.

Before 1932, the French Communist Party had no art policy in place with which it might have attracted sympathizing artists in the way of its German counterpart. It fell to the un-affiliated surrealists to restate the long-term revolutionary claims of modern art in Communist terms to the point of professing allegiance to the Soviet Union, but stayed immune against emulating Soviet art. As transpires from the change in title of their journal from *La Révolution Surréaliste* of 1924 to *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* of 1930, the surrealists' self-styling as revolutionaries preceded their commitment to Communism. Even though in 1927 their leaders André Breton, Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard signed on as Party members, the Party kept the group at arm's length. As their telegram to the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature in Moscow of July 1930 insists, the surrealists refused to heed the cultural policy of the Comintern. They did join the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' when it was founded in January 1932 under Communist auspices, only to be excluded two years later.

/1.2.3 **CONSTRUCTION OR SUBVERSION**

At the end of 1929, the Comintern, under its new chairman Vyacheslav Molotov, diagnosed the Great Depression as the start of a 'Third Period' in the world-historical development of capitalism, which was bound to end with its collapse. Now a recasting

of revolutionary art from communist subversion to socialist construction became relevant for Soviet cultural propaganda abroad. The large-sized, multi-language photo-journal *USSR in Construction* advertised a Soviet alternative to the economic decline and social misery now rampant in capitalist states. It served the destabilizing policies of national Communist parties as a counter-paradigm. Hence modern Soviet artists of international renown were asked to contribute. Eventually El Lissitzky was appointed editor. This political reorientation in the international promotion of Soviet modern image techniques from a model for design—as in El Lissitzky's 'Pressa' Pavilion of 1928 at Cologne—to a triumphalist proclamation of Soviet economic and social superiority was to inspire a 'revolutionary' challenge to capitalist democracy, now being compromised by its failures.

Instead of exalting Soviet productivity, the ARBKD and other artists working for the German Communist Party, dwelt on working-class hardship under capitalist exploitation. Their protracted celebration of the failed post-war communist revolutions against democratic government was now aimed against the social order of the Weimar Republic. ARBKD artists, intent on foregrounding the precarious life and the fierce resistance of the working-class, used realism as a mode of subversive exposure. On this point, the association's founding statutes expressly followed the Soviet 'Association of Revolutionary Artists (AKhR), whose realistic depiction of workers' life was criticized in the USSR itself for lack of uplifting expression. The two most prominent members of the ARBKD, George Grosz and John Heartfield, both Communists, had been rabidly hostile to Weimar democracy since their Dadaists beginnings. While Grosz incurred objections from the Party because his social critique of the upper middle-class fell short of firing up the fighting spirit of the workers, Heartfield balanced both concerns well enough to become the leading artist of the Communist press.

No matter how stridently French surrealists professed revolutionary Communism, they kept a proud distance from both Soviet art and the cultural policies of the French Communist Party. Their political partisanship showed in their tracts and manifestoes, but not in their art work, which they refused to bend to the political interests and the aesthetic preferences of the working-class. In 1931, Salvador Dalí produced the only surrealist works whose subject-matter openly related to Communism, when he started to paint pictures featuring the face of Lenin as part of his customary pictorial mystifications. They almost netted him exclusion from the group, but no other surrealist artist came up with a more acceptable portrait of their Soviet hero. With their literary acumen, the leading surrealists—Breton, Aragon, and Éluard, writers all—could debate the ideological alternatives of a revolutionary culture in their incisive controversies, untrammelled by the need for any recommendations for the pictorial arts. Their revolutionary reasoning touched upon neither political activity nor artistic practice.

/1.3.1 **RECOIL TO RHETORIC IN FRANCE**

When in 1934 Andrei Zhdanov defined the newly-installed paradigm of Socialist Realism as a “true and historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development (see Chapter 2.3/1.2.1) he short-circuited the alternative between revolution and evolution. He turned the term ‘revolutionary’ into a non-controversial epithet to be invoked for any cultural change directed from above. One year later, in May 1935, the Comintern’s change of strategy from fostering world revolution to supporting center-left electoral politics in Western European states prompted their Communist Parties to desist from destabilizing parliamentary democracy, but it did not restrain their cultural agencies and sympathizing artists from indulging in even more unbridled revolutionary rhetoric. In the ensuing culture of the Popular Front, the idea of revolutionary art was converted into a mantra just as vacuous as it had become in the USSR. It merely conveyed a militant resolve to press for radical changes by democratic means. Once both Popular Front governments were formed in France and Spain, it served to defend their policies against an equally militant conservative opposition.

As late as July 1933, the Party journal *Commune* was inaugurated under the premise of a conflict between “bourgeois” and “revolutionary” cultures, the latter serving “the action of the proletariat.”⁽⁸⁰⁾ In his article “Culture and Revolution” for the journal *Vigilance* of 1934, art critic Jean Cassou argued in the same direction, although during the right-wing riots of February 1934 Communists rallied to the defense of the Republic. Two years later, as an art official in the Education Ministry of the incoming Popular Front government, Cassou held on to the same rhetoric. Speaking in his official capacity during the ‘realism debates’ of 1936, he urged the assembled artists to “make revolution.”⁽⁸¹⁾ As late as 1939, no longer in government, he extolled Henri Matisse as a leader of French revolutionary art in the 20th century. It was Cassou who reportedly approached Pablo Picasso to design the curtain for the festive inauguration of the first Popular Front government on July 14, 1936 (see below, 2.2.2), which the artist completed on May 28. In a later variant, dated June 13, Picasso depicted the people celebrating the fall of the Bastille in 1789, brandishing hammer and sickle emblems. This all-too blatant Communist update of the revolutionary tradition may have prevented the sketch from being used.

Taken up by modern artists and their promoters, the idea of revolutionary art lost all political specificity. In the 1936-1937 issue of the *Cahiers d’Art*, editor Christian Zervos called on modern artists to “constantly fire up the masses, ceaselessly imbue them with the idea of the revolution,” but only “on the path towards the unknown.” He was just paying lip service to the catchword of the day.⁽⁸²⁾ In 1936, abstract painter Otto Freundlich assumed the chairmanship of the newly founded association of German artists

in French exile (see Chapter 3.2 / 3.2.3) with a lengthy address entitled “Testament of a Revolutionary Painter.” His anachronistic apology of abstract art’s revolutionary potential against Communist objections cost him the support of his fellow members, so that he soon resigned. A lecture series organized by the leftist Artists International Association in London, published in November 1935 under the title *Five on Revolutionary Art*, is characteristic of the ideological disorientation of the term. Except for editor Herbert Read’s “What is Revolutionary Art?”⁽⁸³⁾, all contributors addressed the subject tangentially at best, and if they did, fell back on the term’s non-political significance.

/1.3.2 CLASS STRUGGLE OR DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC IN SPAIN

From the start, the Spanish Republic, newly-founded in 1931, was torn by bitter class conflicts between capital owners and workers in agriculture and industry. These conflicts were fought out beyond parliamentary venues not just by a communist but also by an anarchist opposition. The bloodiest of its numerous confrontations was the miners’ uprising of October 1934 in Asturias. It is in this political environment of violent civil strife that Catalan graphic artist Josep Renau took the initiative of founding first in Valencia in 1932 the ‘Union of Proletarian Writers and Artists’ (*Unión de Escritores y Artistas Proletarios*)—the government had required the term ‘revolutionary’ to be dropped from the original name—and in Madrid in May 1933, the ‘Union of Revolutionary Writers and Artist’ (*Unión de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios*, UEAR). Although Renau prefaced his founding call for the UEAR with a sweeping comparison of the class struggle in Spain with the German resistance to Hitler’s ascendancy, the defense of the Soviet Union, and the threat to modern culture by unified ‘bourgeois’ and fascist forces,⁽⁸⁴⁾ its program merely coupled the defense of modern art with a call for political engagement.

The two ‘Exhibitions of Revolutionary Art’ of December 1933 in Madrid and early 1934 in Valencia were intended as direct responses to the center-right election victory of October 1933, in the wake of violent street protests against the new government. They imbued the issue of revolutionary art with a confrontational urgency that it never attained in France. Less than a year before the miners’ uprising in Asturias, the organizers’ revolutionary posture was still in accord with the Comintern’s strategy of upsetting democratic governments and aggressively promoting Soviet culture. Several artists in the show featured working-class themes in a realist style reminiscent of Soviet art from the period of the First Five-Year Plan. Still, a discrepancy persisted between the propaganda realism of social imagery demanded by the program and the variety of styles adhered to by the participating artists, many still abstract or surrealist-inspired. In his contributions to the debates surrounding the show, surrealist painter Antonio Rodríguez Luna openly acknowledged the strains in the political matchup.

It fell to Renau, the most activist artist of the Left in republican Spain, who had turned from anarchism to Communism in 1932, to create a forum for the attendant debates by founding the journal *Nueva Cultura* in 1935. It was here that artists and critics attempted to decide the conflict between traditional and modern under the common premise of revolutionary art. No matter how aggressively *Nueva Cultura* promoted an anti-fascist, anti-‘bourgeois’ art for engagement in the class struggle on the side of the proletariat and against the conservative majority of Spanish artistic culture, it left the question in abeyance. It could not afford to alienate the modern artists who formed the core of its supporters and of the UEAR’s membership. It was not until the special election issue of February 1936 that Renau laid down the terms of a propagandistic realism he was to promote when he became General Director of Fine Arts in the summer of that year. In his new capacity, he turned art policy away from class struggle toward a defense of the Republic, which claimed to safeguard its social achievements in the name of revolution.

/1.3.3 **SURREALIST INTRANSIGENCE**

By 1930, when the Surrealists promulgated their Second Manifesto and retitled their journal from ‘The Surrealist Revolution’ (*La Révolution Surréaliste*) to ‘Surrealism in the Service of Revolution’ (*Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*), they seemed to have achieved a tenuous equilibrium between their insistence on the absolute freedom of art, a call for the violent overthrow of the government, and their independence from Communist Party control. Breton construed a revolutionary pedigree of modern art that linked Lautréamont’s and Rimbaud’s poetry to the historic moment after the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune when both those authors wrote. He took the historic coincidence for an ideological validation of the revolutionary ambitions which drove the surrealists from a literary niche into the public sphere. With his flashy alliteration “Lautréamont and Lenin” he short-circuited modern art and Communism. In 1930, a list of essential books he drew up in a hypothetical catalog of Surrealist publications included, among key works of poetry and political literature, the Comintern’s technical manual *Armed Insurrection*, published under the name of Neuberg in a French translation.⁽⁸⁵⁾

After Breton had broken with the Communist Party, confronting Louis Aragon who had broken with surrealism for the sake of Party conformity, he and the remainder of his followers insisted even more defiantly on the disruptive significance of the term revolution, while the Party, heeding the Comintern strategy of Popular Front democracy, emptied the term of any such connotation. The break came to a head at the 1935 Congress for the Defense of Culture in Paris, which abandoned the equation between artistic nonconformity and political revolution. Breton’s dissenting speech, however, dealt not with art but with world politics. With Leninist orthodoxy, he predicted that another revolution would follow from an imminent war, but was silent about what

was left for art to achieve. The short-lived opposition group of intellectuals and artists named 'Contre-Attaque', to which Breton briefly adhered in October 1935, defined itself as a "fighting union of revolutionary intellectuals" without allegiance to the working-class. The group advocated an overthrow of the capitalist social order by armed struggle but failed to say what the arts could contribute to this task.

All these setbacks did not deter Breton from writing, in May 1938, yet another manifesto, now jointly with Lev Trotsky (see Chapter 4.2) entitled 'For an Independent Revolutionary Art,' his only manifesto dealing with the arts alone. Here he advanced the revolutionary claims of modern art in their most uncompromising and hence most self-contradictory form, at odds with the historic moment. "True art, which [...] insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time—true art is unable *not* to be revolutionary, *not* to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society," Breton wrote. Even a "socialist regime with centralized control" he expected a revolution to achieve was to grant the arts an exempt status as an "anarchist regime of individual liberty" (see Chapter 4.2 / 2.1.3). Trotsky and Breton directed their notion of revolutionary art against all three ideologies currently confronting one another—'Fascism,' Bolshevism, and Popular Front Democracy—all of which had claimed to be revolutionary at one time or another. Detaching the term from any engagement with real politics, they fell back on a self-avowed anarchist stance.

/ 2 **FROM REVOLUTIONARY TO ANTI-FASCIST ART**

/ 2.1 **ANACHRONISTIC DEBATE**

/ 2.1.1 **INCOMMENSURATE CONFRONTATION**

The escalating conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union, underway since 1935, entailed an ideological change in how modern art was associated with a revolutionary understanding of modern art. While the National Socialist regime held it to the leftist revolutionary posture it had adopted in the aftermath of World War I, the Comintern, in pursuit of its new Popular Front strategy, gave an anti-fascist turn to its revolutionary connotations. German art authorities did not focus their accusations of 'cultural bolshevism' on the current art policy of the Popular Front, which likewise favored traditional realism for its popular appeal, but supported modern art as well. Rather, they invoked the Soviet government's bygone espousal of modern art at its most radical during the first four years of its tenure as if it were still current. Both the National Socialists and the Popular Front ignored the new significance of what revolutionary art had come to mean in the USSR since the First Five-Year Plan had reassigned revolutionary credentials to agitational realism, and later sanctioned Socialist Realism as the expression of a revolutionary development.

Therefore, the National Socialist accusation that modern art was a tool of Bolshevik foreign subversion was out of date. By the end of 1922 the Comintern had given up on any such intentions, not only because its policy of fomenting revolutions in Western Europe had failed, but also because modern art had long been disabused of its revolutionary claims in the Soviet Union itself. Fifteen years later, the Comintern's Popular Front policy fashioned electoral politics as revolutionary, not only because its previous efforts at destabilizing the Third Republic had come to nothing, but, even more cynically, because it had come to conclude that the National Socialist regime had been stabilized to the point of immunity against subversion, let alone revolution, from within. The Comintern's reorientation of policy made the anti-fascist struggle on an international scale the new political priority for its restored support of modern art, although it was reduced to tolerance. Whereas the ever more severe National Socialist suppression of modern art was touted as proof of its anti-fascist meaning in reverse, its less draconian, but equally consistent abolition in the Soviet Union was kept under wraps.

In his lost painting *Revolution* of 1937, Marc Chagall, who had been a local Bolshevik art commissar before he left the USSR in 1922, advanced the most blatant denunciation of the new ideological twist. The growing Soviet repression of both modern art and Jewish culture prompted him to picture the Bolshevik Revolution as an armed mob's assault on both a Jewish village and an artists' community. This pictorial pamphlet amounted to a bitter turnabout. In a 1919 article entitled "Revolution in Art," Chagall had still postured as a "proletarian painter," whose talent was devoted to serving the collective.⁽⁸⁶⁾ As late as 1933, responding to an inquiry by André Breton and Paul Éluard in *Minotaure*, he had called the Bolshevik revolution his life's most inspiring event. Four years later, after having been granted French citizenship, he construed art and revolution as incompatible with one another. The title of his painting designated revolution as a negative. Perhaps he had already reacted against Iosip Chaikov's so-called relief on the Soviet pavilion at the Paris Expo, which featured the happy coexistence of family life and popular arts protected by the military.

/ 2.1.2 **HITLER'S TARGET**

In the first volume of *My Struggle* (1924), Hitler derives his charge against modern art as a subversive tool of international Bolshevism from witnessing the participation of modern artists in the two short-lived Bavarian Council Republics of March and April, 1919, which he had helped to quell as a non-commissioned officer in a political surveillance and agitation unit of the Army. Those artists and their associated writers and critics had joined or supported the Communist government of Bavaria and heeded the tenet, shared by their colleagues in Russia, Hungary, and elsewhere, that modern art was revolutionary in and of itself. Already before World War I, they believed, it had

heralded or even prepared the political revolution now in progress, just as Tatlin had maintained for Russia. When Hitler wrote that in modern art movements before the war, "the political collapse, which, however, became better visible only later, already started to culturally announce itself,"⁽⁸⁷⁾ he took such claims at face value, no matter how hollow they were when first advanced. They confirmed him in his counter-revolutionary militancy against modern art during the first years of his political career.

At first, the anti-Semitic component of the subversion charge against modern art dominated National-Socialist agitation so much that joint invocations of the terms 'Bolshevik' and 'Jewish' could do without historical references to the revolutionary postures adopted by some modern artists in the aftermath of World War I, first in Russia and later in Western Europe. But when in 1928 Hitler, after four years of silence on the issue, resumed his attacks on modern art in his campaign speeches (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.2), his polemics were directed at the Weimar Republic's cultural policies and their economic repercussions on artists' welfare, not against the political destabilization of the state, in which his party vied with the Communists. By that time the Communist Party, although it lent occasional political support to modern art, was far from investing it with a revolutionary power any longer. Now its cultural policy was committed to a class-based agitational art in realistic styles, opposed to the 'bourgeois' clientele of modern art on grounds of class. As a result, Hitler's attacks on modern art were devoid of anti-communist rhetoric.

Although the charge of 'cultural bolshevism' continued to be raised during the clampdown on modern art Hitler unleashed in 1933 upon taking office, it was not until 1935, when the Comintern launched its cultural policy of the Popular Front, that he returned to the specter of modern art as a Communist device for undermining German national culture. In his speech about the theme of art to the culture meeting of the Nuremberg Party Rally on September 11, 1935, he recalled that the Reichstag fire of February 27, 1933, which he branded as the last attempt at a Communist revolution in Germany, had been answered by the National Socialist leadership's resolve "to give German art the first impulses towards revival and resurrection."⁽⁸⁸⁾ One year later, in his speech to the same forum on September 9, 1936, Hitler declared that "political and cultural bolshevism go hand in hand."⁽⁸⁹⁾ Again, he evoked the Reichstag fire as the latest link in a chain of events that had started with the Paris Commune of 1871, continued in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and was still lurking in what was left of modern art in Germany.

/ 2.1.3 THE 'DEGENERATE ART' EXHIBITIONS

Hitler's speech of 1936 precedes the Anti-Comintern pact he was to conclude with Italy and Japan in November 1936, followed by another pact concluded with Italy alone in November 1937. It is during this time span that the defamatory shows of

modern art, first launched in 1933, were revived on a national scale, culminating in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition held in Munich in the summer of 1937. Already in March 1936, the anti-modern exhibition of September 1933 in Dresden was reassembled for display at the Munich police headquarters under the banner 'Anti-Comintern Exhibition' with several venues to follow, until it was absorbed into the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition. This expansion had a propaganda purpose exceeding art policy alone. The new, nationwide anti-modern exhibition program coincided with, or was even flanked by, several anti-Comintern propaganda shows. It was the German response to the equally deliberate anti-fascist propaganda thrust of the Comintern's own art policy. That the exhibition should have been targeted not on this art policy but on the Comintern's long discarded support of modern art was anachronistic.

On November 23, 1937, the Reich Propaganda Directorate of the NSDAP took over the Degenerate Art Show for a four-year-long tour through other German cities, synchronized with a 'Great Anti-Bolshevik Exhibition' and another exhibition titled 'The Eternal Jew.' The underlying policy had shifted from a defense against the Comintern to an active threat against the Soviet state. Now all three long-standing ideological components of the attack on modern art—degeneracy, Jewishness, and Bolshevism—were coordinated in a nationwide propaganda drive. The Exhibition Guide, which bundled them in this direction and summarized the pertinent propaganda slogans, was probably issued for the first simultaneous venue of all three shows in Berlin. Hitler and his officials would have been unable to pin the revolutionary charge on the current art of the Soviet Union or of the Popular Front, both of which had long reneged on the revolutionary connotations of modern art. But in the censored culture of the regime, where those arts were all but unknown, they could dispense from engaging them. They presented modern art as a tool of domestic subversion.

No single work could have better illustrated the fictitious charge of a combined Jewish-Bolshevik threat than Otto Freundlich's huge plaster head *New Man* of 1912. Freundlich was the only artist in the show who was both a Jew and a life-long, self-avowed Communist. In Paris, where he lived, he was a leading member of the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists'. In the entrance hall of the Munich show, Freundlich's sculpture was prominently displayed standing on the floor and facing up to a crucifix by Ludwig Gies, suspended from a corner of the ceiling. It looked as if the *New Man* was lurking from below, ready to rise against the Christian dispensation. A photograph taken from above was printed on the cover of the Exhibition Guide, highlighting its seditious appearance. In 1933, the sculpture had been quickly removed from the exhibition floor of the Museum of Arts and Crafts at Hamburg, to which the artist had donated it in 1930. Four years later, Reich Chamber of Art President Ziegler's raiding party "ferreted it out," in Hitler's words, from its basement storage and paraded it to viewers like a convict in the pillory.

/ 2.2 THE ANTI-FASCIST TURN

/ 2.2.1 OVERVIEW

In response to the European ascendancy of National Socialist Germany, the Soviet government's new foreign policy of seeking alliances with capitalist states in Western Europe made the 'revolutionary' destabilization of Germany's political adversaries an untimely objective. Hence the Comintern replaced revolution with anti-fascism as a unifying ideology of the Left. The premise was that 'fascism'—a catch-all term applied to both the Italian and the German regimes—was the political system of last resort to prop-up of the capitalist economy, and that consequently the anti-fascist struggle was a timely version of the revolutionary challenge to the capitalist economy, even if it required tolerating 'bourgeois' democracy as a venue for the struggle. As a result, the ideology of revolutionary art was redirected against 'fascism' as an elusive target. In this opaque inflection by the Popular Front governments of France and Spain pursued it all the more stridently. To conceive of an anti-fascist art under these conditions proved to be a contradiction-ridden tour de force.

International outrage about the widely publicized 'Degenerate Art' exhibition in Munich, no matter how limited, made modern art per se, regardless of any manifest ideology, appear as an anti-fascist proposition by default. The ideological vacuity of this proposition was a mirror reversal of its indiscriminate denigration as subversive by the National Socialist regime. This anti-fascist turn shielded the concurrent suppression of modern art in the Soviet Union from ideological comparison, let alone from political critique. Similarities with Soviet cultural policy could be overlooked all the more easily since it was being handled as a domestic affair, flanked by some public pronouncements, to be sure, but without any publicity for propaganda purposes. Such a one-sided misperception suited the general line of Popular Front policy with its axiomatic defense of the Soviet Union, a military ally of both the French and Spanish governments. Only since 1936 were the similarities observed by leftist critics of the Stalinist regime abroad, first and foremost by Lev Trotsky in his book *The Betrayed Revolution* of 1936.

As the artistic culture of all three totalitarian states was swiftly or slowly stripped of its initial revolutionary trappings, artists with leftist sympathies in democratic France and Spain replaced their revolutionary aspirations with an anti-fascist belligerence as the driving force of their political self-mobilization, but tenaciously held on to the hollowed term. When on July 17, 1936, the Popular Front government of the Spanish Republic was challenged by a right-wing military coup-d'état, which quickly became a full-scale Civil War, artists and intellectuals in Spain and abroad flocked to the defense of the Republic as an anti-fascist cause. As a result, the notion of revolutionary

art became mired in unending debates about the priority of warfare over social change. Now artists of heterogeneous tendencies were ready to unite on a common platform of resistance against 'fascism,' which suited their political convictions as citizens and intellectuals rather than the art they practiced. Since Popular Front art policy strove to bridge the alternative between traditional and modern art, the latter lost its exclusive claim on revolutionary credentials.

/ 2.2.2 **FRANCE**

No matter how ardently the propositions of revolutionary and anti-fascist art were promulgated in the debate-intensive culture of the Popular Front, neither one offered artists any clear thematic, let alone formal, concepts to adopt. A recurrent apology was that the arts were not yet ready to engage in the political mission called for by the historic situation. While art exhibitions held in the Maison de la Culture under the catchword "Revolutionary Artists" lacked any thematic reference to their title, the "International Exposition About Fascism," held in the Galérie de la Boétie in the spring of 1935, featured charts, graphs, photographs, and press displays rather than paintings or sculptures, at variance with its venue. In September 1936, Aragon published a programmatic article that effectively put a stop to the realism debate or any other effort at defining artistic criteria for the political task at hand. The urgency of the times—"the tears and blood of Spain"—he asserted, "place reality on the order of the day,"⁽⁹⁰⁾ which would require personal engagement rather than doctrinaire consistency.

John Heartfield's photomontage *Liberty Herself is fighting within their Ranks*, produced shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, invokes the top icon of the bourgeois revolution of 1830 in France for the defense of the Spanish Republic. It illustrates the inclusion of the middle-class in the revolutionary ideology, as it was turning anti-fascist under the Popular Front. A segment of Delacroix' painting forms the background for a line of civilians behind a Madrid barricade in the middle ground and two helmeted heads of marching Republican troops in the foreground. Under the slogan *Madrid 1936: No pasarán! Pasaremos!*, the capital's military defense against the nationalist insurgency is staged as a revolutionary struggle. The segment Heartfield adapted from Delacroix's painting shows working-class people on the barricade but stops short of including the prominent bourgeois with his top hat and rifle to the right. This selective invocation, at variance with the inclusive ideology of the Popular Front in general, may have to do with the class conflict persisting in the conduct of the Spanish Civil War.

In France, the public inauguration of Léon Blum's first government, which was postponed so as to coincide with the customary festivities of July 14, included a performance of Romain Rolland's 'revolutionary drama' *14 juillet* of 1902. The play presents

the storming of the Bastille, which started the French Revolution of 1789, as a spontaneous upheaval, accomplished by the common people on the streets. However, Picasso designed the curtain for the performance as an image of the anti-fascist struggle. A basilisk-headed monster, personifying fascism, carries the vanquished artist-Minotaur, a limp puppet costumed as the crafty Harlequin from the *Commedia dell'Arte*. A bearded man, breaking free from inside the shell of a Trojan horse and attacking the monster from behind, is about to hurl a cobblestone, the proletariat's emblematic weapon. Two weeks after completing the curtain design, Picasso drew a huge illustration of Rolland's drama (see above, 1.3.1). In the concluding scene, the revolutionary throng rejoices after having demolished the Bastille. Three participants are brandishing the Communist symbol of hammer and sickle, a reassertion of what revolution meant for him.

/ 2.2.3 SPAIN

Because the military insurgency in Spain of July 19, 1936, which provoked the Civil War, was a prompt reaction to the Popular Front government's legitimate ascendancy, the ideologies of revolution and anti-fascism came to overlap throughout the culture of the Republic. The government's internal conflicts regarding the conduct of the war were due to these inherent contradictions. The mass organization of artistic culture, whereby the government sought to focus the political will of the populace on sustaining the defense of the Republic made the term 'anti-fascist' quasi-mandatory. The 'Sindicat de Dibuxants Professionals' of Barcelona and the 'Sindicato de Profesionales de las Bellas Artes' of Madrid were subordinated to a 'Comité de Milicias Antifascistas.' The *Ponencia colectiva*, presented by a group of writers and artists to the Second International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers at Valencia in August 1937, confirmed the convergence of both terms. Claiming to rise above any specifics of function, theme, and form, it explicitly linked the idea of revolution to "the current struggle of the Spanish people against international fascism."⁽⁹¹⁾

In 1938, immediately after the Republic's defeat, surrealist painter Antonio Rodríguez Luna recalled how the Asturian miners' uprising of 1934 had induced him to move from what he termed "an artistic and anti-bourgeois 'revolutionarism'" to "a social and revolutionary painting, not in its outside form, but in its profound life's content, which is the same as the struggle of the working-class."⁽⁹²⁾ Rodríguez Luna pointed out that he had included several drawings about that earlier uprising in his album *Sixteen Drawings of War*, published in 1937, because he understood the Civil War as a continuation of the revolutionary struggle rather than only a defense of the Republic. The series presents a panorama of gruesome caricatures which deploy standard foe images of social revolution. Figures of landholders, priests, and Falangists in uniform appear in scenes of hollow triumph or abject debauchery. They

trample on the tortured bodies of the common people, but their own physical decay spreads over the environment. The only subject corresponding to the title of the album is a winged monster in decomposition, flying over a desolate battlefield filled with dead or dying soldiers.

With his statement of 1938, Rodríguez Luna responded to a critical review of his album in the leftist journal *Hora de España*, which had taken exception to his all-too gloomy renderings of the historic situation. “Historically,” the reviewer had written, “the horror of war, if you grant me the paradox, is a positive horror, since it leads [...] to the assurance of the people’s triumph [...] over fascism.”⁽⁹³⁾ As a foil for his critique, the reviewer had acclaimed Rodríguez Luna’s drawings of the crushed Asturian miners’ rebellion three years earlier. By pointing out that he had included some of these in his new album, the artist construed a continuity of both events as stages of the unfolding revolutionary struggle, although the reviewer had not dwelt on the term revolution. Nevertheless, Rodríguez Luna appears to have heeded the critique when, in his painting of a nationalist bombardment of civilians at Colmenar Viejo—probably earmarked for the exhibition in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937—he foregrounded a woman defiantly raising her fist to the sky in the revolutionary salute, a sign of the unbroken will to win.

/ 2.3 **ANARCHIST RELAPSE**

/ 2.3.1 **REVOLUTION WITHOUT POLITICS**

When totalitarian governments had discarded the ideal of revolutionary art for the sake of a monumental art of state stabilization, and when the Popular Front governments of France and Spain had reduced it to a propaganda slogan of populist democracy, artists who held on to the ideal for its promise of political change were left without a political venue. André Breton’s emphatic change of position from allegiance to hostility toward the Soviet Union after the 1935 Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture deprived the surrealists who clung to him of any politically viable alternative to ‘fascism.’ In the two group shows of 1936 in London and 1937 in Paris, they shrunk to histrionic spectacles of provocation. Mere artistic self-display as a revolutionary gesture was a regression onto the convergence of modern art and anarchism during the last two decades of the 19th century. It reversed the move from anarchism to Communism as a political organization aimed at winning power, led by the Soviet Union, which leftist artists had made after the October Revolution of 1917 (see Chapter 1.1/1.3.3).

Keen as ever on political shifts, Hitler used his annual ‘culture speech’ at the 1936 Nuremberg Party Rally to brand both democracy and bolshevism—the two political systems which had joined in the Popular Front for the purpose of resisting his

ascendancy—with the term ‘anarchism’ in order to denounce what he deemed their lack of constructive politics, their merely destructive intentions. “The intellectual precondition for bringing about *anarchy*,” Hitler declared, “or even the intellectual basis of every kind of anarchy, is *democracy*.”⁽⁹⁴⁾ And he added for good measure: “Therefore the period of Bolshevist art craze in Germany has now been terminated, because this Bolshevist and futurist art is an anarchist regression.”⁽⁹⁵⁾ What he missed was that “anarchist regression” stepped back from Bolshevism. Hitler’s immediate target was the remnants of modern art he saw still standing in the way of a compelling National Socialist artistic culture in his own country. His argument, however, had a timely political edge. Hitler reacted to the ongoing rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union, between democracy and bolshevism, to form a bulwark against his aggressive intentions.

Anarchism as a venue of freedom for the political radicalism professed by artists un beholden to Communist discipline had been under recurrent debate. In 1933, Otto Freundlich, always wary of Party control, nonetheless declared his choice in his oil painting *My Sky is Red*. It shows the red flag of socialism flapping leftward on top of the rightward-bending black flag of anarchism prone below. Four years later, Georges Braque, in his painting *Duo*, construed the issue as wide open. He converted a music session into a conversation between a piano player and a listener holding the journal *Débats* opened in her lap. From a painting hanging on the wall behind, one red and two black triangles spill over the frame, suggesting the alternative between socialism and anarchism as the theme of their debate. It seems Braque was referring not only to El Lissitzky’s famous poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* of 1919, but more specifically to its adaptation by Robert Vierthaler in a poster for a 1936 defamatory show of modern art in the Munich police headquarters. Here the wedge is colored black to visualize the charge of anarchism which Hitler had raised against modern art in his culture speech of that year.

/ 2.3.2 ANARCHISM IN SPAIN

It was in Spain that anarchism maintained itself as a viable political movement throughout the Depression. During the Civil War, its conflict with Communism was centered on the question of whether social revolution could be pursued concurrently with the defense of the Republic. After the government had subdued the anarchists in Barcelona by force of arms in May 1937, Communists gained the upper hand. Fine Arts Director Josep Renau, an erstwhile anarchist who had turned Communist already in 1931, accommodated artists of both persuasions in his exhibitions and commissions. The vigorous debate culture within and between artists’ groups and journals he encouraged maintained a balance among contending factions without interference by the security apparatus. In these debates, the term revolution was as ubiquitous as

it was vague. They dealt with the established issue of modern versus traditional art, or with the revolutionary potential of the national art tradition, but never with the question of whether support for strong government in times of war should preempt the anarchist pursuit of instant social change.

Renau's most remarkable feat of compromise politics was his enlistment of Joán Miró to paint a mural in the staircase of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. He gave the artist a free hand to choose *The Catalan Reaper in Revolution* as an expression of his adherence to the ideals of an anarchist peasant revolution in Catalonia, now adopted by government propaganda. In an interview the year before, Miró had still proclaimed his rejection of Popular Front politics: "Our present-day leaders, bastard offspring of politics and the arts, claim to regenerate the world, but actually they're on the way to poisoning our last sources of refreshment. Whether they talk of tradition and high ideals, or of revolution and a workers' paradise," for him they were discredited.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Now, in a lengthy inscription below his staircase mural, Miró defiantly proclaimed the creed of the Catalan peasant revolution of anarchist observance, which in Barcelona had been crushed the month before. Conceiving the sickle as both harvest tool and weapon, he paralleled the social revolution against big landholders with the military defense of the land.

In 1935, French painter André Masson broke with the surrealist group over its adherence to Communism and left Paris for Spain to work there in seclusion. It was here that he turned into a self-avowed anarchist, as he made it clear in scornful letters to his friends back home. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he even joined an anarchist union in Barcelona, but refused to take up arms. Masson vainly tried to have the first in his ongoing series of caricatures about the Civil War published in Spanish journals. Different from Rodríguez Luna's *Sixteen Drawings About War*, which depicted a similar array of foe images as targets in an upbeat struggle, Masson presented the enemy as victorious in a bleak scenery of terminal decay. Upon his return to Paris in the fall of 1936, he recovered his sympathy for Communism, albeit with lingering reservations. He even taught well-attended courses on decorative painting at the communist-directed Maison de la Culture. Eventually, however, he followed Breton in joining the Trotskyist FIARI, for which Breton hailed him as a paramount revolutionary artist in the last issue of *Minotaure* (see Chapter 4.3 / 3.3.3).

/ 2.3.3 THE MANIFESTO OF ANARCHIST ART

Breton's and Trotsky's Manifesto "For an Independent Revolutionary Art" of July 25, 1938, (see Chapter 4.2) bestowed a world-wide ideological validation on the final, anarchist turn of revolutionary art. That Breton should have been able to persuade Trotsky to embrace it as a tenet for the artists' organization of his Fourth International appeared to endow it with a political credibility that anarchism had thus

far been lacking. Revising Breton's draft of the Manifesto, Trotsky inserted the following words: "If, for the better development of the forces of material production, the revolution must build a socialist regime with centralized control, to develop intellectual creation an anarchist regime of individual liberty should from the first be established. No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above!" It had been anarchists in Spain who attempted to pursue a policy of what Trotsky called "permanent revolution." Some of their leaders had even been in touch with him. For Breton, their bloody suppression by the central government in May 1937 had triggered his final condemnation of Communist policies in the Spanish Civil War. The Manifesto turned their defeated stance into an ideal for the arts.

Breton, for his part, returned full circle to the ideological alignment of modern art and anarchism, which had started in the latter part of the 19th century and resurfaced intermittently, even in the absence of anarchist politics. He abrogated the practice of subordinating anarchist ideals to the vicissitudes of socialist or communist policies for which modern artists had fallen in the past. A lapse into anarchism, with its concomitant utopian disregard for political institutions, had often been the way for modern artists or writers to obviate a choice between Communism and democracy. Their insistence on aesthetic and expressive independence excluded any adjustment to political requirements. The Manifesto was an attempt to recover anarchism for political exemption. Thus, the ideological privileging of modern art as a reservation of anarchism, untrammelled by an activist engagement with responsible political activity, amounted to a reassertion of what Trotsky, in his articles on art and literature from the years before the First World War, had diagnosed as the 'bourgeois' accommodation of modern art's oppositional posture.

It was the ideological impasse of contemporary politics which prompted Breton to reclaim the term anarchism from a past when the leftist aspirations of modern art had not yet been embraced by the cultural policies of any party, let alone of any state. It compelled him to steer clear of any choice between Communism and democracy which he equally opposed. Since the term 'revolutionary' had been co-opted by all three totalitarian governments that the authors of the Manifesto denounced for their oppression of the arts, they revived the anarchist version of the term, to the point of dropping the requirement that the arts should carry any express revolutionary message. To say that independent art "could not be but revolutionary" was a default position. However, contrary to its authors' opposition to democracy, the Manifesto reaffirmed the long-standing democratic ideal of modern art as the medium of free expression, first cultivated in the middle-class milieus of its origins. It inadvertently converged with the tentative alignment of modern art and democracy that started at that time, most clearly in the United States.

/ 3 **FROM REVOLUTIONARY ART TO WAR ART**

/ 3.1 **MILITARISM VERSUS PACIFISM**

/ 3.1.1 **SOLDIERS' REVOLUTIONS**

By contrast to the failed revolutions of the 19th century, where the military had stood by the forces of order, all three totalitarian regimes relied on soldiers in their 'revolutionary' grab for power. Participation of soldiers in the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 was so decisive they came to be styled, along with workers and peasants, as one of three components of the proletariat. Based on Lenin's doctrine of the essential continuity of war and revolution, and on the defense of the Bolshevik revolution in a Civil War involving foreign states, the military component of revolutionary ideology was by far the strongest in the USSR. It imbued the conduct and strategy of the Red Army, newly organized by Lev Trotsky, a revolutionary civilian. The successful Fascist coup d'état of 1922 and the failed National Socialist insurrection of 1923, both also styled as revolutions, were led by junior combat officers and soldiers from the First World War, including Hitler. Their military connotations, however, paled next to the historic fusion of war and revolution Lenin and Trotsky promoted in their policies and pronouncements.

As a result, all three regimes stressed military combat ethics in their revolutionary ideologies and enacted them in their organization of state and society by command and discipline. Only in Russia was this emphasis tempered by the political subordination of the military to a party with long-entrenched civilian power mechanisms, embodied in the party commissars assigned to guide Red Army officers. Soviet military doctrine linked the revolutionary buildup of a socialist society to a concurrent armament drive, intended to shield it against a military aggression on the part of capitalist states, and deemed inevitable after the experience of the allied intervention in the Civil War. This linkage prompted the penetration of the social fabric by military-style command structures. The military framing of revolutionary ideology in Fascist Italy rested on a similar foundational doctrine, rooted in the rise of fascism from a political movement aimed at making Italy join the First World War. And when Hitler in 1935 embarked on his military build-up for an eventual war of conquest, he made the memory of his party's revolutionary 'struggle' part of the flanking propaganda drive.

Because the political structures of the three totalitarian states were fundamentally different, their alignment of revolutionary and war ideology also varied. At issue was the relationship between the distinct organizations of the party and the military, and the ability of political leaders to impose their belligerent designs on professional army commanders reluctant to embrace them. The decisive support of army units and their commanders for the Bolshevik revolution had enabled Lenin and Trotsky to

newly fashion a 'Red Army' along Communist organizational principles. The integration of political commissars into every level of the new command structure was to imbue soldiers, over and beyond obedience, with the political will to fight for a revolutionary cause. The Fascist and National Socialist regimes had accomplished no such fusion, and their control of their military was tenuous at first. As a result, their alignment of revolutionary and war ideologies took the form of construing a commemorative analogy between party activists killed in the street violence of the early twenties and the fallen soldiers of the First World War.

/ 3.1.2 **REVOLUTIONARY MILITARISM**

Soon after the Civil War, the Red Army began to sponsor an artistic culture of its own, complete with a new museum and with ongoing commission and exhibition programs. The Moscow art exhibition commemorating its tenth anniversary, held in February 1928, juxtaposed Civil War battle pictures with scenes from the Red Army's current integration in social life. One of the two prominent paintings in the show was Kusma Petrov-Vodkin's *Death of the Commissar*, especially commissioned by the 'Revolutionary Military Council'. It shows soldiers moving on after their commissar has been killed, now driven by their own political will, a reminder of the abolishment in 1924 of the Red Army's double structure of military and political command. The other prominent painting was Aleksandr Deineka's *Defense of Petrograd*. Based on Ferdinand Hodler's picture of German students volunteering for the 'War of Liberation,' it shows the replacement of wounded soldiers returning from the front by armed workers marching forward in the opposite direction, a quasi-didactic illustration of their proletarian unity.

From the start, Mussolini, once a fervent advocate of Italy's entry into World War I, had styled the casualties from that war as an inspiration for the fascist thugs whose street violence had enforced the Fascist government takeover of 1922. It was in this spirit that the annual anniversary celebrations of the 'March on Rome' fused the memories of war and revolution. Marcello Piacentini's triumphal arch at Bolzano, completed in 1928, was conceived as a joint memorial to the Italian troops who had secured Italy's annexation of the Alto Adige from Austria in 1919 and the 'martyrs' of the 1922 Fascist insurrections at Bolzano, Trento, and Trieste, whose busts were fitted into the surface of the fasces-shaped sculptured pillars. In 1932, the propaganda exhibition marking the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome was centered on a circular 'sanctuary' for the commemoration of 'revolutionary' militants killed during the Fascist takeover. Here the sound system played the army ritual of an imaginary roll call on an endless loop, where soldiers answered "Present!" on behalf their comrades killed in action.

The National Socialist counterpart of the equation between party thugs and World War I soldiers was fraught with a political problem. One year after his accession, Hitler put a violent stop to the SA's bid to become an armed force separate from the

army, culminating in the murder, on June 30, 1934, of SA Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm and most of the SA command at the hands of the SS. One year later, a pair of open 'Temples of Honor' for the reburial of sixteen Party members shot dead by police during Hitler's failed Bavarian coup attempt of 1923 were built on the occasion of its twelfth anniversary at the Munich Party Forum for mass rituals of commemoration. Here, any reference to the fallen soldiers of the First World War was avoided. Another year later, however, when the draft was reinstated, the Wehrmacht started to be drawn into Party ceremonies. At a congress of the 'National Socialist Cultural Community' in June 1936, Party and Army delegations performed an elaborate ritual before Wilhelm Sauter's *Heroes Shrine*, a triptych featuring SA and SS street fighters in the center panel, flanked by World War I soldiers in the wings.

/ 3.1.3 **FROM REVOLUTION TO CIVIL WAR**

Because in the 19th century, the military had loyally backed the oppression of any uprising, the revolutionary tradition invoked by the Popular Front movements in France and Spain considered it a counter-revolutionary force. Their revolutionary ideologies were strictly pacifist. Socialist parties regretted their support of the war effort in 1914 as a lapse. Therefore, the Comintern's ideological shift from revolution to anti-fascism hardened the pacifist stance of leftist artists in their opposition to the militarism of the Fascist and National Socialist regimes. At the Paris World Exposition of 1937, the French Popular Front government enlisted two of them—Max Lingner and Frans Masereel—for the decoration of its Peace Pavilion. At the same time, however, the Spanish Civil War made most sympathizers of Popular Front culture regard the defense of the Republic as a people's war against oppression. In its foreign propaganda, the Republic publicized its war effort both as a revolutionary and an anti-fascist struggle. It attracted civilian volunteers from abroad to its militia units.

When the Spanish Popular Front government reacted to general Franco's Nationalist army by sponsoring an art intended to whip up popular support, it had to reconcile the revolutionary spontaneity of a people's war with the military discipline needed to match the professionalism of the insurgents and their German and Italian allies. The 19th-century polarity of people versus army would no longer do. Until the end of the Civil War, the government never quite accomplished the task of detaching diverse militias from the political control of trade unions or leftist parties and subordinating them to the command of its general staff. The anarchist convictions that had prompted those volunteers to take up arms made it hard for them to follow orders. Profuse poster campaigns by the government and its sympathizing unions advertising 'militarization' and 'discipline' showed civilian fighters and uniformed soldiers side by side to stress their common strategy. Shirking the obedience issue at the heart of the debate, they extolled military discipline over anarchist fervor as the appropriate morale.

José Luis Bardasano, Spain's foremost Communist propaganda artist, and author of many posters advertising 'militarization,' contributed a watercolor to the art show in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. It shows a steel-helmeted regular soldier, armed to the teeth, implacably shielding a terrified mother cowering behind him. In the same art show, Victor José Archila Hita's *Wounded Militiaman* presented the alternative to this ideal image of the regular army. It shows an upright civilian fighter suddenly stopped in his advance by a shot into the heart, a blood stain spreading over his emblematic white shirt. His hand, in dropping the rifle, is nonetheless clenched to form a fist in the republican salute. In the progressive elaboration of his wall painting *Guernica* for the Spanish Pavilion, Picasso proved sensitive to the looming contradictions inherent in the 'militarization' policy. Rather than subscribing to Bardasano's upbeat imagery of professional warfare, he sided with the tragic ideal of a militia fighter perishing in the midst of his defenseless community.

/ 3.2 **MODERN ART, REVOLUTIONARY NO LONGER**

/ 3.2.1 **FROM FUTURISM TO AEROPITTURA**

In Italy, the disparate ideological interrelation between revolution, war, and technology proved crucial for the ups and downs of Futurism's Fascist credentials. After their initial equation of artistic and social revolution had proved so untenable that Marinetti and his followers broke with the Fascist Party, they had to let go of their revolutionary posture when they wanted to rejoin. Between 1914-1916, leading Futurist painters had verbally overstated first their interventionist politics and then their acclamation of military service as an enactment of modernity. Marinetti and several others even volunteered for service as a group. However, they failed to redeem their public enthusiasm with a significant body of art work, a few exceptions notwithstanding. At the start of the Depression the Futurist group, its membership enlarged, turned to exalting the technology of aviation. The Ethiopian conquest in 1935 and the military intervention in the Spanish Civil War in 1936 gave them opportunities to imbue this subject with their old belligerence. Never again were they able to transcend this narrow specialization.

The defiant manifesto Marinetti issued in 1929 to spell out the new orientation of Futurism stays clear of both the terms revolution and war. It waxes on the aesthetic transfiguration of the experience of flying as a fulfillment of futurist synesthesia. Marinetti categorized the various styles derived from that experience as fulfillments of the quest for overcoming static vision. With their new enthusiasm for the airplane theme, he and his artists latched on to the official propaganda flanking the development of aviation as a prominent accomplishment of Italian industry. Tato's photomontage *Futurist Portrait of Marinetti* of c. 1930 blends three portraits of the writer

at the commands of an airplane. In 1932, Marinetti adopted *Aeropittura* as an alternative group name. However, the newly branded group's attraction for aviation agencies to reward them with purchases or commissions only briefly peaked in 1932 and subsided in 1934. After a state-sponsored *Aeropittura* show held in March 1934 in Berlin had backfired, provoking attacks on modern Italian art in Germany. The Ministry of Communications withdrew its patronage.

Still, the Ethiopian War of 1935, for which Marinetti volunteered, and the Spanish Civil War of 1936 gave the Futurist painters new themes for unleashing the appeal of their style to the visual imagination of mechanized warfare, far beyond what they had aspired to in World War I. By 1938, they even advertised themselves as 'Futurist aeropainters of Africa and Spain.' This timely adjustment allowed them to forego the first of their three original ideological tenets—revolution—and to correlate the other two—technology and war—more closely than they had twenty years before. They styled the rapid changes of views in flight, sliced by machine gun bursts, as a validation of the interdependence of breakup and buildup in modern abstraction. When Futurist painters narrowed the theme of multidirectional vision during flight to downward circling dogfights and nosedive bombings, they trivialized the modern ideal of destruction and construction to an illustrative enhancement. Their small success with government or party agencies proved that this topical adjustment fell short of providing an adequate propaganda tool for the newly-fashioned fascist 'Empire'.

/ 3.2.2 SURREALIST INTROVERSION

For André Breton and the surrealist artists who were still loyal to him, the defeat of Spanish anarchism by the Communist-steered Popular Front government precluded any understanding of the Spanish Civil War as a continuance of revolutionary politics, particularly after Lev Trotsky had disqualified it as an instance of his theory that 20th-century revolutions had their origins in wars. Benjamin Péret's reports from Barcelona, the writings of Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris, and the books by British art critic Herbert Read, *The Heart Conscripted* and *Philosophie de l'anarchisme*, all set a tone of disgust for real politics and of melodramatic despair—the opposite of the revolutionary fervor to which the surrealists had still clung two years before. Until now surrealist artists had not put forth works to match, much less to express, their revolutionary beliefs, be it of orthodox Communist, be it of Trotskyist observance. Now the new, disillusioned mindset transpiring from those writings prompted them to visualize some of their long-standing artistic concerns, first and foremost their aspiration for what they called a 'new myth.'

In the spring of 1937, a Paris stage production of Cervantes' tragedy *Numancia*, whose subject is the collective suicide of an Iberian city's populace to avoid being enslaved by Roman colonizers, inspired a histrionic bewailing of the losing Civil War in

Spain. Surrealist artists wallowed in gloomy fantasies about bullfights, menacing monsters, and the Minotaur. It was a fitting assignment for Masson, the self-proclaimed anarchist and adversary of the Popular Front who had just returned from Spain, to design the stage set and costumes for the performance. In a review of the show, Georges Bataille hailed his work as a breakthrough toward a “mythical” and “tragic” art in the spirit of Nietzsche.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Such timeless terms preempted any historical or political reckoning. The transfiguration of the Spanish Civil War into a quasi-mythic spectacle severed any ideological relations between revolution and warfare and introverted the Civil War into a conflictive self-experience. It spared the surrealists any further involvement with the rising war scare of 1937-1939, no matter how assiduously Paul Éluard acclaimed Picasso’s *Guernica* for just that.

In the exhibition ‘L’Art Cruel,’ running from December 17, 1937, to January 6, 1938, and organized by Jean Cassou, assistant of education minister Jean Zay, surrealist artists were cast in some supporting roles. Their tragic view of the Spanish Civil War, along with that of others, was sanctioned by an official of the government whose lack of political assistance contributed to the looming defeat of the Republic. In his preface to the catalog, Cassou credited all exhibiting artists with having “connected certain subliminal hopes with the Spanish cause, in fact exactly at the moment when this Spain began its death agony.”⁽⁹⁸⁾ In fact, the surrealists—Picasso included—had bitterly protested his government’s stand-off policy, and their disappointment added to their sense of tragedy. Since Breton and Masson had broken with the Communist Party, no surrealist artist was included in the defiant show ‘Espagne 1930–1937. No pasarán!,’ which former surrealist Louis Aragon had mounted earlier that year for the Maison de la Culture with an interventionist message. It featured no modern artist, only realists such as Frans Masereel, along with photographs from the front.

/ 3.2.3 **BROKEN EQUATION**

At the end of the decade, the two most prominent movements of modern art that had started out with express revolutionary claims, each one with a vociferous literary leader—Marinetti and Breton—, found themselves at their wit’s end. They were unable to adjust their work to the ideological refashioning of revolution by the two totalitarian regimes to which they had adhered. In the fascist culture flanking the winning war in Ethiopia, the Futurists were quick to altogether forego their revolutionary aspirations in lockstep with the new imperial triumphalism. In the democratic culture faced with the losing Civil War in Spain, on the other hand, the Surrealists saw through the revolutionary rhetoric of the Popular Front and retreated to an art of introverted despondency. The timeliness of their responses did not shield either movement from being marginalized in an artistic culture they had set out to provoke with the stridency of their revolutionary aspirations. Neither futurist airplanes nor surrealist monsters

were a match for the emerging art of World War II with its traditional monumentality now being fostered by both Italy and France.

As early as 1934-1935, Max Ernst produced a series of four paintings with the analogous titles *Barbarians Marching West* or *Horde of Barbarians*, avatars of the German invasion of France in 1914, foreboding the repetition in the offing. The term 'barbarian'—outsiders menacing culture—jibed with the Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture held in June 1935. One year later, however, in a lecture he contributed on June 24, 1936, to ongoing discussions about revolutionary art held at the 'Maison de la Culture,' Ernst insisted on the independence of the artistic imagination from any ideological message. It was an historic art gone underground, as it were, by introversion into the unconscious which made for its revolutionary authenticity. Henceforth, Ernst abandoned any overt ideological allusions in his work and turned to regressive scenarios of natural history, a wildly proliferating growth of plants and insects which simulated the life of humans. In this biological transfiguration, neither revolution nor war had any place. Ernst's pragmatic leadership in the politics of German artists in French exile steered clear of ideology.

Sometime in June 1937, Breton had his photograph taken in front of Picasso's *Guernica* in the works, soon to be featured in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo as a forecast of war all over Europe. The ongoing defeat of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War appeared to confirm Picasso's transfiguration of a losing people's war into the specter of a general war to come. One year later, the sole reference to war in Breton's and Lev Trotsky's *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* was the sentence "We are by no means thinking only of the world war that draws near" in the opening paragraph. But the underlying expectation was that another revolution, like that of 1917, could only follow from another war. Finally, in his pamphlet *Neither Your War nor Your Peace* of September 27, 1938, Breton confirmed the Surrealists' refusal to align themselves with any one of the ideological positions fueling the political confrontation of the arts in Europe. Altogether omitting the term revolution, he recognized that none of them offered a viable response to the inevitability of war.

/ 3.3 **THE END OF REVOLUTIONARY ART**

/ 3.3.1 **MILITARY ASCENDANCY**

Mario Sironi's fresco panel in front of the press pavilion at the *Mostra Nazionale del Dopolavoro*, held in Rome in 1938, evokes the daily *Popolo d'Italia*, whose editor Mussolini had called for Italy's entry into World War I back in 1915. Its title was *Stele del Giornale della Rivoluzione*, but it showed a column of steel-helmeted soldiers marching in lockstep, led from above by a fasces-wielding victory. The fresco recalls François Rude's famous relief inside the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, which commemorates the

defense of the revolution in 1792. But the enthusiasm of Rude's volunteers, inspired by the call of the victory goddess flying above them, contrasts with the tight marching order of the soldiers in their dull obedience to the fascist version of the goddess who leads them into a nondescript war. The emphasis on war rather than revolution in this monumental commemoration of Mussolini's proto-fascist journal grates on its revolutionary title. It congeals the military transfiguration of the fascist revolution, inaugurated by the so-called 'sanctuary' within the Tenth-Anniversary Exhibition of 1932, into a vision of command and obedience without apparent cause.

Arno Breker's pair of nude male bronze figures before the portal of Speer's New Reich Chancellery in Berlin, entitled 'Party' and 'Army' (*Partei und Wehrmacht*), also created in 1938, confirmed the subordination of the armed forces under Hitler's personal command, after War Minister Werner von Blomberg and Army Commander Werner von Fritsch had been dismissed. The sculptures were echoed by pairs of steel-helmeted SS elite guards in black and white uniforms flanking the doorway and other decorated passageways at various points inside the building. Despite their military garb, these were not soldiers but paramilitary party units, who during the Röhm affair of June 30, 1934, had murdered most of the SA command in order to foil their schemes of encroaching on the military. The configuration celebrated the political alignment of the military that Hitler had accomplished since that year—actually with the assiduous help of Generals von Blomberg and von Fritsch—thereby preventing the SA from transmuting into a 'revolutionary' fighting force rivalling the regular Army. The guiding attitude of the *Party* figure feigned a leadership over the army which the Party never exercised.

Although in 1937 the Soviet government, after the purge of the Red Army command, restored the double leadership system of commissars and officers, its military doctrine, keyed to a prospective German attack, was defensive rather than revolutionary. Domestically, revolution was considered accomplished after the First Five-Year Plan. Thus, the art exhibition held in 1938 on the Red Army's 20th anniversary foregrounded peaceful interaction between soldiers and the populace. The military's protective mission had already been the theme of Josip Chaikov's steel relief surrounding the entrance of the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris Expo. Gone was the Leninist link between revolution and military conquest. It was the ongoing pursuit of aggressive war policies on the part of both the Italian and the German regimes—the conquest of Ethiopia as the stepping-stone to building a Fascist empire, and the military occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia as a stepping-stone to the conquest of the Soviet Union—that prompted the peculiar transition from revolutionary to war art in those both states.

/ 3.3.2 **NO VENUE LEFT**

The year 1938, when the Munich conference imposed a brief delay on a looming war, marks the point when throughout Europe no more self-styled revolutionary

art was forthcoming. After the demise of the Popular Front governments in France and Spain, no regime or political movement was left to propagate revolution. And without such backing, it could no longer be substantially conceived. It seems pathetic that in that same year, Trotsky and Breton, in the 'Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art' they jointly wrote in faraway Mexico, should have attempted to revive the idea now stripped of any substance. Their call for revolutionary art without political purpose turned the historic lack of venue into a utopia for a scattered handful of artists and writers. Only when governments or mass parties, totalitarian or democratic, sought to bolster their authority by styling the trenchant social changes they sought as revolutionary did they highlight the idea in their artistic cultures. As soon as their underlying societies were fully under control and gearing up for war, they discarded revolution in favor of social unity.

In 1938, Vera Mukhina sketched a monumental sculpture titled *October Revolution* to adorn the Moskvoretsky Bridge in Moscow. It personified the revolution as a half-nude victory figure overrunning a vanquished enemy. Placed before the projected Palace of Soviets with its towering Lenin figure, the group was to be paired off with another, titled *Socialist Construction*, featuring a blacksmith with hammer and anvil. In the same year in Paris, Marc Chagall continued working on his canvas *Revolution* (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.1.1). Here he pictured Lenin standing on one hand like a circus acrobat, clutching the imperial Russian tricolor between his feet and throwing the red flag away. He adapted the figure from Gert Arntz' linocut *Circus Europe* (see Chapter 3.3 / 2.2.1), a caricature of the ideological make-believe perpetrated by European leaders. Both Russian artists—one conformist, the other dissident—stripped the revolutionary ideal of any promise of liberation and reduced it to a display of belligerent violence—one as a panegyric, the other as an indictment. Neither one was in a position to uphold its connotation with the liberation of the people. Both hailed or denounced it as an exercise of power.

In 1937 Paul Klee—an artist who throughout his career had tried hard to keep his art aloof from politics—painted what amounts to be an epitaph of revolutionary art. In his *Revolution of the Viaduct*, the viaduct has broken apart into arched segments that are marching forward, at a right angle to the pre-ordained pathway, like in a workers' demonstration, but without lining up with each other, each one at its own pace. The painting recalls, perhaps deliberately, Mario Sironi's architectural arrangement of the plaza at the 5th Triennial held in 1933 in Milan, ominously titled *Six Free Arches*. Here a spaced-out row of six solitary arches is interspersed with the letters *DUCE*, centered upon sculptured *Fasces*. A photograph shows throngs of women in uniform standing at a right angle to the arched pathway. In *Revolution of the Viaduct*, Klee has carefully distinguished each one of the moving arches in size, proportion, perspective, and position, dissolving the underlying totalitarian scheme. He has thus restored the

destructive, liberating significance of the term revolution against its ubiquitous conversion into a slogan of conformity.

/ 3.3.3 **REVOLUTIONARY ART OR ART OF THE PEOPLE?**

That toward the end of the decade the ideology of revolutionary art should have paled before the ideology of an art for the people, was due to the advancing consolidation of political control in the three totalitarian states and to the Communist's turn to democratic politics in France and Spain. Only during passing periods of enforced or radical political changes had it been drawn upon for a deceitful rhetoric. Such periods occurred in the USSR between 1928 and 1932, in Italy between 1932 and 1933, in Germany between 1933 and 1934, and in France and Spain between 1936 and 1938. They correspond to the enforcement of the First Five-Year Plan, to Mussolini's personal takeover of the government, to the breakneck political 'coordination' after Hitler's ascendancy, and to the uneasy governance of the Popular Front. In the USSR, Socialist Realism, preempting the term 'revolutionary,' reoriented the arts to deceptively extol success. In Germany, Hitler's penchant for classical order excluded any art dwelling on upheaval. In Italy, the revived triumphalism of the Roman Empire did away with futurism's revolutionary aspirations. In France and Spain, the term was bestowed on any art that suited the regimes of the Popular Front.

To some extent, the relationship between the two ideologies of revolutionary art and art of the people pertained to the alternative between traditional and modern art. After all, it was modern art which, in its uphill challenge to traditional art, had been incessantly promoted under the catchword of a revolution that signified no more than an upset of convention. It was in the first three or four years after the First World War that those revolutionary claims on behalf of modern art were politically validated in those very states where eventually democracy succumbed to totalitarianism. In the Third Republic, which held on to democracy, they were never politically validated, not even under the Popular Front, where the ideology of revolutionary art was so profusely voiced. Wherever the idea of revolutionary art was re-launched during the decade, it was no longer suited for a political validation of modern art. Since all four governments were keen on an art of mass acceptance, modern art lost out to traditional art, the tested tool for consolidating power. It recoiled to an evasive imagination of the middle-class.

When in March 1939 Mussolini called the 'Axis' between Italy and Germany a "meeting of two Revolutions which declare themselves in direct antithesis to all other conceptions of contemporary civilization," he was recalling the distant revolutionary origins of two consolidated totalitarian states, whose military alliance was certified two months later in the 'Pact of Steel.' Such a pact no longer needed any revolutionary art, if it ever did. Instead, an art extolling the streamlined political will of the people to back up the government with no questions asked, was the order of the day. As all four states

moved into position for the imminent war, an art for the people blended into a political culture of national unity. Modern art had never been driven by any ambition to be an art of the people, that is, to address the common people's social concerns, or at least to vie for their aesthetic appreciation. At the end of the Depression, any ideological aspirations it may still have harbored were reduced to a recoil from, or resistance against, political reality, now out of grasp for revolutionary intervention.



2/ Ideologies

2.1 / Art of the People p. 122

2.2 / Revolutionary Art p. 156

2.3 / Ideologies and Policies p. 190

2.3/ Ideologies and Policies

/1 **CONFRONTATION AND COEXISTENCE**

/1.1 **UNCERTAIN ANTAGONISMS**

/1.1.1 **THREE-WAY CONFLICT**

In the shared economic emergency of the Depression, political systems strove to prove themselves against one another. Democracy had to validate its correlation of political liberty and free enterprise. Fascists and National Socialists denounced democracy as unable to deal with social strife. Communists asserted that ‘fascist’ oppression was required to protect capitalism from succumbing to a terminal crisis. Communism opposed ‘bourgeois’ democracy and ‘fascist’ authoritarianism in equal measure, since it construed a structural continuity between the two. It asserted that the latter was the outcome of the former, because the ‘bourgeoisie’ would adopt ‘fascism’ once it could no longer hold on to political power by democratic means to protect the capitalist economy from social unrest. Fascism and National Socialism opposed democracy and communism in equal measure because in their view, those systems unduly empowered the masses over political authority, precipitating society into anarchy. Democracy, finally, opposed communism and ‘fascism’ in equal measure for the obvious reason that both had been and were still targeting it for overthrow.

As the Depression unfolded, oppressive regimes in communist and ‘fascist’ states could claim political superiority over democracy in dealing with the economic and social crisis it entailed. Moreover, since their economic recovery was partly due to mounting rearmament, they projected their strength on the international scene with military self-assurance. However, the ensuing three-way ideological antagonism between communism, fascism (the common term used at the time for both the Italian and the German regimes by their opponents, their protestations notwithstanding) and democracy failed to yield any certain orientation on the trajectory from the Depression to the Second World War, no matter how ominous it seemed. Similarly, although the Soviet, Italian, and German regimes did their best to fashion an art to suit and represent their distinct political systems—culminating in their pavilions at the Paris World Exposition of 1937—it gave contemporary beholders no clues as to their political relationship with one another. The Third Republic, for its part, never tried to fashion such an art on behalf of its democracy.

Fraught with obfuscations, misunderstandings, and plain ignorance, the three-way political conflict between Soviet, German, and French art policy invalidated the vague, intangible opposition between Right and Left which had underpinned the ideological antagonism between traditional and modern art before. Each one of the three totalitarian regimes calibrated their relation in a different way. Just as the historical trajectory inherent in the confrontation between all four political systems in Europe remained obscure for most contemporary beholders, even beyond the outbreak of the Second World War, so the disparities or similarities between their artistic cultures remained opaque, since hardly anyone took the trouble of comparing their relationship to one another. While Hitler railed against 'cultural bolshevism,' he ignored the current art of the Soviet Union. While officials of the Popular Front in France denounced National Socialist suppression of modern art, they turned a blind eye to its Bolshevik equivalent. For the sake of a fleeting peace, Paris Expo organizers worked hard to make the arts of adversarial states appear compatible with one another.

/1.1.2 **TWO-WAY CONFLICT**

Cutting across the three-way conflict of state-based political systems—'fascism,' communism, and democracy—was an unspoken, but more fundamental conflict between democracy and totalitarianism, the latter an ideologically neutral term coined around 1936 to characterize the structural similarities first of the Fascist and National Socialist, and later also of the Soviet, regimes. Despite incessant ideological debates within each one of the four artistic cultures, with their occasional, superficial references to one another, it was not a three-way ideological but a two-way political confrontation that shaped the history of art during the latter part of the Depression, as governments and parties adapted the arts to updated policy concerns, transcending ideological constancy. This is because the fundamental two-way conflict underlying the political confrontation of the arts—the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy—had not yet been spelled out in more than the most cursory terms, and only by a few observers. Comprehensive definitions of totalitarianism were long in coming, and so was an assessment of what a genuine art of democracy might be.

The structural independence of totalitarian art politics from any specific ideology, be it 'fascist' or communist, accounts for the ideological opacity of artistic culture during the later years of the Depression. Time and again, it overrode the deceptive stridency of the three-way ideological conflict, and exposed democracy's inability to formulate a substantive art ideology of its own. Much of French artistic culture, not limited to that of conservative bent, appreciated Fascist art in Italy, partly because of its own adherence to the 'monumental order,' and partly because the Fascist promotion of that style admitted modern art as one of its components, provided modern artists adapted themselves to its requirements. Fascist art never anticipated that Italy would

eventually declare war on France. Although Soviet and German art by now shared the oppressive preference of traditional over modern art, an ideological equation between them appeared impossible in view of their reciprocal political hostility. But hardly anyone faced up to this contradiction. To solve it by applying the totalitarian equation proposed by Lev Trotsky would have put France's ally and adversary in the same boat.

On the surface, the confrontation of the arts was fought out on the terms of traditional versus modern rather than dictatorship versus democracy. It ran through all four political systems in their efforts at redefining the relationship between economic modernization and political order. The Fascist regime alone could claim to have attained a synthesis of sorts between the two. Now modern art stood deprived of ideological consistency. While it was branded as 'bourgeois' in the Soviet Union and as 'Bolshevik' in National Socialist Germany, its spurious acceptance by the Popular Front in France and Spain was never defined as an achievement of democracy. In Italy, finally, it ended up as an attenuated, contested ingredient of Fascist style. Long-winded debates about what constituted Socialist Realism or how classical and modern paradigms might coalesce in Fascist art were germane for Soviet and Italian artistic culture. In Germany, such debates were curtailed within less than two years into the National Socialist regime, and the absence of professionally applicable ideological guidelines led to the showdown of 1937.

/1.1.3 **FROM REVOLUTIONARY ART TO ART OF THE PEOPLE**

What totalitarian regimes had in common was their ascendancy from failing democracies by the forcible replacement of parliamentary government with an ostensibly more efficient form of autocratic rule that nonetheless claimed popular support. They derived their surface legitimacy from mobilizing masses for pseudo-plebiscitary demonstrations of assent. The latter of the two was more relevant for their long-term hold on power than their short-term origins, which they kept celebrating as revolutions to various degrees and at various points in time, no matter how differently those anti-parliamentary beginnings had come about. Depending on such variants, the revolutionary designations of their cultures were either foregrounded or de-emphasized. The Bolshevik revolution, preceded by military defeat and extended into a civil war, had been by far the bloodiest of the three. The violent conduct of the Fascist parliamentary takeover in 1922 did not destabilize the country to a similar degree. The National Socialists, finally, enjoyed a parliamentary ascendancy in 1933, and only briefly called their violent start of governance a revolution.

During the decade of the Depression, art of the people overtook revolutionary art as a guiding ideology of public art production. While the former became a crucial tenet for fashioning an art of mass conformity, the latter was maintained as a formula for any kind of radical change, either state-ordained or postulated by individual artists, against the status quo of politics. True to the political differences summarized above,

it was in the USSR that both ideologies were cultivated side by side, the first in order to back up official preference for traditional art, the second to define its ideological content. They converged in Andrei Zhdanov's 1934 prescription of "reality in its revolutionary development" (see Chapter 2.1/3.1.2) for the substance of Socialist Realism. During the last years of the Weimar Republic, and throughout the Third Republic, Communist parties encouraged artists to proclaim the ideology of revolutionary art in opposition to democratic government. In the Spanish Republic, it flourished during the ascendancy of the Popular Front, but eventually became submerged in the populist culture of anti-fascist militancy.

The most articulate, and most protracted, switch of ideologies occurred in Fascist Italy, where revolutionary art was still being foregrounded in the tenth anniversary exhibition of 1932. Its replacement in 1936 by the ideology of imperial art was not argued so much in populist terms as in terms of an expansionist autocracy with nationalist backing. It was in National Socialist Germany that the ideology of art for the people was not argued against that of revolutionary art but became instantly predominant with Hitler's accession. The NSDAP had never cultivated a revolutionary art before, although it conceived of its ascendancy as a revolution. When modern artists invoked it to ingratiate themselves with the new regime, they were rebuked. It was in the two most oppressive totalitarian states that the ideology of art for the people was most profusely proclaimed. On the assumption of popular preference for the art they sponsored, their populations were to be persuaded to appreciate government policy as a response to their own aspirations, not as a fulfillment of revolutionary demands, but through enforced conformity.

/1.2 **CHANGES OF ART POLICY**

/1.2.1 **USSR I: FROM ACTIVISM TO CONTENTMENT**

During the decade of the Depression, the USSR underwent by far the most trenchant changes in art policy of all four states concerned. It led from the art of the First Five-Year Plan, launched in 1928, to Socialist Realism, which replaced it since 1933. Uniquely, both art policies managed to invoke the ideologies of art for the people and revolutionary art at the same time. Domestically, the Party canvassed the policy change, with its state appropriation of industry and collectivization of agriculture, as a second revolution, even more searing than the first. Internationally, on the other hand, Soviet propaganda, hiding the attendant administrative violence, celebrated it as a successful effort to invigorate the Soviet people for enthusiastic cooperation. By 1933, however, when the Second Five-Year Plan began to fall short of its expected achievements, Socialist Realism was launched as a triumphant propaganda style to assert the contrary. It replaced effort with success, exertion with contentment, as if

the 'revolutionary development' with which Andrei Zhdanov credited reality itself could dispense of harder labor as a revolutionary struggle.

The visual culture of the First Five-Year Plan engaged the arts for a propagandistic enforcement of the social engineering deemed necessary for precipitated industrialization. It promised to redeem long-standing aspirations on the part of avant-garde artists of transcending aesthetic confinement toward social activism—this time, however, not into reality, but into pictorial propaganda. The new expressive stylization of modernized technology in the hands of an enthusiastic workforce was shared by traditional and modern artists, but it was due to a limited rebound of the latter against the former, who had reclaimed realism on merely populist grounds. It could be valued as a convergence between revolutionary art and art for the people. For such a purpose, trite realism was judged to be inadequate. Stereotypical images of self-confident effort and proud achievement, often based on pseudo-documentary photomontage, were to represent a social reality under a benevolent leadership, which was omnipresent gesticulating in exhortation and congratulation. They misrepresented ruthless policy enforcement as the political will of labor.

Abroad, the First Five-Year Plan style of Soviet modernization, first displayed in El Lissitzky's Soviet pavilion at the Cologne Pressa exhibition of 1928, and later popularized in the illustrated monthly *USSR in Construction*, was designed to appeal to the technological aesthetics of modern art in capitalist states. It could build on the renown that modern Soviet design had already attained. This international outreach flanked the Plan's reliance on large-scale imports of foreign technology for its break-neck industrialization, which however was largely financed with exports of primary materials, mainly agricultural. When the Depression made grain prices fall worldwide, the ruthless boosting of these exports prompted the catastrophic famine that befell the newly-collectivized peasantry. The imagery of enthusiastic farm workers applying their mechanized equipment to an abundant food production, which fills the pages of *USSR in Construction*, conveys the ideological fiction of a harmony between industry and agriculture, a foundational Communist belief by its administrative violence and scant results.

/1.2.2 **USSR II: SOCIALIST REALISM**

A quick, conspicuous change of styles, as it occurred in the Soviet Union in 1933-1934, leading from the art of the First Five-Year Plan to Socialist Realism, remained unmatched in any other of the four states concerned. While at home it was profusely commented upon as a political decision flowing from an accomplished economic policy, abroad it was never recognized as such. The new style entailed the most fundamental discrepancy between artistic ideology and political reality anywhere in Europe. Its distinctive feature was a uniform exaggerated look of joy and contentment

in Soviet life and work. It illustrated Stalin's well-publicized dictum of 1934 that, as the result of the Five-Year Plan, the USSR had achieved socialism, the precondition of a joyful lifestyle. The ideological mendacity of the style consisted in its one-sided exaltation of this lifestyle at the expense of the large-scale, murderous repression sustaining the political order, starting with the Party purge of 1933, tightened by the revisions of the penal code in 1935, and culminating in the show trials of 1936-1938. Only the former, never the latter, was the subject of Socialist Realism.

For the Soviet Union's artistic self-display abroad, the new style served an expressive change from technological productivity to economic autarchy, social contentment and military resolve. In the two World Expositions of 1937 and 1939, it attained a hypertrophic triumphalism which boosted its position of strength in the increasingly saber-rattling political confrontation. The new style disconnected Soviet art from its previous international compatibility as an exemplary way of balancing modern and traditional art for the purpose of representing modernization—as it had been acclaimed in the Decorative Arts exhibition of 1925 in Paris and the 'Pressa' exhibition of 1928 in Cologne—particularly since leading Soviet artists of erstwhile modern persuasion came around to espousing it. Yet the impact of the earlier style outlasted the switch to Socialist Realism, whose critical significance was largely ignored. Conservative milieus could acquiesce in the new style's lack of revolutionary features. Left-leaning milieus clung to their anachronistic view of the earlier style's message that Soviet modernization was the antidote to capitalist Depression.

It would have taken an adversarial regime to call Socialist Realism on its service as a smokescreen for the murderous oppression now being conducted by the Bolshevik government. But its only open adversary, National Socialist Germany, was anachronistically fixated on modern art as the expression of what it denounced in Bolshevism. Perhaps the new style was too close to home for confrontation. In its new anti-fascist coalition policy launched in 1935, the Comintern, for all its praise of current Soviet culture, never canvassed Socialist Realism as a style to emulate. And the Socialist Realism propagated by French Communists like Aragon was focused on the exposure of capitalist injustice and fascist wrongdoing, the opposite of the cheerful essence of its Soviet namesake. The criticisms of current Soviet art, as part of the broadsides Trotsky, Breton, and others had been hurling against the Stalinist regime since 1936, were limited to its state-controlled conformity, which it shared with German art per the totalitarian equation. They stopped short of exposing its ideological function as a camouflage of the calamities that the regime had wrought on Soviet society.

/1.2.3 **GERMANY, ITALY, FRANCE**

From the start, an ideological self-contradiction was built into National Socialist art policy. On the one side, Hitler had programmed it to follow the ideal of classical

antiquity as an expression of state power. On the other hand, Goebbels' Reich Chamber of Art encouraged a trivial, deliberately populist art without political content for the sake of professional recovery. Both variants seemed to share the ideology of an art for the people, but only the latter could derive some credibility because of the rising success of populist art on the market. No art work of this kind would ever have made it into a project of official art, whose popular acceptance consisted of totalitarian admiration. Here, the idea of art of the people was abstracted into the racial commonality of Greeks and Germans. The contradiction surfaced when the House of German art, the programmatic paradigm of the first variant, was to open with a bulk show of the second, and Hitler rejected numerous submissions, so that future shows in that ostensibly perfect building were usually accompanied with caveats to the effect that populist art was not fully accomplished but improving.

In Fascist Italy, modern had prevailed over traditional architecture in the name of the Fascist ideology of revolutionary renewal, linked to Fascist tenets of functional transparency in politics. A decisive ideological change came in 1936, when, because of its North African conquests, Italy claimed the status of an empire. Now, in emulation of Roman imperial building, modern architecture was blown up to symmetrical grandeur. It seemed that the art policy of synthesizing corporate diversity had yielded an ideological balance between the classical heritage of imperial Rome and the modernization drive of the Fascist state. However, the transition was anything but smooth. Paramount projects of state architecture such as the Palazzo de Littorio and the Foro Mussolini were endlessly changed, relocated, and never finished according to plan. The most egregious example of ideological self-contradiction was the drawn-out work on the site for the projected World Exposition of 1942. It pitted Marcello Piacentini and Giuseppe Pagano, the erstwhile protagonists of corporate synthesis, against one another on the question of imperial style. And Mussolini's belligerence belied its ostensibly peaceful message. Nonetheless, it was pursued two years into the war.

France's limited effort at a representative style was the overall design of the Paris World Exposition of 1937, where a modernized version of classical French architecture was meant to be reconciled with an aesthetic representation of technology. The three totalitarian states were able to insert the styles of their pavilions into the parameter of the first but not of the second proposition. The republican consensus regarding diversity in the arts presented no substantive ideological options for defining a particular style of the French Republic. Current ideological connotations of such styles, be it the social topicality of realism, classicism as a facade of political order, or the social nonconformity of modern art, were never debated with an eye on national self-representation. The sole attempt to fill this political vacuum was the exaltation of a supposed French artistic supremacy, which collapsed traditional and modern art together under the nationalist cachet of 'Frenchness.' It failed to net French democracy

a distinct artistic profile expressing its fundamental political distinction from the three totalitarian states.

/1.3 **DECEPTIVE ALIGNMENTS**

/1.3.1 **GENERAL**

The four-way confrontation of political systems that led from the Depression to the Second World War was never matched by any overt clash of art policies—neither in the representation of their arts abroad, where all four regimes vied for diplomatic recognition, nor in their domestic art scenes, whose enduring conflicts played out on the alternative between traditional and modern art. Public discourse on the arts was largely devoid of comparative references to other political systems. Never were Bolshevik or National Socialist art defined in opposition to one another, never was any commonality between ‘fascist’ art in Italy and Germany recognized, and, most importantly, never was an art of democracy upheld against totalitarian dictatorships in any other terms than those of freedom. Only the Soviet Union and Fascist Italy embarked on international propaganda campaigns by means of cultural policies: that of the Popular Front, inaugurated at the Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture in 1935, and that of an internationalization of fascism, inaugurated at the Covegno Volta in 1936. In this respect, the ideological antagonism between ‘fascism’ and ‘anti-fascism’ held true as a political divide.

The ideologies underlying foreign art policy often differed from those promoted at home. The most blatant example of such a discrepancy was the German denigration of modern art as Bolshevik, long after it was banished in the Soviet Union. Both states ignored their common preference for traditional art for the sake of upholding their ideological antagonism. A similar discrepancy between ideology and politics appears in the artistic fraternization between France and Germany in the name of peace, at a time when Germany was gearing up for war on France. Their cultural cooperation in shaping a public architecture in traditional style was at odds with France’s military alliance with the USSR, which was never matched by any appreciation of Soviet art. Yet another discrepancy appears between Italy’s propaganda effort aimed at an international expansion of Fascist culture—epitomized in the plans for the World Exposition of 1942—and its quickly forgiven North African colonial war of conquering an ‘Empire,’ followed by its tightening military alliance with Germany in preparation for the incoming World War.

The Paris World Exposition of 1937 championed a “Monumental Order,” as it has been called,⁽⁹⁹⁾ which embraced not only a modernized classicism that democratic states with conservative governments and totalitarian states with capitalist economies could share, but also the non-classical monumentalism of the Soviet Union, and did not exclude modern-style pavilions of other states. Gold medals and other awards were

showered upon the pavilions and their art works contributed by totalitarian and democratic states alike. The German share was proudly listed in successive instalments of the membership monthly published by the Reich Chamber of Arts as proof of the international acclaim for the achievements of National Socialist art policy. The Paris Expo paraded a peaceful cooperation between states that were gearing up for war, their arms industries working at full tilt. It was bitterly ironical that at the opening of the German pavilion, Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht extolled this very ideal six months before the Hossbach Conference of November 5 fixed a timetable for the start of war.

/1.3.2 **USSR AND GERMANY**

As long as the Soviet government pursued a foreign policy on the expectation that the Depression spelled the demise of capitalism and opened the opportunity for a Communist world revolution to succeed at last, Western democracies tended to perceive National Socialism as a bulwark against Bolshevism, since Hitler's government had left the capitalist economy essentially intact. However, when the German government, starting in 1935, gave evidence of an accelerated move toward military expansion, democratic states turned to cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Soviet government, for its part, attempted to oppose German power by launching its international peace diplomacy and inserting its new Popular Front policy into the domestic politics of democratic states. A stunning upset occurred on August 23, 1939, when the Soviet Union passed over the opportunity of consolidating its alliance with the West in the face of Germany's accelerating threat to Central Europe and switched sides at the last moment to conclude the Hitler-Stalin Pact so it could share in the conquest of Poland, the first campaign of the Second World War, which started one week later.

After Hitler's accession, German-Soviet art-diplomatic relations, which had been vigorously pursued during the Weimar Republic—mainly on behalf of modern art—were suspended. Henceforth, there was little or no public knowledge about each other's art in either country. While German art policy cultivated a foe image of 'art Bolshevism,' Soviet anti-German propaganda spared National Socialist art. Until the Trotsky-inspired totalitarian equation between both regimes started to address the similarities between their state-directed art production, foreign observers turned a blind eye to them, just as they did to the similarities between both regimes' suppression of modern art. It seems that the alliance with the Soviet Union against the German war threat preempted any ideological perspicuity. The Hitler-Stalin Pact would have validated the totalitarian equation, but it came too late to affect the art policies of either state. Perhaps its short-term expediency was too blatant for the new alliance to develop any persuasive ideology to justify it. In any event, the less-than two-year interlude until the German attack brought no artistic rapprochement.

The artistic affinity between both states, despite their ideological confrontation, emerged for all to see in the symmetrical pairing of their pavilions at the Paris Expo, which could be alternatively perceived as antagonism or analogy. Even though their styles were altogether different (see Chapter 1.3 / 3.2.3), their common adherence to the 'monumental order' became the yardstick for their propagandistic confrontation. In the German official photographic survey of the Expo, edited by Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's confidant in artistic matters, the Soviet pavilion received top marks. Staff writer E. P. Frank applauded its exhibits for their matching of "very high artistic merit and a clearly marked propagandistic tendency,"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ just what German art policy was aiming for as well. "From a purely aesthetic viewpoint," wrote Frank, "one might well receive here the most profound impression. The magnificent reliefs at the entrance, but above all the giant group 'Worker and Kolkhoz Farmer' on top,—these are art works in the best sense of the word. No matter whether you deal with Bolsheviks—you cannot deny that the Russians have a sense for art."⁽¹⁰¹⁾

/ 1.3.3 GERMANY AND FRANCE

Unlike the USSR and Italy, neither National Socialist Germany nor the French Republic undertook cultural initiatives abroad aimed at promoting their political systems as paradigms for other states to follow. The fiercely nationalist, or even racist, self-definition of German art forestalled foreign emulation. France altogether lacked a substantive ideology of democratic art to propagate. Even more disconcerting than the German admiration for Soviet art was the French admiration for German architecture because of its shared adherence to the classical tradition at a time when both states were rearming for an expected German attack on France. Since their political antagonism was never spelled out in any overt propaganda, their artistic convergence served as a smokescreen of peaceful relations. At the opening of the German pavilion at the Paris Expo, Jacques Viénot, president of its planning commission, called for France to match the architectural energy of the totalitarian states. "Since the war," he said, "we in France have been left behind by other foreign nations: Rome, Moscow, Berlin [...]. All know how to perfectly organize gigantic human maneuvers with an imposing sense of decoration, staging, and propaganda."⁽¹⁰²⁾

The official flyer of a concurrent nationwide competition to revive the *fêtes françaises* cited both the Nuremberg rallies and the parades in Rome as models for France.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Expo architect Gaston Bardet even called for monumental rallying grounds like Speer's at Nuremberg, the only ones anywhere, he said, where mass movements had been channeled into an aesthetically dignified environment.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Thus, when Expo architect Eugène Beaudin was commissioned to design such spectacles for Bastille Day, he deplored the lack of suitable spaces in Paris, due to what he termed excessive building during the century after the Revolution. In a position paper, he juxtaposed a picture

from the Nuremberg Party rallies to one of the 1792 *Fête de la Fédération* on the Champ de Mars.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ For Waldemar George, the leading anti-modern art critic of nationalist convictions, the emulation of National Socialist pageantry meant no political rapprochement but meeting the German threat with an equally self-confident popular glorification of the military.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ His call for a mimicry of totalitarian mass enthusiasm, echoed in the right-wing press, was intended to fill a void of the democratic public sphere.

Two years later, Expo head architect Carlu dressed up the Palais de Chaillot for the festivities on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the French Revolution, to be held on July 14, 1939, less than three weeks before the outbreak of the war. It was to serve as a backdrop for mass parades of civic organizations, partly in uniform, on the model of similar events in the three totalitarian states. Most conspicuous was the screen of towering *fascies* closing off the plaza between the two head structures, in disregard for the appropriation of this ancient revolutionary emblem as a ubiquitous sign of Fascist rule in Italy. Despite its historic legitimacy, it diminished the visual distinctions between democratic and totalitarian symbols. Democracy appeared to lack an unequivocal symbol of its own. However, the festivities confirmed the Third Republic's inability to match the populist appeal of totalitarian mass architecture, no matter how hard it tried. Already less numerous than expected, the crowd dispersed because of a steady rain. It was a striking contrast to Bastille day 1936, when the mass constituency of the Popular Front celebrated its election victory in front of Picasso's anti-fascist curtain.

/ 2 **DISORIENTED ARTISTS**

/ 2.1 **PAVEL FILONOV AND OSKAR SCHLEMMER**

/ 2.1.1 **REJECTED BY THE REGIME**

The increasing impact of state art policy on the economic viability of artistic culture went hand in hand with ideological anxiety on the part of artists about how it was to be understood and how strictly it was to be heeded. This did not help those modern artists who—disingenuously or not—strove to prove their ideological alignment without gauging the underlying economic and social fundamentals. During the preceding decade, the two totalitarian regimes already in existence abound with incidents where modern artists, led, respectively, by writers Mayakovsky and Marinetti, offered their ideological conformity, only to be rebuffed by the political authorities. By the start of the thirties, these artists were forced into a tightly circumscribed accommodation which allowed for a minimum of professional leeway. After 1932, this state of affairs persisted only in Italy. In the USSR, it was abrogated by the April Decree of 1932. In Germany, in January 1933, the newly ascendant National Socialist regime did not even allow it to arise. Whereas in the USSR until 1936, modern artists were given the chance to argue

their cases, albeit in vain, in Germany they met with implacable rejection from the start.

Pavel Filonov and Oskar Schlemmer were outstanding painters of modern observance who had made their national reputations during the decade of 1919-1929. In 1932 and 1933 respectively, both were disabused of their assiduous efforts to prove the ideological conformity of their work and its theoretical foundation to the Soviet and German art authorities, because they misjudged the political significance of their ideological pronouncements. Filonov, before World War I a prominent member on the modern art scene of St. Petersburg, and during the Revolution a political activist, nonetheless received no post in the first Bolshevik government, and henceforth declared himself an independent Communist artist. After 1932, his self-claimed outsider status came to haunt him. No longer painting for sale, he eked out his livelihood as a mural restorer in St. Isaac's cathedral. Schlemmer, in 1918-1919 a sympathizer with the German revolution, had quickly risen to a prominent professorship at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau. The National Socialist art policy measures of 1933 deprived him of the teaching post at the Berlin art school he held at the time. By 1937, his opportunities on the art market were curtailed so much he had to make a living as a technician in a lacquer factory.

Filonov's official repudiation started in 1932 with the cancellation of his huge retrospective show in the Russian Museum at Leningrad, to which he had been invited in early 1929, and which was, after several delays, installed but never opened. The public controversy over the show, which was protracted for almost three years, is the most vociferous event in the history of the institutional suppression of modern art in the Soviet Union. In 1930, Schlemmer had been commissioned to do a cycle of wall paintings for the Folkwang Museum at Essen, which the conservative director made him revise four times. In 1933 the new director, a National Socialist, had them scraped off the walls. Schlemmer's defense of his figures as "unequivocally German in posture and expression"⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ was of no avail. Professing allegiance to their respective regimes in lectures, debates, press articles, and letters to the authorities did not help the Soviet or the German painter, because their protestations were confined to asserting the ideological conformity of their modern styles. Their arguments fell on deaf ears because art policy aimed to reduce, if not eliminate, artists' ideological self-determination.

/ 2.1.2 **PAINTING AND TEACHING**

It was not so much their paintings that landed Filonov and Schlemmer into particularly bitter conflicts with their respective regimes, as their teaching in state-directed art schools, which gave their foundational theories a wider public resonance. Depending on their different institutional status in those schools, their public exposure varied, and their political repression took a different course. At the Leningrad Academy, Filonov never occupied a regular teaching post, but was merely authorized to conduct an unpaid master class on its premises, which allowed him to stage his teaching as an

alternative to the mounting traditionalism around him. When in 1932 a conservative curriculum was restored at the Academy, he reorganized his painting class as a private 'collective.' Schlemmer, on the other hand, taught as a senior professor at official institutions in the framework of regular curricula. His influence peaked in 1928 at the Bauhaus in Dessau, where his basic course 'The Human Being' became mandatory for all students. In his subsequent appointments at the academies of Breslau and Berlin, however, his competency was reduced, first to stage design and later to perspective.

Filonov sought to legitimize his precepts, no matter how idiosyncratic and hermetic, in the name of a dictatorship of the proletariat, which he claimed to represent as an artist. He held on to the leadership claim of outstanding individuals over like-minded groups which avant-gardes of modern art shared with Communist party elites. As a Bauhaus professor, Schlemmer also transfigured his metaphysically grounded art principles into the aesthetics of a world view and a life ethos, but he never claimed the art-political status of a leading master. Thus in 1933 he stood ready to subordinate his art to an ideologically congenial politics, provided it was allowed to unfold along its own professional logic. Whereas Filonov's teaching followed from his claim to group leadership, he did not submit to institutionalization, and hence provoked political ostracism. Schlemmer derived his teaching from the academic certification of modern art achieved in the Weimar Republic, which he developed into a far-flung educational mission remote from political entanglement.

In the second half of 1931, the year his show was in abeyance, Filonov worked on two paintings of a tractor factory and a textile workshop commissioned by the political administrators of these plants and intended to be mass-distributed as color prints. Although he swerved from his customary splintered abstraction and even altered both paintings at his patrons' requests, they were turned down. Similarly, in April 1934, Schlemmer took part in the Propaganda Ministry's competition for murals in the main lecture hall of the German Museum at Munich. Although he later saw himself as "the only one who had attempted to represent the national community,"⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ his composition sketches of closely packed, animated throngs of acclaiming people, some even raising their arms in the Hitler salute, were rejected. Thus, both artists, when they found themselves at odds with their respective regimes, were under the illusion that their ideological conformity would suffice to offer their works with minimal stylistic adjustments for use as propaganda. But mere adjustments were not enough. Unable to forego their long-developed personal styles, both fell afoul of the surface appearance required as the hallmark of political control.

/ 2.1.3 REJECTION OF CONFORMITY

Filonov might have let himself be sidelined in compliant resignation, as did Leonidov, Melnikov, or Rodchenko, but his prominence, coupled with his fearless public

self-assertion, made him, more than anyone else, into the personification of the independent artist that the new Soviet art policy was out to curb. In 1936, the press coined the vituperative term "Filonovitis," as if his uncompromisingly subjective art were the symptom of a disease. Schlemmer, on the other hand, never suffered any specific objections to his art. Since in 1933-1934, debates about the acceptability of modern art were focused on expressionism, to which he did not belong, he faced a summary rejection without reasoning. His subsequent attempts at ideological self-ingratiation were ignored, leading him to believe that he was a victim of a misunderstanding. Both artists thought they would be able to compaginate their anthropological concepts of the human being at the center of the cosmos with the political orders of Communism and National Socialism respectively. From their political allegiance they erroneously derived a license to insist on their artistic self-determinaton.

Filonov never wavered in his professions of Communism, even of subservience to Stalin's personal authority. He was able to move within the Bolshevik regime's parameters of cultural policy and ideological discourse. His self-defense abounded with catchwords such as revolutionary or classless art, proletarian dictatorship and creativity, all advanced with the utmost self-assurance. Schlemmer, on the other hand, had before 1933 maintained a non-political posture. It was only in June 1933 that he suddenly wrote in a private letter: "I feel pure and my art to strictly suit National Socialist principles [...] but *who* sees it?"⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ "Folk community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and "state composition" (*Staatskomposition*) were the catchwords of his ideological self-defense.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ It never dawned on him that both these terms entailed a political control of his professional practice. In their ideological self-defense, both artists ignored the all-embracing organization both totalitarian regimes had set up in 1932-1933 for the political management of artistic culture. While Filonov's ideological conformity with the Bolshevik regime could not override his refusal of its art-political authority, Schlemmer even lacked an ideological understanding of his professional disgrace.

The built-in tendency of modern art from deviation to codification, from dissent to authority, led both artists to opposite conclusions from their self-understanding as teachers. While it seduced Filonov into cultivating an ideological self-righteousness the regime could not admit, it facilitated Schlemmer's attempt to offer his non-political aesthetics of a cosmic as well as social order to a regime it did not fit. "Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Copernicus, Galilei"—these were the authors Filonov on February 19, 1940, recommended to a young painter who still wished to study with him.⁽¹¹¹⁾ With his categorical alternative to the party-approved curriculum of the Leningrad Academy, he held on to the hypothetical ideal of an artist both Communist and free, which in 1918 had attracted Russian modern artists to the Bolshevik revolution. Schlemmer, on the other hand, deprived of any pedagogical expression, sank into depressing doubts. It was only in the summer of 1939, after a secret reading of Thomas Mann's political pronouncements

from exile, that he raised moral self-incriminations about his failed attempt to work in Nazi Germany.⁽¹¹²⁾ In December 1940, finally, he condemned his efforts at regime conformity as a “desertion.”⁽¹¹³⁾

/ 2.2 **GERT ARNTZ**

/ 2.2.1 **SCHEMES OF DECEPTION**

Circus Europe, a linocut by German graphic artist Gert Arntz, a committed leftist exile in the Netherlands since 1934, illustrates the ideological opacity of the international public sphere in May 1936, at the high point of political uncertainty. In caricaturing international politics as a circus performance, Arntz discredits any political manifestation of the day as a deceptive sham. The linocut personifies each one of the four regimes interacting in European politics, lined up on the platform of a circus entrance to advertise their illusory acts. A French Popular Front worker is bearing a fat-cat capitalist on his shoulders. Mussolini, arm in arm with a female dancer labeled ‘democracy,’ is crushing skulls under his boots. Hitler is juggling a peace palm, ammunition pieces, and a dollar sign. The most scathing caricature is aimed at the Soviet Union. Stalin, in uniform, is didactically pointing to a life-size picture of Lenin turned upside down. As a result, Lenin’s trademark raised arm is pointing to the bottom, a poignant reversal at a time when this stereotypical posture was to be monumentalized in the giant statue crowning the Palace of Soviets, publicized all over Europe.

Already in his woodcut *Election Dial* of 1932, Arntz had positioned representatives of the principal parties in the two decisive German elections of July and November of that year, making their public appearance within the sectors of a circular percentage graph materialized into a spinning turntable. Other figures personifying covert interests stand half-concealed behind their backs, steering them at variance with their postures. Remarkably, the sizes of the sectors allocated to the main parties on the dial do not match the vote tallies of either one of the two 1932 elections, nor of the previous one of 1930. Instead, Arntz has symmetrically applied the commonplace pictorial scheme of a front figure and a steering figure, with big industry behind the Social Democrat as well as the Nazi, but with a Soviet soldier manipulating the Communist. The print denounces parliamentary democracy as a sham performance, where casting the ballot is supervised, and presumably coerced, by the police. Below, by contrast, a group of workers is turning away from the election and assembling in ‘Councils,’ the elected bodies of the November 1918 revolution, abolished less than a year later by the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Constitution.

These two images of political deception spanning the first five years of the Depression were created by an activist artist of strong leftist convictions, but without party affiliation. During the earlier part of the twenties Arntz had used his pictographs,

a blend of social statistics and constructivist abstraction, as agitational images of capitalist injustice and social revolution. Still in 1928, he had made the woodcut titled *Crisis*, an ideologically unequivocal, partisan broadsheet for the class struggle. Even before the onset of the Depression, the print presents his stereotypical polarization between the rich on top, flush with merchandise and money, and the poor at the bottom, forcibly prevented from looting a store that is empty anyway. Several others woodcuts of that year dwell on themes of revolutionary violence harking back to the years 1919–1922, complete with stand-offs between workers and capitalists, workers' sabotage, armed factory takeovers, Nazi crimes, and debauchery of the rich. Here Arntz still professed his long-held belief in revolution, years before the workers' uprisings of 1934 in Asturias and Vienna had been quashed.

/ 2.2.2 FROM STATISTICS TO CARTOON

As a member of the radically leftist, if not outright Communist, 'Group of Progressive Artists' active at Cologne since 1921, Arntz had put out social-critical woodcuts in the highly schematized stylization he shared with other members. In 1926, the famous social scientist and publicist Otto Neurath enlisted him to head a studio of pictorial statistics in his 'Museum of Society and Economics' in Vienna. Neurath's Museum was founded and supported by the socialist administration of the city of Vienna with the mission to publicize its housing program and to promote its policies of socialist urbanism abroad. He charged Arntz with developing pictorial statistic as a tool for visualizing the fundamental processes of social and economic life, based on an expanding inventory of standard pictograms for multiple use. During the first four years of the Depression, Neurath successfully propagated this system of pictorial statistics as a means of simplified instruction that would allow an uneducated public to understand the historic and political parameters of their existence. Arntz, for his part, used the pictorial inventory he created for Neurath for his own ends: to endow his caricaturist woodcuts with the satirical look of objectivity.

In 1931, Neurath's method reached the high point of international acceptance when the Soviet government invited him to found a new institute of pictorial statistic (ISOSTAT) in Moscow for the express purpose of propagating the goals and achievements of the First Five-Year Plan. Arntz headed the Institute's team of graphic designers and was authorized to make them adhere to the style he had devised for his pictograms. Initially, both the socialist sympathizer Neurath and the Communist sympathizer Arntz were impressed by the Soviet political economy of the moment, with its apparent scientific foundation on planning, touted as an alternative to the failing laissez-faire capitalism of Western Europe and the USA. Their pictorial statistics were to become part of the propaganda for the First Five-Year Plan. It is during his tenure at the Moscow Institute that Arntz, incensed by the bloody suppression of the workers' uprising in Vienna in

1934, created his most militant anti-capitalist woodcuts. By the end of that year, however, ISOSTAT's pictorial typology had come to be questioned for lacking national characteristics, and the Institute stopped working.

Neurath's withdrawal from the USSR, and his later emigration from Austria to Holland in 1938, did not impede but boost his international success, albeit at the price of shedding the leftist origins and aspirations of his enterprise. He was enabled to accomplish ever more ambitious projects, culminating in his books *International Picture Language* of 1936 and *Modern Man in the Making* of 1939. Meanwhile, Arntz, still Neurath's head designer, stubbornly pursued his agitational printmaking, drawing on the intended universality of the sign systems he concurrently designed for Neurath's projects. The didactic functionalism of the Isotype system served him to dress up his political judgments as if they were statistical statements of fact, but his work was now shot through with propaganda concepts. The woodcut *War* of 1935, intended as a memorial of the First World War, shows British and German troops symmetrically pitted against one another as common victims of profit-making capitalists. One year later, a similarly symmetrical grouping, extended across two linocuts titled *Spain Left* and *Spain Right*, extolled the righteousness of the Republican side over the viciousness of the insurgent one.

/ 2.2.3 **UNCERTAIN CONFRONTATIONS**

It was in 1934, while still in Moscow, that Arntz created the two linocuts *The Third Reich* and *Russia 1934*, which, though not meant as pendants, can nonetheless be understood as parallel critiques of both regimes. One was an all-out denunciation of the Hitler State, often reprinted in Western European leftist publications. The other, a comparatively mild lampoon of Soviet collectivization, remained unpublished at the time. The first linocut is a steep pileup of figure types representing German society, topped by Hitler, whose raised arm is echoed by a cannon sticking out of the picture. Below, in an arms factory, a Communist worker is handing out leaflets denouncing the regime. The vertical composition slightly tilts to express its wobbly stance, foreboding the toppling of the Hitler state by the revolutionary resistance of the Left. The second linocut is a packed, horizontal composition depicting the delivery of a new tractor to a grateful kolkhoz community protected by soldiers in their midst. A hierarchical group featuring Stalin flanked by bureaucrats, including a censor brandishing a pair of scissors, towers over the encounter. Even though the image does not denounce collectivization, its repressive enactment is unmistakably criticized.

Still, in 1935 Arntz produced the linocut *Germany and Russia*, a clear-cut antithesis between German rearmament and Soviet housing construction. Below, a Soviet worker is reaching across the divide to join hands with a German factory worker bent on sabotage. The linocut presents a straightforward appeal to the international

solidarity of Communism as the paramount anti-fascist force. Arntz's embittered denunciation of Stalinism, along with all other political systems of the day, in *Circus Europe* in the following year, marks an ideological turning point. The Popular Front's particularly scathing put-down was apparently prompted by the Comintern's strategic switch from revolutionary resistance to coalition democracy. In his linocut *Factory Occupation in France* of 1936, Arntz reasserted the violent confrontation of capital and labor against the class-transcending co-operation policy of the incoming government of the Popular Front. In a reversal of capitalist lockout tactics, a throng of workers fills a plant on which their flag has been raised, as the management is forced to leave through a big black door.

All the while, Arntz remained in charge of providing an ever-more diversified typology of pictographs for Neurath's unbridled efforts at world-embracing, supra-political statistics, which culminated in his book *Modern Man in the Making* of 1939, Neurath's most successful work. However, in his own judgmental prints, he continued to diverge from his employer's supra-political optimism. *Modern Man in the Making* includes a section on war as a component of the 'modern' world economy, devoid of any political reflection. It presents four potential 'Silhouettes of War Economy' pitting a host of states against one another, regardless of their political systems. These tables would not have enabled readers to even guess what kind of war was likely to occur. Arntz, for his part, ceased to deal with overt political subject matter in 1936 and retreated to depressing images of class conflict. In 1939, when *Modern Man in the Making* was published, he took up mythological subject matter, out of a "feeling of doom" about the German invasion of Poland, as he later asserted. He shared this turn to mythology with other artists on the left.

/ 2.3 **LE CORBUSIER**

/ 2.3.1 **THE SEARCH FOR POLITICAL BACKING**

The well-publicized villas that Le Corbusier built during the twenties for wealthy clients had netted him prestige as one of the leading modern architects of his time. As if by compensation, he pursued hypertrophic projects of mass housing and urbanism, culminating in the plan for a *Ville Radieuse*, which would have required the demolition of existing urban structures, including those of Paris. Lacking any realistic economic, social or political backing, Le Corbusier's radical urbanistic precepts never stood a chance of being carried out. Witnessing the surging politicization of the arts since the start of the Depression, he attempted to link them to diverse political ideologies, ranging from Communism through fascism, and eventually to the Popular Front. None of Le Corbusier's initiatives were based on a personal allegiance to any one of the political systems to which he turned, and none of them met with acceptance. His erratic

ideological forays were enough for French government agencies and art administrations to treat him with distrust. The persistent failure of his schemes is symptomatic of the ideological disorientation of modern artists in a democratic state.

Since the end of World War I, demands for social change were part of numerous modern architects' professional postures, but Le Corbusier went the farthest in linking them to defined social and political programs. In the first year of the Depression, he turned to syndicalism, a workers' movement with roots in 19th-century French labor struggles, weary of parliamentary democracy. The Syndicalist program of radically restructuring society envisaged a system where workers, grouped into syndicates, would elect representatives, who would in turn elect a governing council. Such a scheme seems to have appealed to Le Corbusier's sense of urbanism as an egalitarian systematization of collective living, yet configured in organizational patterns apt for political management. Although the syndicalist principles underlying the first versions of Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* implied a challenge to extant political authorities, its configuration around a social and political power center gave the improved living conditions provided by the *unites d'habitation* a sense of subordination, in accord with the self-acknowledged fascist leanings of part of the syndicalist movement.

Even after the dramatic failure of his activities in the Soviet Union between 1928 and 1932, Le Corbusier posited the abstract notion of a political "authority" as the condition for implementing his socially progressive plan for a 'Radiant City.' The source of its political legitimacy did not concern him, as long as it offered an opportunity for trenchant social change. In any event, it was alien to democracy. Lecturing in Italy in 1934, he spoke admiringly of Mussolini's modern architectural preferences. In 1936 he played a prominent role in the Sixth Convegno Volta, an international congress devoted to the propagation of Fascist principles throughout Europe. The foremost of those principles, the joint corporative organization of capital and labor, must have reminded him of some of his earlier syndicalist leanings. Unlike syndicalism, however, his verbal emphasis on the term 'authority' was meant to answer the question of political legitimacy for the imposition of the *Ville Radieuse* idea. It had a precarious affinity to the authoritarian self-understanding of all three totalitarian states. Only the absence of a housing program worth the name made National Socialist Germany unsuitable for Le Corbusier's schemes.

/ 2.3.2 **SOVIET DISILLUSION**

Le Corbusier's highest hopes for a political backing of his all-embracing schemes were raised, and disappointed, by the Soviet government during the period of the First Five-Year Plan. His eventual lack of acceptance in the USSR coincides with the change in art policy from modern to traditional in 1932, the year of the Plan's completion. Since he was unconcerned with Soviet politics, it took him by surprise. Le Corbusier had never shared the categorical enthusiasm for the Soviet Union professed

by Western European artists of leftist persuasion. It was modern-minded Soviet architects with a say in cultural policy who sought him out as a rising celebrity in the profession, at a time when the economics of the First Five-Year Plan counted on co-opting technological advances from capitalist states. However, all three ventures for which he was enlisted—starting in 1928 with the Centrosoyuz cooperative building, following in 1930 with the official request for his expertise on the reconstruction of Moscow, and culminating in 1931 with the invitation to participate in the competition for the Palace of Soviets—ended in setting him up as a prominent target for the mounting opposition against modern art unfolding during those four years.

Le Corbusier's 'Response to Moscow,' a variant of his earlier idea of demolishing much of extant city cores to make room for rebuilding social relations from the ground up, was based on his assumption that it suited the 'revolutionary' promotion of the First Five-Year Plan. However, in June 1931 the pertinent committee rejected his proposals, and the Communist press abroad denounced them. While this rejection may have been a matter of urbanistic practicality, the failure of Le Corbusier's Palace of Soviets design—an ingeniously devised compound apt to accommodate all functional requirements stipulated by the competition brief, particularly mass access—to be included among the three awards made in February 1932 was due to its deliberate lack of any monumental or pictorial appeal. The three-year suspension of the construction of the Centrosoyuz building, under mounting public pressure against its functionalist design, should have alerted Le Corbusier to the discrepancy of his ostensibly non-ideological approach to architecture with the increasingly prevalent monumentalism in Soviet architectural policy, signaled by the ever-changing stipulations of the ongoing Palace of Soviets competition.

Protesting the dismissal of his Palace of Soviets design, on March 31, 1932, Le Corbusier drafted a telegram to Stalin in person on behalf of the CIAM governing body. He argued that Boris Iofan's prize-winning design did not match the Communist ideal of socially beneficial modernization. The telegram is a dramatic document of the contradiction between ideologies and policies during the Depression. "Through the unfalsified language of architecture, the Palace of Soviets was to express the Revolution accomplished by the new civilization of modern times," Le Corbusier maintained.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Once again, the ideology of revolution linked to modern art had proved obsolete vis-à-vis the ceremonial self-display, and self-submission, of the masses to personalized authority. Already in a letter dated March 13, 1932, to former education commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky, Le Corbusier put his finger on the term "the people," invoked by the Party for the anti-modern turn. "Let us not delude ourselves with rhetoric: I know perfectly well that the people... greatly admire the palaces of kings," but the "thinking leaders of the Soviet republic," whom he still considered revolutionaries, should not have catered to such tastes.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

/ 2.3.3 MARGINALIZED BY THE POPULAR FRONT

When in 1935 Le Corbusier joined the 'Union of Architects,' a spin-off from the 'Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires,' he re-entered the orbit of the Left, now in the attenuated guise it assumed on its way to the Popular Front. He presented his 'Radiant City' scheme in one of the evening lectures held at the Maison de la Culture as part of a socialist modernization program. The Popular Front government that took office one year later was in no position to heed his radical precepts of a new urbanism grounded on mass housing, because the priorities of its social policy for the working-class were focused on labor reform and leisure opportunities, and its construction budget was overstrained by defense projects, particularly the completion of the Maginot Line (see Chapter 4.1/3.1.1). Le Corbusier's emphasis on housing as the top priority for any architectural policy had never been aimed at political backing from the Left alone. As early as 1928-1929, he had vainly attempted to impress it on conservative labor minister Louis Loucheur, whose 'Law Loucheur,' providing for a limited quantity of low-cost housing construction, had been passed on July 13, 1928.

In 1934-1935, still under conservative governments, Le Corbusier submitted a proposal for a contribution to the planned Paris World Exposition, which once again promoted his ideas on affordable mass housing. It consisted of a set of giant buildings with 1,170 apartments for a total of 9,360 inhabitants, but the area allotted to him was whittled down, and eventually his project was altogether scrapped. However, if Le Corbusier had hoped the Popular Front government would be more receptive to a contribution from him because of his ties to the 'Maison de la Culture,' he was to be disappointed. His project of a 'Pavilion of Modern Times,' renamed 'Museum of Popular Education,' was re-oriented from modern building style to economic and social issues of architecture and urbanism, but its funding shrunk beyond feasibility. Eventually, Le Corbusier was assigned the barest minimum of space and money for a makeshift exhibit with the original name at the outskirts of the Expo. It was a tent-like canvas construction, suspended on wooden poles, containing a didactic show of text and figure panels, photographs, dioramas and big-lettered slogans, apt to be folded, shipped, and reassembled as a "Travelling Show of Popular Education," which, however, was never sent on its way.

The pavilion's dedication "to the people of France" heeded the prevailing populist ideology, although one of its fifteen sections was still titled "Architectural Revolution." Le Corbusier used this section for one of the most exasperated statements of his customary demand for a priority of social policy, now turned against arms production, even in the face of the growing German war threat. One prominent exhibit was a new multipurpose stadium in Paris, billed as "a national center for popular jubilation for 100,000 participants," to be used almost daily for "awakening the

country.”⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Le Corbusier thus responded to the current political concern for *fêtes françaises*,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ seeking to catch up with the monumental structures for mass gatherings now being erected in the three totalitarian states.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Already as early as January 7, 1937, he submitted a detailed version of the stadium project to the Minister of Leisure, Léo Lagrange, as a monumental pooling of Popular Front leisure culture. It would have grouped multiple facilities for “a ‘total art’ where music, dance, film projections and mass movements” were to surround the sports events,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ a democratic match for totalitarian mass architecture.

/ 3 **THE LEFT AT A LOSS**

/ 3.1 **THE SHIFTING SOVIET PARADIGM**

/ 3.1.1 **THE TURNS OF SOVIET POLICY**

As long as Soviet foreign policy operated on the ‘Third Period’ expectancy that the Depression spelt capitalism’s final decline, and hence a new opportunity for the Communist world revolution that had stalled in 1923, the capitalist cultures of Italy, Germany, and France shared an express or latent distrust of modern art as a perceived instrument of Communist subversion. Modern artists—not only those of Communist persuasion, but also those who claimed to be apolitical, and even those who sought to align themselves with the Fascist and the National Socialist regimes—found themselves stigmatized as virtual Bolsheviks against their own convictions. Only in democratic France was modern art politically diversified enough to prevent such wholesale prejudice. This kind of ideological taint became obsolete as soon as Soviet art turned traditional in its entirety. The second competition for the Palace of Soviets, held in 1931, and Andrei Zhdanov’s curt pronouncements on Socialist Realism in 1933 disabused left-leaning modern artists of their sympathies for the Soviet Union and exposed them to being politically miscast wherever they might turn.

In 1935, the art-political preconditions changed once more. As the German drive to armed expansion became apparent, France embraced the new international peace diplomacy of the Soviet Union. The flanking Comintern policy of expanding its influence by democratic rather than revolutionary means, intended to stabilize its new ally, stripped French culture of the Left of its revolutionary cachet. The Popular Front’s revalidation of a class-transcending cultural consensus in order to consolidate the anti-fascist struggle cancelled the ideological antagonism between traditional and modern art on a Right-Left scale. Modern artists on the Left could no longer claim an ideological monopoly on their anti-fascism by branding traditional art as politically reactionary. Moreover, since the mounting conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union was inconsistent with the inadvertent similarity between the traditional look of

the arts now being promoted in both states, the 'anti-fascist' mindset of modern art could no longer compaginate political and aesthetic judgment. As a result, the artistic culture of the Popular Front ignored, if it did not shun, contemporary Soviet art.

In July 1936, the Spanish Civil War upset the pacifism of the Left, which only the year before had been energized by opposition to German rearmament. Suddenly a war enthusiasm on behalf of a just cause revived the long-standing revolutionary militancy of the avant-garde, soon to be disappointed by the Soviet Union's repressive conduct of its Spanish intervention and eventual acquiescence to the defeat of the Republic. The ensuing vacillations between commitment and despondency deprived modern artists of the last ideological certainty about the fundamentals of the revolutionary struggle to which they had clung so long. Their recognition of an overwhelming power politics beyond control, or even beyond understanding, threw them back on denunciations of a war their enemy was winning. Picasso's *Guernica* was just this kind of denunciation. The contentious commentaries that either blamed it for defeatism or squeezed it for an upbeat message are just so many attempts at keeping up hope against all hope. The Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 23, 1939, came too late to confirm the ideological disorientation of artists on the Left.

/ 3.1.2 **SOVIET ART ABROAD**

Since the start of the Depression, the Soviet Union was the only one of all four states to foster an art that exalted modernization—the art devised as propaganda for the First Five-Year Plan. It was an art of realism, opposed to the modern artistic culture of the other three, which was merely bent on devising aesthetic equivalents to the visual appearance of a modernized technical environment. The international prestige of Soviet art since the early twenties had rested on modern art of this bent in architecture, painting, and photography alike. It was personified in El Lissitsky's ceaseless organizational ventures abroad. The conservative segment of domestic Soviet art, averse to modern internationalism, was in and of itself immune from serving as an international paradigm. During the following decade, the art of the First Five-Year Plan, and later that of 'Socialist Realism,' brought any international impact of Soviet art to a standstill. Soviet international ventures in the arts continued to be admired, to be sure, but merely as demonstrations of a culture with a superior economic and social cohesion, whose political operation was inimitable.

The change of postures is apparent in the foremost Soviet propaganda enterprise for foreign distribution, the oversize photo journal *USSR in Construction*, which was published from 1930 to 1939, first in two and then in three Western European languages. During its first three years, it was centered on extolling Soviet advances in productivity and social policy through a seemingly documentary presentation. The journal advertised the First Five-Year Plan to promote admission of the USSR into the

network of world trade, despite its principled challenge to capitalism. It showcased a politically energized working society which its prospective trading partners could rely upon. After missing that objective, it turned to a triumphalist show of Soviet superiority over the Depression-ridden West. Since the fall of 1932, documentary photography was increasingly manipulated to extol productive achievements by means of photo-collages, decorative compositions, illustrated statistics or reportages of ceremonial events, all of which had been scarce in previous issues. It is at that time that prominent modern photographers who had gained a reputation in Western Europe were enlisted as contributors or even editors.

El Lissitsky, one of the leading modern artists from the start, who during the preceding decade had acquired a high reputation and a wide network in Western European artistic milieus of modern orientation, now rose to direct the most prominent artistic ventures of Soviet cultural policy abroad, including the interior designs of the Soviet Pavilions at the Paris and New York World Fairs. Since October 1932, he was also charged with the layout and artistic direction of fourteen issues of *USSR in Construction*, culminating in the triple issue of December 1937, devoted to the new Soviet constitution of 1936. He more than anybody implemented the journal's ever-growing change from a documentary look to the colorful pictorial hyperbole of poster design. El Lissitsky's transition from the terse but expressive photomontage techniques of his beginnings to the emotional cheerfulness and decorative symmetry of Socialist Realism made it seem as if modern art had been successfully adjusted to the illustrative appeal of advertising. His work acted as a living proof that any attacks on the 'cultural bolshevism' of modern art for its 'formalist' distortions were outdated.

/ 3.1.3 **SOVIET ART BEYOND EMULATION**

Yet, different from some French writers, whose admiration for the ostensibly superior accomplishments of the Soviet political economy knew no bounds, French artists never took a page from 'Socialist Realism,' either in content or style. During the 'realism debates' of 1936-1937, cultural officials of the Popular Front government took care to draw the line against a style whose political enforcement they were in no position to emulate. Just as the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937 neither in its architecture or its imagery shared in the international style conventions of the 'monumental order,' but presented itself as an uncompromising statement of 'Socialism in one country,' so *USSR in Construction*, in its new artistic guise, boasted a patriotic triumphalism unsuitable for foreign imitation. Not even artists featured by the Communist-run Maison de la Culture could look to Soviet art for paradigms that might have matched the ideological orthodoxy of Communist politicians and writers under the guidance of the Comintern, all the less so since those responsible for art policy took care not to compromise the cultural pluralism of the Popular Front.

Although artistic exchanges between France and the USSR continued during the first three years of the thirties, they stopped when Socialist Realism became the style of the day. Despite the Soviet-French alliance of 1935, an exchange of art exhibitions between both states envisaged for 1936 was cancelled,⁽¹²⁰⁾ perhaps because of Soviet aversion to French modern artists who would have been included. The exhibition 'Twenty-Three Soviet Artists,' organized in 1933 by Communist art dealer Pierre Vorms, was centered on works by Aleksandr Labas, Yury Pimenev and Aleksandr Deineka, but failed to feature academic artists such as Isaac Brodsky or Aleksandr Gerasimov, who were among the driving forces behind the technical and institutional development of Socialist Realism. Two years later, Vorms proposed an exchange program that was to feature French realist painters of Communist persuasion such as Gromaire and Goerg under the label "currents close to Socialist Realism"⁽¹²¹⁾, but their work lacked both the technical finish and the optimistic air that had by now become axiomatic for Soviet painting. Nothing came of Vorms's initiative.

The turn of Soviet art away from any compatibility with the art of capitalist states was played out in the three competitions for the Palace of Soviets for an international public to watch. It spelled the end for any possibility of flanking the political rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union with any artistic ties that would have transferred the influence of Soviet art in France from modern art to Socialist Realism. Even within the culture of the Communist Party of France, art institutions, including the Maison de la Culture, and individual artists shied away from turning to current Soviet paradigms, by contrast to the Party's subservience to directions from the USSR. The Comintern's new, inclusive cultural policy had no use for Socialist Realism's rigorous codes of traditional technique and joyful expression. Thus, the artistic culture of the Left in France was at a loss to coalesce around consistent standards. It failed to produce any significant body of work. The protracted debates held in the Maison de la Culture yielded nothing but irreconcilable differences. And the two outstanding, mutually hostile art organizers of Communist persuasion, Louis Aragon and André Breton, opposed each other in imaginary hyperbole.

/ 3.2 **ARAGON VERSUS BRETON**

/ 3.2.1 **LOUIS ARAGON**

Amongst the Western European artists and writers who fell for Soviet international propaganda of the First Five-Year Plan, none was more ardent than Louis Aragon, a former member of the Surrealist circle. After having been given the tour of a new factory in the Donbass after the Kharkov writers' congress in October 1930, he signed an anti-surrealist declaration of subservience to the Bolshevik line. Almost three years later, he reiterated his praise of the Plan in his poem *Red Front* (*Front Rouge*), which

netted him an indictment for sedition. After waxing about the abundance of steel and corn produced by new factories and kolkhozes, he extolled the Red Army, poised to smash the “rubbish” of the capitalist order, “France before all else.”⁽¹²²⁾ True to Lenin’s precepts, he clung to war as the *ultima ratio* of world revolution. With up-to-date topicality, *Red Front* heralded the stiffening Soviet antagonism vis-à-vis capitalist states, adopted after the failure of earlier efforts to connect the political economy of the First Five-Year Plan with the world trade system. The poem rehearsed the Comintern’s renewed strategy of world revolution, which in 1934 supported the workers’ uprisings in Vienna and Asturias under the banner of a ‘United Front’.

In a lecture on John Heartfield, delivered on May 2, 1935—the day the Soviet Union signed a military assistance pact with France—Aragon recast the epithet ‘revolutionary’ from a violent overthrow of the capitalist order into the solidarity of the international proletariat in the anti-fascist struggle. Artistically, he short-circuited the ‘realism’ of photomontage with the realistic tradition of French 19th-century painting. One year later, after the Popular Front’s electoral victory of 1936, Aragon intervened in the three-day-long mass debate entitled “Where is Painting Headed?” at the Maison de la Culture. Here he advanced a sweeping equation between Socialist Realism, severed from its Soviet contents and significance, and French realist painting, still using the catchword ‘revolutionary’ in order to relate the two. Finally, the mass meeting of a thousand artists and intellectuals that Aragon organized on June 1, 1938 at the Centre Marcelin-Berthelot in Paris overrode previous ideological distinctions tied to any style. Accompanied by artists as diverse as Léger, Gromaire, and Masereel, Communist Party Secretary Jacques Duclos pronounced anti-fascism as an all-embracing platform of “complete freedom.”⁽¹²³⁾

Whatever claims Aragon may have advanced to bridge the gap between traditional and modern art on the premises of nationalism and anti-fascism, he was unable to insert his newly-adopted, party-line opposition to modern art into any coherent art-critical argument, particularly since he kept counting the most prestigious modern artists among his friends and political allies. Already in the realism debates of 1936, he rejected Léger’s and Le Corbusier’s calls for a political empowerment of modern art on the basis of its appeal to contemporary media experience. And in the Party newspaper *L’Humanité* of 1937, where he served as an editor, he passed over Picasso’s mural *Guernica* in silence, and published a diatribe against modern art as a bourgeois diversion. Finally, by 1938, Aragon extolled Henri Matisse, the non-political modern artist *par excellence*, in several publications beyond all measure. Soaring over ideological debates, he indulged in a fantastic invocation of Matisse’s presumed ‘roots’ in the soil of his native France, even linking him to prehistoric cave painters. Here, any political topicality had given way to nationalist hyperbole.

/ 3.2.2 **ANDRÉ BRETON**

In his statement about “banners” of 1935 (see Chapter 1.1/1.2.3), André Breton declared the freedom of modern artists to include political self-determination and responsibility on a par with that of writers. Acting as the self-appointed, though not undisputed, leader of the Surrealist group, which included numerous artists, some of them with strong political convictions, he would have been in a position to organize collective ventures on that premise. Yet Breton never attempted to manifest what he called the “political position of Surrealism” in the artistic culture wherein he operated throughout the decade. The two big artistic enterprises in which he had a leading say—the lavish art journal *Minotaure*, running from 1931 through 1938, and the International Exhibition of Surrealism, staged in Paris in 1938—were devoid of political expression. One reason for this separation between art and politics was that Breton earned his livelihood as an art dealer, precariously enough, to be sure, on an art market adversely affected by the Depression. The other reason was his belief that the essential themes and postures of surrealist art were political per se, merely because of their provocation of the social order, without any controversial political topicality.

In 1928, while still successful as a dealer, Breton published his collected catalog introductions and review articles in a book entitled *Surrealism in Painting*, which, by contrast to his literary pronouncements of the time, contains no reference to politics at all. In the following decade, he never addressed the ideological positions taken by leading surrealist painters such as Ernst and Masson, except for Dalí, whom he opposed. Still, in the surrealist circle’s unforgiving ideological insider culture, the subjective, if not idiosyncratic, expression of political views on the part of those painters raised perpetual cycles of discords and reconciliations—most notably with Dalí and Masson—and never converged on a common public platform to which most surrealist artists would have been willing to subscribe. It was the judgment on Lev Trotsky’s expulsion from the Soviet Union, at that time the touchstone of Communist political dissent, which first flared up in a raucous meeting of March 11, 1929, at the Bar du Château in Paris. On that occasion, numerous painters, Max Ernst among them, refused to agree on any one position, be it Aragon’s or Breton’s. It was under Trotsky’s influence that Breton later pronounced himself explicitly on art and politics.

Breton’s and Trotsky’s Coyoacán Manifesto of June 1938 (see Chapter 4.2). drew the consequences from those persistent ups and downs of partisanship, as it projected a politics of art in opposition to all political systems now facing one another. Unconcerned with the ideology of an art for the people, the current priority of art both on the right and on the left, it upheld the ideology of revolutionary art regardless of its waning topicality. The Manifesto’s demand, “No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above!” was meant to safeguard the independence of artistic commitment, but

what it actually signified was a radical severance of ideologies from policies, the recoil of ideologies to mere expressions of conviction. Both authors could voice it with such stridency because they found all extant policies equally discredited. At this virtual summit meeting of revolutionary art, Breton did not write the Manifesto on behalf of the surrealist circle, or what remained of it. For artists in Paris, his co-signer Diego Rivera—no matter how prestigious as a ‘revolutionary’ artist—remained an exotic figure. Upon Breton’s return, only André Masson adhered to the newly-proclaimed ‘Federation of Independent Revolutionary Artists,’ of which the Manifesto was to be the program.

/ 3.2.3 THE CLASH

In the late spring of 1938, Aragon was seated next to Jacques Duclos on the presidium tribune of the mass meeting at the Porte Berthelot, while, in far-away Coyoacán, Breton and Trotsky finished their joint manifesto in a convivial ambience. The promise of “complete freedom” for the arts in Duclos’ speech was synonymous with the “complete freedom for art” Breton demanded in his text. The apparent symmetry between the conflicting proclamations is the ironic outcome of an exasperated split between the two surrealist writers, which started in 1932, when their political trajectories diverged. While Aragon, a Party member to the end, became a leading organizer of French Communist culture, Breton, expelled from the Party in that year, held on to his Communist convictions as a political outsider. As a result, Aragon was in a position and under obligation to keep abreast of the ideological tergiversations brought on by changing Comintern and Party policies. Breton, on the other hand, exploited his political marginalization to the full, not only by sticking to his original revolutionary principles, but also by pronouncing himself with a clear eye on the ideological self-contradictions of current Communism.

It was Aragon’s political judgment to abandon the world-revolutionary ambitions that proved untenable by the defeat of workers’ uprisings in Asturias and Vienna in 1934, and come round to the cultural alliance with the middle-class, the Party advocated in the following year. As managing secretary of the ‘Maison de la Culture,’ he was empowered to maximize the class-transcending mass appeal of anti-fascist culture. Breton, on the other hand, as one of the editors and later sole editor of *Minotaure*, was catering to upper-middle-class taste for modern art undiluted by concerns for any class-transcending appeal. Only here could he deploy the panoply of disruptive themes and forms that illustrated the revolutionary aspirations of modern art. The assumption was that they corresponded to his pronouncements on contemporary politics. The two major artists representing these contrary positions were John Heartfield and Pablo Picasso, Aragon’s and Breton’s respective heroes. One was a Party member in good standing and a successful press illustrator, who had risen to become an exhibition artist. The other was the most prestigious modern artist of his time, who expressed his

leftist partisanship with no regard for, or concession to, popular understanding, let alone a party line.

Given their acknowledged leadership and tireless activities in leftist artistic milieus inside and outside of the Communist Party, it is a sign of ideological vacillation that neither Aragon nor Breton arrived at any persistent categorical explanations of their views on art and politics. In 1938, at the height of pre-war ideological uncertainty, their writings left any topicality behind. Aragon's transfiguration of Henri Matisse as an outgrowth of the timeless "soil" of France, published in 1938, as well as Breton's account of the "Most Recent Tendencies of Surrealist Painting" in the last issue of *Minotaure*, which appeared in May, 1939, were devoid of any attempt to link the arts both authors chose to praise to any political situation. The special insert of the last *Minotaure* issue, entitled "Recalling Mexico," and bound within a special cover designed by Diego Rivera, included a photograph of Breton, Trotsky, and Rivera at Coyoacán, but no word about or from the Manifesto that had been the outcome of their meeting. Instead, it presented a medley of texts and photographs celebrating Mexico as an exotic revolutionary nirvana.

/ 3.3 **GEORGE GROSZ IN EXILE**

/ 3.3.1 **THE CONFLICT WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY**

During the Weimar Republic, George Grosz had pursued a successful career which more than once brought him into conflict with the Communist Party, of which he was a member from the start. Still, his drawings of social and political critique sold so well with private collectors that his dealers were able to market expensive luxury editions of his low-cost picture books issued by the Party press. This simultaneous success is suggestive of his precarious political posture. Grosz's caricaturist assaults on the government and the "ruling class" did not prevent his pictures and drawings from being purchased and exhibited by numerous public museums. In his blasphemy trials of 1929 and 1930 over a published drawing of the crucified Christ wearing a gas mask, no less than Reich art commissioner Edwin Redslob testified on his behalf. Grosz's social critique had become the brand of his market success. Although in 1924 he had chaired the Communist-dominated art league 'Red Group' and in 1928 joined its successor 'ASSO,' the glumness of his social critique incurred such strong objections from Communist Party writers that he felt obliged to assert his independence against them. His autobiographical essays in the mainstream art journals *Kunstblatt* of 1929 and *Kunst und Künstler* of 1930 made no mention of his politics.

Thus, after years of relentless Communist critique for his lack of uplifting expression and his business success in the German art world of dealers and museums, Grosz' relations with the Communist Party were already strained enough by the time he

chose, on January 12, 1933, not to return from the USA—where he held a teaching job—but stay there as an exile. In two letters of June 3 and 6, 1933, to Wieland Herzfelde, his friend and former editor, he refused to collaborate with Herzfelde’s oppositional publication plans, launched from the latter’s Prague exile. They contain a double attack against National Socialism, on the rise, and Communism, in defeat, after Hitler’s ascent to power, which was coupled with a wholesale abdication from artists’ political engagement. In the liberal artistic culture of the United States, Grosz was well received because of his celebrity as a leftist artist in the defunct Weimar Republic. Siding with the strong anti-Stalinist Left in its exasperated struggles with the Communist Party of the USA, he refused to join the Moscow-dominated American Artists’ Congress. However, in his work for show or publication, he stayed away from politics.

It was not until 1936 that Grosz ventured to put out a survey of his political views for the public. It was a large portfolio of 64 photolithographic reproductions of his drawings, ranging from 1927 to the present. Entitled *Interregnum*, and billed as a “pictorial record of modern Germany from 1924 to 1936,” it was printed as an expensive collector’s edition. With only 42 copies sold, it proved a public failure. Appearing in the same year as Lev Trotsky’s *Betrayed Revolution*, *Interregnum* amounted to the first comprehensive critique of the political analogy between National Socialism and Bolshevism advanced by a dissenting Communist artist, or by any artist for that matter. With three years’ delay, it visualized the views Grosz had expressed as early as June 1933 in his two letters to Herzfelde. The sixty-four illustrations are evenly divided between reprints of drawings from the time of the Weimar Republic and new drawings about the murderous Hitler regime, the menace of war, and the degradation of Communism under Stalin. Two of these present symbolic images of the totalitarian equation between both regimes, the first to be devised by any artist of the decade.

/ 3.3.2 THE TOTALITARIAN EQUATION

The first of these two drawings, *Jigsaw Puzzle*, depicts a composite figure split down the middle into half of a Bolshevik worker with an inane grin, showing off hammer and oars in his clenched fist, and half of a Nazi storm trooper with Hitler’s features, armed to the teeth and brandishing a dagger in a similar gesture. One is standing in a cornfield, the other on a cobblestone pavement. In the second drawing, entitled *Art is Eternal*, the artist, a tiny bespectacled puppet with a harp, palette, and book attached to his body, is dangling on a tightrope, loosely suspended from two chairs on which two robotic giants are seated, their foreheads cut off above their noses. One is an armed storm trooper raising his right hand to hail Hitler, the other an unarmed worker clenching his left fist in the Communist salute. The systemic analogies visualized in both symmetrical groupings are limited, however. The belligerent attitude is reserved to the armed Nazi, which squares with the unequivocal attribution of the war threat

to Hitler's regime throughout *Interregnum*. The peaceful posture of the Communist, which seems to embody no threat, may or may not denounce the current peace initiative of Soviet foreign policy.

Grosz developed *Art is Eternal* from a sketch of 1935 entitled *Between the Chairs*, which shows the German exiled writer Ernst Toller, awkwardly squatting on the floor between Hitler and Stalin who are seated back to back. The inscription "humanitarian radical" lampoons Toller as one of those leftist intellectuals whose belief in Communism as a position to take against National Socialism Grosz deemed a self-delusion. In the final drawing, the tiny figure of the artist is swinging at a right angle to the alignment of the hostile robots, as if he could perform his art in blissful ignorance of their antithetical configuration. Whenever the two superpowers of the day might arise to turn against one another, his weight would make their chairs flip over backwards, and he would crash while they would stand. Unlike the personalized caricature of Toller, which merely pictures a commonplace figure of speech, the emblematic configuration of *Art is Eternal* is visually reasoned out to ridicule what Grosz regards as the would-be independent artist who indulges in his self-centered craft. Beset by the illusion that art is exempt from historical contingency, he is swinging at an angle to the political dynamics of his time.

Two more drawings of *Interregnum* make it clear that Grosz allows the artist no way out of this quandary. In one, he denounces artists who cater to totalitarian power, a charge that Trotsky had also raised in *Betrayed Revolution* the same year. In the other, he is putting down the artist who is moving into opposition against overwhelming power. Taken together, they illustrate the futility of artist's engagement in politics. It is telling that the first drawing, depicting tiny artists with ape-like tails cowering before the boots of a headless Nazi giant, is titled *Singing their Way into the Hearts of the People*. In substituting a solitary power figure for 'the people,' it denounces the ascendant artistic ideology of the time, while throughout *Interregnum* the issue of revolution is nowhere addressed. Two interrelated drawings titled *Progress* and *The Voice of Reason* show the boots of an SA man walking through the mud. In the first, he has just murdered a demonstrator for "Freedom and Peace," as the fallen placard reads. In the second, he simply ignores a minute artist, dressed in a flowing smock, who is riding an attack on his hobbyhorse, brandishing a sword stump. For the artist, even resistance is futile.

/ 3.3.3 THE TROTSKYIST QUANDARY

The bulk of the new drawings, however, denounce the Hitler state, its atrocities and its war threat. With the title *Interregnum*, Grosz defiantly labels what had been billed as a thousand-year reign as simply a transitory period without a legitimate ruler, a historical interlude bound to pass. He omits the Soviet counterweight from

the ideology of the anti-fascist struggle. On this point, Grosz differs from Trotsky, who projected a newly-fashioned Fourth Communist International as a hypothetical spearhead to confront Hitler. He opens no ideological, let alone political, perspective on what might end the 'Interregnum'. For him, the outcome of the coming war prepared by the German regime is merely a catastrophe with neither winners nor losers. Grosz' double critique of artistic conformity and artistic opposition betrays a resigned self-reflection on the political irrelevancy of art in the face of a world-historical confrontation, whose fronts appeared obscure until the last minute before the war broke out. Several drawings of *Interregnum* show solitary figures of Grosz himself, raking mud or stalking through bad weather, in a mix of defiance and despair.

Already on March 15, 1933, Grosz wrote to his benefactor Felix Weil: "What is now going on in Germany is [...] bitter. What is bitter, and for many who care here incomprehensible, is: why have these millions of communists so miserably failed??? [...] I believe with Trotsky (without being his unconditional adherent), that the élan of the revolutionary movement has been paralyzed for many years."⁽¹²⁴⁾ Kay Flavell, in her paraphrase of the letter, apparently based on the unpublished original, adds: "His own position he describes as 'between the stools'."⁽¹²⁵⁾ That Grosz should have used the same figure of speech in *Art is Eternal* confirms the Trotskyist origin of the totalitarian equation presented in *Interregnum*. In the USA, it would have appealed to the anti-Stalinist Left, where Trotsky had a strong following. Unlike Trotsky, however, Grosz was unable and unwilling to imagine any meaningful challenge to the Hitler regime proffered by the Left. His long-term political disappointments prevented him from sharing Trotsky's and his small cohort's indefatigable self-delusions about the anti-fascist viability of their 'Fourth International.' For his 'Interregnum,' there was no end in sight but destruction.

Still, after the United States had finally entered the war in 1943, the anti-Hitler cartoons of *Interregnum*, which Grosz in 1936 had addressed to a left-to-liberal political culture, acquired a new resonance as prophecies of an all-out clash between dictatorship and democracy. Between 1942 and 1944, Grosz enlarged several of the drawings into oil paintings which met with some success. One of these, titled *Cain*, on which he worked through all of 1943-1944, is based on the drawing *And Cain Killed Abel*, which shows a concentration-camp guard sitting by a corpse, at rest from his murderous work. The guard has been turned into Hitler himself, to whom a host of minuscule victims are creeping up to devour him in revenge. The painting sold to an American collector. Grosz chose to ignore that it was not Hitler's victims who eventually prevailed over him, but the American and Soviet armies, at variance with the totalitarian equation drawn in *Interregnum*. Back in 1936, it had been beyond his political judgment to imagine that it would take the apocalyptic war he pictured in his drawings to bring about the end of Hitler's regime, as the eponymous title promised.



3/ Artists

3.1/ Political Activity p. 224

3.2/ Political Oppression p. 258

3.3/ Political Resistance p. 292

3.1/ Political Activity

/1 POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

/1.1 POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

/1.1.1 FROM OPINION TO ENGAGEMENT

The growing convergence of the free art market and the public sphere during the 19th century opened professional artmaking to ideological self-expression on the part of individual artists, as opposed to adjusting their work to the ideologies of their patrons or prospective buyers, as had been the norm before. Eventually, such artists' claims to professional independence included freedom of political expression. To volunteer one's art for political engagement was a further step in this direction. It meant transcending not just the circuits of artistic culture, but also those of the public sphere, toward cooperation with political movements, agencies, and authorities. Here artists could attempt to activate their professional challenge to the cultural status quo as a form of social or political dissent. In the first decade after World War I, the democratic states of France and Germany offered more opportunities for diverse political engagements than before, in tandem with the ensuing controversies. In the two evolving totalitarian states of the USSR and Italy, on the other hand, such engagement was permitted, or even encouraged, solely on condition of conformity with the ruling party.

A case in point is the participation of German artists Käthe Kollwitz and Otto Dix in the pacifist campaign evoking the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, organized by a coalition of Social Democrats, Communists, and other leftist organizations, and including a travelling art exhibition under the agitational slogan "Never Again War." Kollwitz, a member of the Social Democratic Party, designed the poster for the event, which featured a youth shouting the slogan, and showed her woodcut cycle *War* of 1922-1923 in the accompanying art exhibition. It is on this occasion that she wrote in her diary about the pride she took in participating in the campaign with the words "I want to have an effect in this time,"⁽¹²⁶⁾ an apt expression of political engagement. Dix, on the other hand, was a World War I veteran without political affiliation. He had pictured his combat experience in the giant canvas *Trench*, a raw display of mayhem, sold in 1923 to the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, but returned to his dealer as a result of a public outcry. By lending it to the *Never Again War* show, he made his current anti-war convictions operational.

In both totalitarian and democratic states, artists willing to reason out their own combinations of artistic originality and ideological self-expression frequently found out that their work's intended message was either ignored or jarred with its public impact, because they had misjudged the meaning of the arts for public policy, which was pre-conditioned by diverging ideological stereotypes. Unless they were bound by the guidelines of official commissions, most of these artists did not operate according to political programs, but at the risk of mismatching their work to political requirements they could often only gauge. The result was a recurrent divergence between their work's original intent and its public impact, exacerbated by the give-and-take of defiant remonstrations or expedient adjustments, and ending in accommodations or rejections. Recurrent discrepancies between subjective intention and political reception characterized artists' efforts to have their ideological self-expression validated by the political movements or authorities they wished to embrace. These were ill disposed to grant artists the initiative of devising a political art of their own imagination. They insisted on compliance with their policies, no matter how opaque.

/1.1.2 **FROM MOVEMENT TO GOVERNMENT**

Political engagement of artists' groups surged toward the end of World War I in Italy, Russia and Germany—the three future totalitarian states—most often in support of ongoing revolutions. They attempted to relate the avant-garde ideal of a revolution in the arts to the programs of political parties keen on upsetting their governments, and to work for revolutionary governments once these were in place. All those artist's groups were of modern persuasion. Their initial acceptance by the new regimes took different forms and reached different degrees, but never lasted longer than four years. As post-war governments consolidated their management of artistic culture, they excluded supportive artists' groups from political functions and put them in their ever-diminishing place. It was one thing for a group of like-minded artists to pronounce their views on issues of art policy or of political ideology in manifestoes, but quite another to insert their work into the operations of social groups or political parties with which they sympathized or from which they expected to obtain professional support. Their engagement subjected their ideological convictions to a political test.

Because political engagement originates from artistic freedom, its success or failure during the Depression depended on the difference between totalitarian and democratic political systems. While totalitarian governments offered both greater opportunities and greater risks, democratic governments offered a disinterested tolerance for overextended political ambitions. As long as totalitarian regimes construed themselves as populist mass movements, they attracted the engagement of artists with aspirations for cultural leadership. As they turned increasingly authoritarian, they

started to curb such artists' bids to define policies without authorization, souring their engagement by an administrative discipline imposed on them by politicians. In both totalitarian and democratic states, artists eager to reason out their own combinations of artistic independence and ideological nonconformity found out that the ideological message of their work remained without political resonance because they had overestimated its relevance for public policy. Totalitarian censure or democratic indifference put them in their place.

One of the most glaring instances of such a political repudiation was the 'International Dada Fair,' held at the Otto Burchartz Gallery in Berlin from June 30 to August 25, 1920, and mounted by the communist artists Wieland Herzfelde, George Grosz and John Heartfield, all of them party members of the first hour, as a provocative performance of Soviet revolutionary tenets. They lampooned the reconstituted republican army so acerbically that they were put on trial for "incitement to class hate" and "insult to the Reichswehr" on a personal complaint by the new defense minister Otto Gessler. Slogans of communist allegiance—"Dada is struggling at the side of the revolutionary proletariat," "Dada takes sides with the revolutionary proletariat"—criss-crossed the gallery. However, the KPD newspaper *Die Rote Fahne*, in its review of July 25, 1920, repudiated the disorderly makeup of the 'Fair' in the name of the traditional acculturation of the working-class. "The proletariat will lead and win this struggle even without the extra campaign against art and culture undertaken by a bourgeois clique of writers," wrote critic Gertrud Alexander.⁽¹²⁷⁾

/ 1.1.3 ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION

The politicized artistic cultures where such artists wished to operate required at least the semblance, if not the substance, of political conformity. It tempted them to overstate their allegiance as part of their professional standing or, more often, to compromise the perception of their independence. Traditional and modern artists fared differently in this respect. Traditional artists often worked on the assumption of an effortless application of traditional form to totalitarian art, with some ideological enhancements of style and subject matter. Many regarded such adaptations as a customary professional practice that did not touch upon their personal beliefs. Most closed their eyes to the dubious political conduct of the regime they served. Modern artists, on the other hand, faced a professional quandary. Once it was no longer underwritten by their upper middle-class clientele, the self-definition of modern art as an expression of subjective nonconformity became vulnerable to charges of political dissent under totalitarian regimes, and of social provocation in democratic states.

Modern artists conceived of their work as a matter of conscience they could dedicate to ideological expression but not subordinate to political requirements. The

easiest way of engagement was for them to verbally invest their pre-existing artistic concepts with the political conformity they wished to profess, with little or no accommodation. Because the resurgence of traditionalist art policies since the start of the Depression placed modern artists on the defensive throughout Europe, they tended to overstate their allegiance to the politics they offered to serve, albeit with their accustomed work. However, the political authorities did not let such pronouncements dissuade them from rejection. The potential discrepancy between subjective intent and political expediency was due to their unwillingness to let artists devise a politicized art on their own. What they demanded was compliance with overriding art policies that were set or changed by state or party authorities and went beyond determining the form and subject matter of individual works.

In February 1933, Franz Radziwill, a former expressionist who later adhered to a form of New Objectivity and now posed as an ardent National Socialist, went to Berlin to jockey for position with the new cultural administration, and in May 1933 even joined the Party. He was duly appointed professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, only to be dismissed in 1935, when his expressionist beginnings were exposed. Radziwill's mistake was to think that his New Objectivity realism alone qualified him to be counted as an adherent of the new regime's traditionalist art policy, thus sparing him the effort of adjusting his themes. As a result, the authorities kept clamping down on him, to the point of including his early works in the Berlin venue of the 'Degenerate Art' show in early 1938 and barring him from mounting personal shows. Undeterred, Radziwill, in a letter of March 30, 1937, to Reich Chamber of Art President Ziegler, protested against the confiscation of his most successful painting, *The Street* of 1928, purchased then by the Interior Ministry, contending that artists had no directions to follow. In his belated answer of November 16, 1937, Ziegler wrongly retorted that Hitler's culture speeches at the Nuremberg Party Rallies had set standards that were clear enough.

/1.2 **ENGAGEMENT FOR REVOLUTION**

/1.2.1 **FROM A FUTURIST TO THE FASCIST PARTY**

Italy was the only state where the political engagement of artists went as far as forming a political party of their own. On February 11, 1918, Marinetti and four other writers framed a lengthy manifesto for a *Partito Politico Futurista* to be organized after the war under the label "nazionalismo rivoluzionario." It summarized the radical social and political dissent the Futurists had voiced from the beginning. Remarkably, the manifesto says nothing about any specific contributions by artists to its all-embracing program, which is aimed at the political enactment of partly populist, partly patriotic, and partly outright hypothetical propositions. Its passages about cultural policy deal with the reform of education and the elimination of religious authority, but do not

touch upon the arts. Futurism and Fascism joined momentarily in late 1918 and during the first half of 1919, when Mussolini founded his *Fasci di Combattimento* in Milan on March 23, with Marinetti and some of his fellow Futurists in attendance. Mussolini's pronouncements, and the published party program, were as radically revolutionary as the 'Futurist Party' program had been one year earlier.

The attempted conversion of artists into politicians with a claim to precedence did not sit well with Mussolini and his cohorts in the formative stage of his party, in which Marinetti participated along with Giuseppe Bottai, a Futurist writer at that time. Already in 1920, Mussolini denounced Marinetti as an "extravagant buffoon who wants to make politics and whom no one in Italy [...] takes seriously."⁽¹²⁸⁾ At the Second Fascist Congress in Milan on May 24-25, 1920, Mussolini countered the Futurists' revolutionary demands on behalf of the proletariat with the call for a productive agreement between the proletariat and the upper middle-class under the catchword 'restauration'. A few days later Marinetti and his followers walked out of the *Fasci di Combattimento*. As an immediate reaction, Marinetti published his tract *Al di là del comunismo*, the most anarchist of his writings. Here he exalted the arts as an alternative to politics without the need to compromise. Art, he argued, could be practiced by millions with the goal of universal happiness. "We will have the artistic solution of the social problem," he wrote.⁽¹²⁹⁾ This utopian ambition did not lend itself to party control.

On November 1, 1922, three days after the formation of the first Fascist government, Marinetti, in a defiant article, reaffirmed the freedom of the individual to the point of rejecting any party engagement by artists and insisting on their right to pursue a politics of their own. For this political sovereignty he coined the term *Artocracy*, oblivious of his earlier populist ambitions. One year later, Marinetti retreated with the *Manifest to the Fascist Government*, where he demoted the Fascist regime to a mere "realization of the minimal futurist program."⁽¹³⁰⁾ In return, he narrowed futurism's political claims to being "a frankly artistic and ideological movement" which would only "intervene in political struggles at a time of grave danger for the nation."⁽¹³¹⁾ It followed from such a reversal that "the political revolution must support the artistic revolution, that is, Futurism." Marinetti followed up this prospective deal of political abstention in return for economic entitlement with a list of public ventures that only Futurist artists were qualified to offer. This amounted to a conversion of political engagement into political service. The artistic autonomy that was a precondition of the offer depended on the artists' pre-ordained conformity.

/ 1.2.2 PROLETKULT VERSUS 'FUTURIST' ART IN THE USSR

Already before the First World War, Russian intellectuals in exile had framed a future Bolshevik cultural policy, including the arts as an all-embracing acculturation of the proletariat without regard for professional artistic practice. On October 16, 1917,

the first office of a "Proletarian cultural-educational organization," Proletkult in short, was set up in Petrograd without Party supervision. An entirely different, ex-post facto engagement with the new Bolshevik government came from the radical modern artists of Petrograd and Moscow, led by Vladimir Mayakovsky and Vladimir Tatlin, neither of whom had harbored any political aspirations before. With their self-styled 'revolutionary' upset of artistic practice before the war, they claimed to have anticipated the Bolshevik revolution. For the incipient Bolshevik art policy, the coexistence of the Proletkult organization and the 'Futurist' art movement presented a principled alternative, particularly since Anatoly Lunacharsky, one of Proletkult's initiators, had risen to be Commissar of Education in Lenin's first government. While the Proletkult kept clear of this government, the 'Futurists' were eager to join in.

The newly empowered Futurist artists deftly dealt with the political liability resulting from their minority position. In a bold appropriation of avant-garde ideology, Nikolai Punin called for a "dictatorship of the minority" with "muscles strong enough to march in step with the working-class,"⁽¹³²⁾ by analogy to the Bolshevik Party's self-entitlement to lead the dictatorship of the proletariat. It took Lunacharsky less than two years to realize that the lacking popular acceptance of modern art would jeopardize their policies' political success. Yet by that time, modern artists were so entrenched in Soviet art administration and art instruction that it took a decade of protracted conflicts to dislodge them and return to traditional art as the bedrock of Soviet artistic culture. The rebuff of modern Soviet artists' political engagement started in 1920, the same year as that of their Italian counterparts, but unfolded differently. Whereas the Fascist Party tolerated its Futurists' enduring claims of allegiance as a powerless minority position, the Soviet government put their Futurists to the test of public service, which they eventually lost to their traditionalist competitors.

Toward the end of the same year, the government ended the autonomy of the Proletkult movement, a wide network of cultural centers supporting an artistic practice of the proletariat as a way of fostering its Bolshevik allegiance without Party supervision. By attaching this organization to the Education Commissariat, the government eliminated spontaneous engagement as an impetus of artistic creativity. In 1922, the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) was founded, which heralded the resurgence of anti-modern realism, practiced by a majority of artists, as an alternative Bolshevik art form capable of reaching out to the uneducated proletariat. Expressly asking the Central Committee for guidance, it volunteered for subordination to the Party. Henceforth, ever new artists' groups and alliances vied for political orthodoxy, until the April Decree of 1932 put a stop to their ideological infighting. Since all of them merely acted on the professional interest of having their versions of style and subject matter validated, but never harbored ambitions for political participation, engagement turned into conformity.

/1.2.3 FAILED REVOLUTION IN GERMANY

As long as the German revolution of November 1918 seemed to promise a Communist-led council regime, the new Russian art administration extended feelers to German artists with revolutionary aspirations to join up for an 'International of Art.' However, once it became clear that Germany was headed toward a parliamentary democracy, these efforts came to nothing. The foremost venture by German modern artists to organize on the model of revolutionary soldiers' and workers' councils was the Working Council for Art (*Arbeitsrat für Kunst*), founded in November 1918, and chaired by architects Bruno Taut and Walter Gropius. Although it was no more than a loosely connected interest group, it raised far-reaching demands for changes in state art policy. Already on December 18, 1918, the Working Council published "A New Artistic Program" in newspapers and journals, which read in part: "Art and the people must form a unity. [...] Henceforth the artist alone will be responsible for the visible vestment of the new state. He must determine the shape [of everything] from the townscape down to the coin and postage stamp."⁽¹³³⁾

Thus, from the start, the Working Council claimed an active participation in all matters of art policy without a mandate of any kind, belying the choice of its name by analogy to the elected workers' and soldiers' councils of the Revolution. As a modern artists' association, they were a small minority, neither able nor willing to represent any constituency. The minister in charge of culture in the Provisional Council Government, Johannes Hoffmann (USPD), turned a deaf ear to Taut's offerings of cooperation. Thrown back on issuing still more hypothetical programs, the Working Council dissolved on May 30, 1921. It was an early case of the recurrent reluctance by democratic governments to grant artists a share in the conduct of politics. The rise and fall of the Working Council for Art during the initial crisis and incipient consolidation of the Weimar Republic goes to show that the empowerment of artists was incompatible with a stable democratic government. In the Third Republic of France, whose constitutional stability was never compromised, no comparably activist movement of artists arose after the war.

The revolutionary claims advanced by modern German artists, who, within weeks of the February Revolution of 1919, formed the Dada movement in Berlin, were repudiated by the German Communist Party (KPD) even more strongly than by the government. The Communist press condemned an exhibition they organized in the summer of 1920, entitled 'International Dada Fair,' as a 'bourgeois' sham. It took the persistent organizational efforts of the brothers Helmut and Wieland Herzfelde, both KPD members of the first hour, to create and maintain the Malik Verlag, a center of literary and artistic activity financially backed by the KPD but free of Party control. Its stated objective of mass propaganda had little use for the modernist antics of its

erstwhile Dadaist members. The photomontages of John Heartfield (the artist name adopted by Helmut Herzfelde), which predominated the ideological orientation of the Malik Verlag, were in sync with the KPD's Comintern-directed line. Other artists, most notably George Grosz, were subject to Party discipline as soon as they appeared to deviate from the positive outlook deemed appropriate for the Party's class struggle politics.

/ 1.3 **ENGAGEMENT DURING THE DEPRESSION**

/ 1.3.1 **GENERAL**

After the First World War, artists' political engagement arose at times of crisis, when governments appeared weak or unstable. The first such time had been the revolutionary period from 1917 to 1923, the second was the Great Depression. Since by that time two totalitarian governments had securely ensconced, it was limited to the two surviving democracies: Germany until 1933 and France beyond the end of the decade. Political engagement needed a public sphere for free expression, no matter how contested by the tug-of-war between protest and censorship. It also needed the right to form political groupings, no matter how curtailed by the authorities. Since the two totalitarian states no longer met both these conditions, artists channeled their political engagement into emphatic demonstrations of allegiance, true or feigned. Because both democracies were constitutionally bound to protect the arts from political control, they provided a political culture for fundamental opposition on the part of artists who went beyond voicing their demands or protests to espousing revolutionary or reactionary ideologies which challenged the political system as a whole, making for recurrent legal disputes.

In Italy, the process of absorbing political engagement into government art policies lasted until 1930, when artists were pooled into one of the seven newly-constituted corporations. In the Soviet Union, it lasted until the April Decree of 1932, when the Party, taking art policy away from government, likewise replaced issue-prompted artists' groups with national or regional organizations. Such transitions from political engagement to totalitarian subordination made for the deceptive shows of enthusiastic ideological unanimity in the art of both systems, which so impressed conservative or leftist observers in the democratic states. In Soviet art, which was tightly controlled, it appeared more overwhelming than in Fascist art, which was more loosely supervised. The National Socialist regime, which joined the pair of existing totalitarian states in 1933, had no important artists of political partisanship to spearhead an art of enthusiastic conformity, which it kept lacking until 1937. Yet, there were some modern artists who passed off their eagerness to ingratiate themselves with the regime as professions of spontaneous conviction.

In the two democratic states, the breadth and intensity of artists' political engagement depended on the stability of governance. In Germany, hit by the Depression so severely that the democratic system eventually imploded, it came from both Left and Right. In France, where the crisis was milder and where, in 1934, democracy weathered an overthrow attempt, it only came from the Left. And while in France leftist political engagement was absorbed, and to some extent resolved, by the parliamentary ascendancy of the Popular Front, in Germany the two-pronged engagement by mutually hostile, art-political movements on the Right and Left became ever more exasperated, in sync with the self-destruction of parliamentary democracy. Those movements were primarily pressure groups who expressed their political demands in the form of meetings, public assemblies, published declarations, and provocative shows, but rarely through representative works. On the Left, prestigious sympathizing artists—such as Pablo Picasso or Otto Dix—would participate in their shows but never join their groups. The Right had not a single significant artist to boast.

/1.3.2 GERMANY

In Germany, the turn from political engagement to political management under the rising totalitarian regime did not happen until the start of the Depression and the ensuing demise of democratic governance. This time lag made a difference in the participation of artists in the conduct of totalitarian art policy, longer under way in the two totalitarian states already in existence. It was not until then that artists' political engagement flared up to the point of outright cooperation with party politics. In the case of the communist Left, it was a rebound from the years 1918-1923, when Communist revolutionary aspirations had failed. In the case of the National Socialist Right, it was an upsurge concurrent with the quick electoral ascendancy of the NSDAP. While the communist rebound, led by the party-backed 'Association of Revolutionary Artists of Germany' (*Assoziation revolutionärer bildender Künstler Deutschlands*, ARBKD or Asso in short) was cut short by Hitler's ascendancy, the National Socialist upsurge, represented by the party-affiliated 'Combat League for German Culture' (*Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*) on a wider social base, was nonetheless excluded from shaping the art policy of the new regime.

Four years after the 'Red Group' had ceased its activities, the ARBKD was, at first informally, founded on January 30, 1928, by a small number of artists, and later enlarged and consolidated by an influx of artists who had formed a communist faction within the 'Reich Economic Artists' League of Germany' (*Reichswirtschaftsverband bildender Künstler Deutschlands*). In 1930 the ARBKD was certified as the German section of the newly founded 'International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists' under the aegis of the Comintern. Its seven statutes, the first of which identified it as a sister organization of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia, spelled out a tight

oversight by the party over the artists' activity in the class war. A highly structured organization with sixteen local chapters, the ARBKD was subordinated to the KPD's umbrella organization of workers' culture, employed artists in art courses for workers, poster or banner design, and other ventures related to the goal of devoting the arts to political struggles. It organized evening discussions with leading communist art writers of the day.

Quite different from the ARBKD was the 'Combat League for German Culture', officially founded on February 26, 1929, as an umbrella organization for all existing nationalist groups opposed to modern art under a National Socialist ideology. Although chaired by NSDAP official Alfred Rosenberg, it was organizationally independent of the National Socialist Party. The Combat League was a cultural mass movement of political engagement where architects and artists shared their militantly anti-modern stance with a socially diverse panoply of writers, intellectuals and art lovers. For all its racist promotion of a hypothetically pure German art, its task was an electoral attack propaganda rather than the formulation of a National Socialist art policy. Thus, after the NSDAP's ascendancy to government, Rosenberg's and the Kampfbund's aspirations to have a say in the new regime's art policy, based on its mass membership, were sidelined by Hitler's own deliberate art-political plans for the immediate future. Implemented by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, these designs were aimed at an economic recovery of traditional art with scarce regard for ideological orthodoxy.

/1.3.3 **FRANCE**

In France, artists' political engagement on the Left was racked by discord almost from the start. The 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists,' (AEAR) founded in January 1932 under the auspices of the Communist Party, included the Surrealists, and thus seemed to promise a unified artistic venue for leftist dissent on the premise of a 'Unified Front'. Here the term 'revolutionary' still meant subversion of the government. However, as early as June 1933, when the Surrealists were expelled from the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists,' communist discipline failed to subordinate the freedom of artistic engagement. The dividing issues were the practicality of politics and the mass response to art and literature, both issues on which the Surrealists would not defer to any Party line. Although internal strife would continue to haunt their own engagement, the "Call to the Struggle," issued as a response to the rightist riots of February 6-7, 1934, restored the unity of political engagement on an anti-fascist platform. Written by a group of intellectuals, writers, and artists, and directed towards parties, trade unions, and other political groups, it was followed on February 12 by a massive street demonstration. It looked as if artists had taken an initiative with political, not just ideological impact.

With the founding of the Maison de la Culture under the aegis of the Communist Party in April 1935, and the international Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture, organized by a galaxy of Communist sympathizers in June of that year, political engagement by artists on the Left attained its highpoint, including the usual conflicts between individual fervor and collective discipline. As the prominence of Henri Matisse, an honorary AEAR member, in the publicity of the Maison de la Culture shows, artists' participation in its events and shows did not necessarily affect their styles. It was the aim of this institution to rally them for their political engagement rather than their work, although the Maison was attractive enough as a cultural center to make attendance a matter of professional ambition. Finally, the Defense of Culture Congress, which ratified the new Comintern policy of a class-transcending anti-fascist alliance, was an effort at ideological accord at the expense of minority deviations. It is on this occasion that Breton, after having been sidelined at the Congress, rallied most of his Surrealists under a new manifesto of dissent from the new policy.

The Popular Front government, elected in 1936 with the support of numerous artists, honored their engagement. It provided opportunities for the expression of their political aims, such as the anti-fascist struggle or the support of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War. Most importantly, it channeled the perennial antagonism between traditional and modern art into the political forum of the realism debates. Insofar as the Popular Front tended to politicize artistic culture, it also opened it up to a competitive diversity of artistic positions that was focused on its public impact. The participation of government officials in the realism debates made it appear as if artists could influence art policy. Contentious political competition gave way to a democratic give-and-take. The Surrealists' break with the Communist Party, which entailed their exclusion, or self-exclusion, from the artistic culture of the Popular Front, did not enable them to forge a "political position" of their own, as Breton asserted in one of his tracts. The absolute political independence of artists he and Lev Trotsky eventually claimed in their Coyoacán Manifesto of June 1938 lacked any substantive content.

/ 2 **TOTALITARIAN SERVICE**

/ 2.1 **ARTISTS IN OFFICE**

/ 2.1.1 **ORGANIZED LEADERSHIP**

In all three totalitarian states, political power accrued to artists either from their leadership of politically coordinated professional artists' organizations, or from political mandates from above to organize artistic culture. All of them owed their positions to their appointment, or at least confirmation, by supervisory personnel of the

governments in Italy and Germany, and of the Party in the USSR. Such artists in office obtained three responsibilities and opportunities: first, the professional organization of art production and distribution; second, the adaptation of academic teaching to political objectives; and third, the making of works to order. In each one of the totalitarian states, those responsibilities and opportunities were differently weighted. It was in Fascist Italy that artists in office rose highest in all three respects, because the regime, according to its corporative social policy, counted on self-regulating artists' professions. In the USSR, by contrast, Party control of artistic culture was so thorough that it made them accountable to supervision. In Germany, the government stood by as they fell short of expectations.

Leadership positions of totalitarian artists' organizations were filled with artists of proven loyalty regardless of their accomplishments. Such artists were expected to foster political conformity amongst a membership that was unsuited to being managed in the way of a party organization—not even in the Soviet Union, where 'cells' of Party members in their midst were charged with implementing policy. Architects Marcello Piacentini, Karo Alabian, and Albert Speer, and painters Mario Sironi, Aleksandr Gerasimov, and Adolf Ziegler were put in charge of high-powered administrative bodies with a mission to guide artistic policy and practice and watch for non-compliance. However, their artistic standing, institutional position, and range of influence differed widely. Piacentini and Sironi had long, successful careers behind them when they joined the regime, and hence were most successful in imposing their artistic visions. Alabian and Gerasimov, both academy graduates and party members, were not among the most prominent Soviet artists, but were expert enough to be on top of the art political issues. Speer and Ziegler, finally, had only limited professional credentials when Hitler empowered them.

All three totalitarian regimes had two distinct objectives in managing artistic culture from above: ensuring an economically viable art profession for society at large and producing a monumental self-representation of their rule. For this, they needed artists whose claims to leadership resulted from political conviction, or at least from an expeditious willingness to serve. The Soviet government went farthest in correlating the leadership of artists with party oversight in whipping artists' organizations into the conformity of 'socialist realism.' Starting in 1936, it unleashed the NKVD on artist leaders, who were arrested or shot because they were judged to run afoul of policy, while ordinary artists whose work was rated unacceptable were left unscathed. Italy and Germany lacked equally refined doctrines of art policy. As a result, appointed artist leaders stopped short of enforcing ideological orthodoxy. While top Italian artists led their corporations toward satisfactory paradigms of Fascist art, unqualified German artist leaders proved so incapable in this regard that in 1937 the regime would not rely on them for its monumental projects.

/ 2.1.2 **STRUCTURAL PREMISES**

Artists' political empowerment formed part of the totalitarian politicization of social activity to the point that it would work for the regime without being run by the state. It was to fulfill the populist aspirations of totalitarianism as a political system that prefers encouragement or manipulation to forcible guidance. For the arts, only encouragement could be expected to work. To politicize the arts, totalitarian regimes strengthened the authority of leading artists within the quasi-egalitarian, semi-democratic culture of traditional artists' corporations. In Italy and the Soviet Union, this policy was enacted through a continual process of debates. Because in Germany any such debates were squelched by early 1934, the mass of organized artists never came up with any politically useful style. To put art writers with their own idiosyncratic political ideologies in charge would have run counter to both the corporate principle in Italy and the principle of Party supervision in the USSR. As a result, the leadership claims of Mayakovsky and Marinetti within their respective artists' organizations were never honored. The German regime had no writers of their caliber to reign in.

Artists' empowerment worked best for the Fascist regime, which first devised the concept of totalitarianism with its structural balance of populist and dictatorial premises. The Bolshevik and National Socialist regimes, on the other hand, abandoned it in their transition from mass-based to autocratic dictatorships, imposing artists with little merit on an indifferent or reluctant membership. Such an empowerment of artists to commit a predominantly non-political profession to political tasks shielded artists' organizations from being submerged into the political culture of mass parties. On the other hand, totalitarian regimes, prone to apply more ruthless means to politicize society at large, never gave an important government or party post to any artist. This is why totalitarian party organizations and their leaders suspiciously watched over artists' corporations and often tried to interfere with their politics—unsuccessfully in Italy and Germany, but with a vengeance in the Soviet Union, the only one of the three regimes to devise political mechanisms for subjecting artistic leadership to Party supervision.

When, by 1936-1937, the Soviet and German regimes—unlike the Italian—concluded that corporate organizations of artists led by their peers were structurally unsuited to deliver the high-quality art of ideological expression they desired for their capital reconstruction schemes and their international representation, they did not avail themselves of the artists they had installed to lead them. Neither Alexandr Gerasimov nor Adolf Ziegler, neither Arkadi Mordvinov nor Eugen Hönig, appointed to head their respective artists' and architects' organizations, had any say in the design and development of the capital centers in Moscow and Berlin or the Soviet and German pavilions at the Paris Expo. Except for one tapestry by Ziegler, they did not contribute

a single work to these projects. In line with the totalitarian policy of overriding institutional structures when they proved ineffectual, top political leaders—Lazar Kaganovich and Hitler himself—ignored artists' organizations and their artist leaders, preferring to deal directly with a select elite of outstanding architects and artists who in the intervening years had risen to a prestige of their own.

/ 2.1.3 **ENACTMENT OF AUTHORITY**

Of the three totalitarian regimes, that of Fascist Italy bestowed the highest professional and political power on its artists in office. Their proven accomplishments, backed up by their prolific writings and keen engagement in art-political debates, served to set substantive paradigms. Through their decisions in shows, competitions, and commissions, they wielded a proven professional authority. Marcello Piacentini's and Giuseppe Pagano's shared responsibility for the design of the Italian Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937 was touted as a reconciliation between classicism and modernism, the two competing tendencies in the architectural profession. Personified in the work of its two corporate leaders, it was meant to suggest a constructive outcome of the attendant debates. No single artist working on behalf of any totalitarian regime could match the authority of painter Mario Sironi, whose direction of entire Biennales determined their aesthetic standards of selection, and of Piacentini, whose overall responsibility for the E42 empowered him to determine both the layout and the stylistic coordinates for participating architects to follow.

Soviet artists in office were prestigious but second rank. Their authority was bolstered by institutional appointments, channeled through organizational structures under Party control. It was limited to the oversight of streamlined evaluation and commission procedures under the rules of 'democratic centralism.' Suspending their own artistic judgment, they acted as administrators rather than as leaders. No Soviet artist in office would claim any paradigmatic significance for the makeup of his own work, only an exemplary fulfillment of a pre-ordained aesthetic doctrine. Their claims to leadership were hidden by ever more ritual deferment to elusive Party lines, to the unquestioned competency of the Party leadership, and, eventually, to Stalin in person. The self-professed orthodoxy that was the hallmark of such artists' work allowed them to shirk the political scrutiny their membership had to endure. Their more prestigious colleagues, who held no office but were awarded big-time commissions, still had to be mindful of demands for adjustments or losing out in competitions. Under Party supervision, political authority and professional success were equally at risk.

During the first four years of Hitler's government, artists in office were selected in order to combine some professional standing from the time before 1933 with an ideological sympathy for the regime. They lacked both the artistic excellency and the political determination to act as role models, let alone as guides, for the

membership of the Reich Chamber of Art. The ensuing shakeup of German artistic culture in 1937, which culminated in the Degenerate Art Show, jeopardized the two original tenets of National Socialist art policy: the innate, spontaneous creativity of a people's community, restored from its neglect in the Weimar Republic, and the leadership principle as a motivation for traditional artists to shape a representative art of the regime. The shakeup diminished the authority of artists in office but did not yield the desired results. While Hitler and Speer took the initiative in league with elite artists of their choice, management of the Chamber of Art was handed to artists of no distinction and promoted by critics of no renown. Oversight of the would-be standard-setting Great German Art Exhibition fell to Heinrich Hoffmann, a photographer.

/ 2.2 **RISING TO SERVE**

/ 2.2.1 **ITALY**

Pursuing a corporative self-regulation of the arts with minimal political oversight, the regime entrusted two insignificant artists—sculptor Antonio Maraini and painter Cipriano Efisio Oppo—with a maximum of institutional authority, exceeding their professional competency. Both also worked as art critics but devoted most of their time to their political responsibilities. However, their tasks did not include the setting of guidelines for developing a genuine Fascist art. Instead, the regime entrusted two accomplished artists of proven ideological commitment—architect Marcello Piacentini and painter Mario Sironi—with artistic leadership functions beyond governmental control. It licensed them to formulate art policy and commissioned them with outstanding projects to confirm their trend-setting role. Neither Piacentini nor Sironi ever held a government or party post. Their national leadership developed from within the organizational structures of their respective corporations. Here they amassed so many tasks that their de-facto preeminence was eventually recognized, even against opposition from within their organizations and in the public sphere of cultural policy.

Marcello Piacentini had made a successful career long before he started his rise to the policy-shaping pinnacle of his profession. Already in 1906, he had been appointed professor of design at the Regio Istituto Superiore di Belle Arti, and in 1920, professor of urbanism in the newly-founded Regia Scuola di Architettura, of which he became rector in 1930. Piacentini used the journal of his corporation, *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, renamed *Architettura* in 1931, to promulgate his views, which he ceaselessly promoted and defended in public debates. The resulting public prominence netted him key positions in numerous architectural committees and exhibitions, culminating in his 1936 appointment as chief architect of the E42. Starting in 1931, Piacentini steered the self-regulating process of developing a Fascist architectural style that would reflect the regime's ambitions for modernization. By hammering out

a compromise platform for the planning of the E42, he managed to overcome the split between his classicist preferences and the CIAM-oriented internationalist leanings on the part of modern-minded architects.

The institutional ascendancy of Mario Sironi, an erstwhile Futurist painter, was launched from the art circle of Margharita Sarfatti, Mussolini's companion. His involvement in numerous institutional ventures of Fascist art policy steadily increased his executive authority, to the point of becoming the sole organizer of the Fifth Milan Triennial Exhibition of 1933. It is from this position that during the thirties Sironi issued a steady stream of reviews and programmatic texts in the pages of the official daily *Il Popolo d'Italia*, where he ventured to define the characteristics of a Fascist style. In fact, he started his work for the Fascist regime in the institutional context of press propaganda, before he himself attempted to shape a Fascist imagery. By the end of the decade, not only did Sironi's work culminate in his prominent murals but spanned virtually the entire range of media and techniques, from architecture to newspaper illustration. His art-political activities covered the entire range of artistic culture, even weathering a passing anti-modern opposition from within the Fascist Party.

/ 2.2.2 **USSR**

Soviet artists in office, such as architect Karo Alabian and painter Aleksandr Gerasimov, were of second rank compared to the more prominent ones who received outstanding commissions. But as authors of important single works, they had enough of a standing amongst their peers to stay on top of the incessant professional power struggles within artists' associations under Party management. As chairmen of their respective nationwide associations, Alabian and Gerasimov maintained official ties with the Party, and later with the NKVD. As a result, they were able to bolster the control of their rank-and-file to an extent never attained by their Italian or German counterparts. They were expected to serve as enforcers of doctrine rather than as role models to follow. The doctrine to be enforced was the ever-elusive concept of Socialist Realism, a state-wide standard of style whose characteristics were supposed to be clarified by a stream of debates, but which became an argumentative device for political infighting, putting the very survival of artists at risk. Eventually, artists in office were reduced to acting in the name of political leaders from Stalin downwards.

In 1934, Karo Alabian, a Party member since 1917 and one of the first graduates of the Higher Artistic-Technical Institute (*Vhutein*) in 1929, managed a timely switch from his constructivist beginnings to a model version of 'Socialist Realism in Architecture.' His Theater of the Red Army in Moscow was a classical building in appearance, laid out on a ground plan in the shape of a five-pointed star. A founder of the All-Russian Society of Proletarian Architects (VOPRA), and since 1932 secretary of the Soviet Architects' Union, Alabian was bent on a single-minded pursuit of political power

amid the quarrelsome architects' profession of the USSR, which was never quite ready to submit to the rejection of modern internationalism under way since 1932. In 1936, he was charged with organizing the first All-Soviet Architects' Congress in Moscow under the personal oversight of Politburo member Lazar Kaganovich. At a time of ongoing sabotage trials throughout the country, he made the exposure of building sabotage a major item of the agenda. He was duly 'elected' first secretary of the Union.

In 1929, Aleksandr Gerasimov had painted a portrait of Lenin on a speaker's rostrum, which some years later became a model of the kind of Socialist Realism that, under his leadership, was being relentlessly enforced in the unions' commissioning processes. As late as March 1939, he codified its definition in an article entitled "Under the Banner of Socialist Realism." Gerasimov's political ascendancy culminated in May 1937, at the height of the deadly purges, when he succeeded the chairman of the Moscow All-Russian Artists' Union, Yuvenali Slavinsky, who had just been imprisoned and was subsequently shot. From now on, Gerasimov saw to it that the political supervision of art production was conducted in cooperation with the NKVD. By the end of the decade, he had become the most powerful artist-politician of the Soviet Union. Unlike Alabian, he was backed by a first-rank politician, Defense Commissar Kliment Voroshilov. His cooperation with the NKVD ensured a potentially deadly control of his union, including the execution of lower-ranking painters in office on non-artistic charges of subversion.

/ 2.2.3 GERMANY

Compared to the older totalitarian states, active participation of artists in National Socialist art policy was minimal, because the regime's resolve to discard Weimar culture wholesale kept it from relying on any major artist from that time. And since there was no personal or institutional organigram for implementing Hitler's categorical pronouncements, its art policy remained uncertain. Taking Hitler's personal oversight of the arts for granted, the three top politicians responsible—education minister Bernhard Rust, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and Party cultural 'supervisor' Alfred Rosenberg—developed no coherent policies in tandem because they competed for influence on Hitler's decisions to have them endorsed. In this confusing situation, two outsider artists—Albert Speer in architecture and Adolf Ziegler in painting—attained a political influence out of proportion to their professional merits. One rose to the pinnacle of power outside any organization, the other remained an obedient hack, unable to steer the Reich Chamber of Art he was appointed to lead toward producing satisfactory work.

When Albert Speer joined the NSDAP in 1931 at age 27, he was too young to have any significant work to his credit. He was a mere assistant at the Berlin Polytechnic when in 1933 he was charged with staging Party rallies. One year later, Hitler, probably rating him as young enough to follow orders, charged him with converting the

Nuremberg Rally Grounds into a set of solid buildings. On January 30, 1937, after Speer had served four years on the staff of the Reich Propaganda Ministry as a commissioner for the technical and artistic organization of rallies, Hitler, overriding the Prussian state government and the city government of Berlin, appointed him to the new post of “General Inspector for the Reich Capital,” to oversee a thorough reconstruction of the city. From this position Speer sought to expand his political oversight of architecture throughout the Reich, and in the fall of 1940, at age 36, even made an unsuccessful bid for a post to cement such an authority. Two years later, with his appointment as minister of armaments, Speer’s political power as a full member of the government rose far beyond his professional qualifications.

Adolf Ziegler, an undistinguished Munich painter, exemplifies the undeserved professional ascendancy open to Party members in the Third Reich. As early as October 1933, Hitler had him appointed Professor of the Munich Art Academy over the objections of the faculty, but Ziegler failed to make any inroads at the school. No state or party agency ever gave him a commission. Ziegler proved to be all the more of a zealous policy enforcer when in 1936 he was appointed president of the Reich Chamber of Art. Endowed with a political mandate overriding any law, he personally carried out the nation-wide, on-the-spot confiscation of modern art works in German museums for display in the punitive ‘Degenerate Art’ exhibition, which he opened with a particularly vituperative speech. To any member of the Reich Chamber of Art who had something to fear from these anti-modern measures, Ziegler must have appeared as the art-political nemesis of the regime. However, his menacing decree of April 23, 1941, to rigorously clamp down on any residual practice of non-conformist art (see below /2.3.3) shows how unsuccessful he had been in whipping the profession into line.

/ 2.3 **ENFORCING CONFORMITY**

/ 2.3.1 **DEGREES OF DISCIPLINE**

The authority of artists in office to discipline their colleagues in the professional associations they were appointed to lead depended on several factors: the government’s desire to regulate the art market, the ideological license those associations were granted within their institutional confinement, and the strictness of their supervision by political personnel. Of the three totalitarian regimes, only the Soviet and the German established what they took to be clear-cut positive or negative standards—Socialist Realism and Degenerate Art—, amply verbalized criteria suitable to be enforced as yardsticks for acceptance or rejection. Because the Fascist regime refrained from setting such standards, it had nothing to enforce. It is no coincidence that only in Italy the most productive and prestigious artists—Piacentini and Sironi—were also the most successful artists in office, because their accomplishments set

their own trends. The prolific debates about the nature of Fascist art in which both were constantly embroiled were aimed at a corporative reconciliation of diverse tendencies according to their judgments.

At the start of the Bolshevik government, artists in office had enjoyed a wide range of opportunities for action. Under the aegis of the Commissariat of the Enlightenment, modern painters such as Vladimir Tatlin, David Shterenberg, and Vasily Kandinsky had steered entire art departments toward comprehensive programs according to their radically modern principles. Yet, despite recurrent disputes, their power did not extend to an exclusionary enforcement of their doctrines on the artistic community at large. On the contrary, it provoked the formation of numerous oppositional artists' groups, whose declared intention was the undermining of their influence. They lacked any official authority to prevent such groups from succeeding. It was the transfer of art policy from government to Party oversight that changed the power of artists in office in a fundamental way. After the April Decree of 1932 had replaced the plurality of competitive artists' associations with all-inclusive national or regional associations under direct Party control, artists no longer advocated competing styles or paradigms, but were reduced to enforcing doctrine from above.

When the National Socialist Party, after a long political struggle, finally ascended to government, it had neither any notions about what art to support nor any paradigmatic artists in place when it faced the task of creating a new artistic culture of its own. Because of this vacuum, various factions competed for setting policy during the first two years of the regime. Alfred Rosenberg and his 'Combat League for German Culture,' which during the last years of the Weimar Republic had acted as the Party's cultural arm, were nonetheless bypassed in this competition, not only for their lack of substance, but because the regime, through the office of Propaganda Minister Goebbels, preferred to pursue an art policy of professional support without ideological impediments. Architect Eugen Hönig, the first president of the Reich Chamber of Art, was a member of the Combat League, but once in office did nothing to enforce the vindictive doctrines the League had pushed during the Weimar years. Only in 1936, when no satisfactory work had been forthcoming from the Chamber, was he replaced by Adolf Ziegler, the punitive enforcer of the Degenerate Art campaign.

/ 2.3.2 **ALABIAN'S TENUOUS LEADERSHIP**

When in 1934 Karo Alabian became chairman of the Moscow Architects Union, he unsuccessfully challenged the officially sanctioned independence of individual architects' studios, demanding a change to "socialist forms of labor."⁽¹³⁴⁾ Henceforth he relied on the supervisory authority of Politburo Member Lazar Kaganovich for control of the Union's internal power structure. Within the Union of Architects of the USSR, founded in July 1932 in the wake of the April Decree, Alabian found himself once again

struggling against the architects' bureaus led by better-known, established architects, who balked at his mission of imposing 'Socialist Realism in Architecture' as a uniform style. Stylistic diversity was the hallmark of those studios in their competition for commissions. Already in the Union's foundational meeting, modern architect Ivan Leonidov defied the demand that "there must be no functional groups which emphasize different tendencies and different directions in architecture" with the claim "We will not live with a single theory."⁽¹³⁵⁾ This antagonism persisted ever since, although it overlapped with that between traditional and modern styles.

As head of the Moscow architects' union, Alabian attempted to enlist Kaganovich's authority in his relentless drive to make socialist realism an obligatory architectural style. In April 1935, he saw to it that Mikhail Okhitovich, an architect who publicly questioned this policy, was first expelled and then handed over to the NKVD, where he perished in a concentration camp (see above, Chapter 2.2/2.2.3). It did not help Alabian's political clout that, in a secret letter of September 15, 1935, to Kaganovich, he had to complain about the dogged resistance of leading Moscow studio heads—he named Shchusev, Fridman, Kriukov, and Melnikov—against arriving at an agreement about committing themselves to a binding definition of style because they kept insisting on their independent standing. Finally, on February 20, 1936, the Party had to back him up with a *Pravda* article entitled "Cacophony in Architecture," "calling on architects once and for all to overcome formalistic hypocrisy, unprincipled eclecticism, and vulgar simplification in their work." Alabian immediately ordered this article to be discussed at architectural gatherings throughout the Soviet Union.

The First All-Union Congress of 1937, which elected Alabian to the presidency, was the result of year-long bitter internal confrontations, in which Alabian demanded the intervention of Moscow Party leader Nikita Khrushchev and Mossoviet chairman Nikolai Bulganin. However, these politicians preferred to let the embattled artist-official sort out the political problems of his profession on his own. When the Congress opened on June 16, 1937, in an atmosphere of political enthusiasm, it was dominated by Kaganovich, who extolled the Party's intervention under the catchword of Stalin's leadership, and the conformist response as a deferment to the wishes of the Soviet people. Still, Alabian declared in his speech the elimination of architectural diversity a task of anti-sabotage vigilance. The Congress marked the apogee of Party control of architects' professional self-management, something that the independent Artists' Union under Aleksandr Gerasimov had managed to avoid. Lacking the organizational counterweight of the collective studio system, artists could internalize political supervision by their own Party 'cell,' and make it effective through direct cooperation with the NKVD.

/ 2.3.3 ZIEGLER AND HIS COHORT

In 1936, Adolf Ziegler wrote to a correspondent that he had painted his notorious triptych *The Four Elements* in the Berlin Reich Chancellery under Hitler's eyes. On a later visit to his Munich atelier, Ziegler added, Hitler had called the painting "a model for his buildings"⁽¹³⁶⁾ and ordered it to be kept under wraps until the First Great German Art Exhibition, where it was to be shown as such. The triptych's paradigmatic significance was confirmed when it was copied on a larger scale in a woven tapestry, to be prominently displayed in the entrance hall of the German Pavilion of the Paris World Exposition next to a model of Ludwig Troost's 'House of German Art,' where the Great German Art Exhibition had been on view, as if the painting and the building had a similar standing. One year later Ziegler literally illustrated Hitler's culture speech at the 1935 Party rally where Hitler exalted the construction start of the 'House of German Art' on October 15, 1933 as the "foundation for this new temple in honor of the gods of art."⁽¹³⁷⁾ His new painting, titled *The Goddess of Art*, shows a nude female figure wielding a disciplinary staff over two adolescent students at her feet.

However, under Ziegler's chairmanship, the Reich Chamber of Art fell short of providing any formal guidance, as recurrent complaints by artists, picked up by the SS Security Service, go to show. And despite his post, Ziegler never received any important commissions. His sparse submissions to the later venues of the Great German Art Exhibitions—mostly nudes—were undistinguished. All the more decisive were Ziegler's zealous efforts in the breakneck organization of the 'Degenerate Art' show, where he overruled some tentative attempts at sparing members of the Reich Chamber of Art, and personally directed one of the trucks making the rounds of state museums to confiscate works of modern art over the objections of their directors. As late as April 23, 1941, Ziegler still issued a decree announcing his resolve to "mercilessly proceed against anyone who produces works of degenerate art," enjoining members to report such works to the Chamber.⁽¹³⁸⁾ The decree amounts to an admission that the suppression of modern art in Germany had still not quite succeeded.

It is under Ziegler's authority that two rabidly National-Socialist hack artists—Wolfgang Willrich and Walter Hansen—were given wide-ranging powers, reportedly by Hitler himself, to implement the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition project. Both knew they needed such higher authorization in order to override the jurisdictions of the Prussian Ministry of Culture and the corporative interests of the Reich Chamber of Art. Willrich had been a member of the 'German Artists League Dresden' (*Deutscher Künstlerverband Dresden*) since 1927 without attaining any recognition outside National Socialist Party culture. Since 1933, and even more throughout the war, he specialized in portrait drawings of Nazi dignitaries, decorated soldiers and idealized anonymous youths for reproduction in posters and postcards. Willrich's and Hansen's

credentials were limited to having written anti-modern tracts. Willrich's widely read *Cleansing of the Art Temple* (*Säuberung des Kunsttempels*) of 1937 served as a blueprint for the Degenerate Art exhibition program. While he placed a few works in the Great German Art Exhibitions of 1937-1941, Hansen never managed to be noticed. Put in charge of an 'Archive for Degenerate Art' at the National Gallery in Berlin, he ended up as a bureaucrat.

/ 3 **DEFERRING TO DEMOCRACY**

/ 3.1 **ARTISTS IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT**

/ 3.1.1 **THE PRECEDENTS OF DAVID AND COURBET**

The foremost French example of an artist who became a politician from the start had been Jacques-Louis David. What led to his downfall under the restored Bourbon monarchy had not been his activity as a court painter to Napoleon, but his powerful position during the Revolution of 1789 as a leading member, and for a time even chairman, of the Jacobin party. As a member of the Public Security Committee of the Convent in charge of supervising the conduct of the political police, David had been responsible for executions, imprisonments, releases, and political surveillance—for everything, in short, that constitutes the apparatus of government oppression. Under the Directorate, he was imprisoned twice for this activity. In 1815, when Napoleon was sent into permanent exile, David had to emigrate as well, but not because of his service to the Emperor, but because he was one of the former deputies who had voted for Louis XVI's execution. In 1829, he died in Belgian exile, still a successful artist of European renown, but now limited to allegorical themes in a neo-classical style.

The second outstanding example of a French artist in elective office who became politically active at his peril and ended up in permanent exile was Gustave Courbet. After the proclamation of the Third Republic on September 4, 1870, he was appointed president of both the museum administration and of a short-lived Artists' Federation. On April 16, 1871, he was even elected to the Council of the Commune. It was in this capacity that Courbet was implicated in the demolition of the Vendôme Column, although his vote to move it elsewhere had been overruled. Shortly afterwards, he resigned from the Council in protest against the execution of a former city official who had ordered troops to fire into the crowd. He still got caught up in the suppression of the Commune, spending time in prison and losing his possessions. Worse still, two years into the Third Republic, Courbet was held personally responsible for the demolition and charged with the rebuilding costs. He escaped to Switzerland, where he spent the rest of his life, never to return to France. Just as in the case of David, his revolutionary activism as a celebrated artist cost him a successful conclusion of his career.

These two notorious stories of artists who became politicians at their peril may or may not have been contributing precedents for the absence of artist-politicians throughout the Third Republic. For all their influence within the institutional network of the Fine Arts administration, artists held not a single government post with a say in the formulation or enactment of art policy. The Weimar Republic, too, which prided itself on having shed the shackles of imperial art policy, never drew artists into the government, ignoring far-reaching political demands advanced by would-be revolutionary artists' groups during its first three years. Although it had no national art administration, its federal and regional culture ministries merely admitted artists as consultants. It is one of the characteristics of democratic art policy in France and Germany that artists held no political office, not even under the Popular Front in France, because democratic governments were averse to the principled politicization of the arts under the totalitarian regimes of the USSR and Italy. No matter how zealously artists might engage themselves politically, they never attained political responsibility.

/ 3.1.2 **FRANCE**

In the Third Republic, government art institutions, art commissions, and artistic endeavors were controlled by politicians and, more directly, by political officials. Their principle of equitable support for artistic diversity would not have allowed for the leadership of any one artist. No political party favored any style. In this respect, even the communist Maison de la Culture was pluralist. The Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, the consultative body of the Fine Arts Administration, with its multiple ad-hoc subcommittees, was the venue for artists to have a voice, but only as representatives of registered professional associations or by co-opting some individuals in recognition of their reputation. Such artists could advise, or vote, but not decide. The Conseil was intended to balance corporative and political approaches to the arts. Under its panoply of boards and commissions, it assembled the full social range of artistic culture: administrators, artists, curators, critics, art historians, dealers, and even so-called 'art lovers,' all of them with a stake in the ideological core values of a French national culture.

Throughout the Depression, persistent efforts of the French modern art scene to enlarge its foothold in state-administered artistic culture made for a steady stream of controversy or compromise. After having lost their basis in the private market, 'independent' artists belatedly reclaimed what they considered to be their share in an equitable political distribution system. Yet, even the self-proclaimed politicization of the arts under the Popular Front government of France was overseen, and contained, not by an artist but a writer: Jean Cassou, assistant for Fine Arts in the Education Ministry. Though an ardent admirer of modern art, he went no further than incrementally increasing its share of representation and patronage, restoring republican equity.

With its professed ideal of coalition democracy, the Popular Front promised to replace the traditional republican policy of equal treatment based on professional recognition with one of activist participation in political culture. It attempted to re-calibrate the balance between traditional and modern art in order to promote the latter, honoring its ideological affinity with the Left.

The various mass organizations of artists and writers through which this political mobilization took effect were all directly or indirectly connected to the organizations of leftist parties and trade unions, on which they often depended for their locales, funding, and publicity. In this regard, the politicization of art took a structural form not unlike that of the totalitarian states. Major unions in France entertained art clubs or workshops run by artists of leftist persuasion. By joining up with the working-class, modern artists in particular pursued long-standing ambitions to prove the social bearing of their work beyond the elite culture of their clientele. In both France and Spain, artists' associations actually took the form of labor unions, adopting their rhetoric of class struggle. Upon the accession of Popular Front governments in July 1936 in France and Spain, such union-like artists' associations forged administrative links with government agencies. Such transitions from union to government were more straightforward in Spain than in France, since in Spain the government took a lead in setting the political goals for artists' contributions to the war propaganda.

/ 3.1.3 **SPAIN**

By contrast to the exclusion of artists from office in France, the Second Republic of Spain, founded in 1931, saw the steady rise of an artist, Josep Renau, to the highest political authority over the arts, culminating in his double appointment to the offices of Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education and Director of Fine Arts with nationwide responsibility for all aspects of art policy. The difference was due to the inclusion of the Communist Party in all three successive governments of the Popular Front, in the first two of which the Minister of Education, José Hernández, was a Communist. As a result, the Communist Party's forceful cultural activity since the inception of the Republic translated into government in terms of policy and personnel. And since Communist-inspired cultural organizations, artists' groups, journals, and other ventures were under less strict direction by the Party, and hence by the Comintern, than they were in France, it was possible for an artist of high talent, public success, and political will to rise to a leadership position reminiscent of modern artists' influence in the early Bolshevik government.

Unlike the quick allegiance of those Bolshevik artists, Renau's Communism was a matter of long-term conviction rather than professional expediency. Right from the start of the Second Republic, he had turned from anarchism to communism, and devoted much of his activity to organizational endeavors with both ideological

consistency and responsiveness to political change. In 1932, Renau led the founding of the 'Union of Proletarian Writers and Artists' (*Unión de Escritores y Artistas Proletarios*) in Valencia, later succeeded by the 'Union of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' (*Unión de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios*). Both were affiliated with the AEAR in Paris, but only loosely connected with similar groups organized in Madrid and Barcelona in 1933 under the same acronym. It was again on Renau's initiative that in 1935 the communist-directed journal *Nueva Cultura* was founded. Here many of those regional groups found a nationwide forum to hammer out ideological premises for an activist art policy. As its editor, Renau published an electoral manifesto in support of the Popular Front in 1936. This made him first choice to join the incoming government.

From his double post, Renau took charge of most aspects of art policy, from poster production for the war effort to the evacuation of art treasures from war zones, and on to the setup of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. Prolific poster production required an ideologically sensitive supervision of numerous artist organizations with diverse political agendas. The high point of Renau's achievement as an artist-politician came when he was charged with illustrating the "Thirteen Points," issued on May 1, 1938, as a summary of Prime Minister Juan Negrín's second government, in a series of thirteen large, poster-like panels to be shown at the New York World Fair of 1939. The commission confirmed him as the Republic's leading artist in the literal sense of the term. Due to Negrín's reshuffling of his government in April 1938, Renau had just been moved from the Education Ministry to the post of Director of Graphic Propaganda in the newly-formed Army Commissariat, headed by his former superior as education minister, Jesús Hernández. Now art policy and war policy were meshed under an artist-politician whose authority was unrivalled by any artist in a totalitarian state.

/ 3.2 **POPULAR FRONT DEMOCRACY**

/ 3.2.1 **ALLEGIANCE AND OPPORTUNITY**

It was in 1933, when the Depression belatedly started to affect the French economy, that numerous artists rallied under the tutelage of the Communist Party, because it was the only party that pursued an activist policy of meeting their economic emergency with tailor-made assistance programs like the state support programs for the rising numbers of unemployed workers in general. The spontaneous mass politicization of artists following from this initiative was a democratic counterpart to the state-enforced political organization pursued concurrently in the three totalitarian states—in Italy and Germany aimed first and foremost at their professional betterment, in the Soviet Union connected to the task of promoting the propagandistic purpose of

the arts. Unlike those measures imposed from above, the quest for public assistance originated from below as a mass movement of political pressure against conservative governments. Thus, in December 1933, several artists' groups joined the Union of Unemployed Committees of the Paris region to obtain special funds for artists' support, in an ostensible show of unity with the workers.

While totalitarian artists' organizations adapted the model of conservative guild traditions for a semblance of professional autonomy, the newly-formed artists' groups of the Popular Front emulated organizational structures of leftist parties or labor unions. For a political impact, they voiced their views with the rhetoric of class struggle and revolution. Just as similar writers' groups, they depended on parties and labor unions for their funding, publicity, and meeting places, and were assisted by party officials. Major unions supported art clubs or workshops run by artists of leftist persuasion. Such a cooperation promised to fulfill long-standing aspirations at social, if not political, engagement on the part of artists. The foremost example of such a politicization was the AEAR, founded in 1932 with communist support. It became the foremost rallying point for artists of the Popular Front movement. Its activities prepared the ground for the foundation of the Maison de la Culture, which became its base of operations. From now on, union democracy gave way to Party guidance as its form of operation.

The highpoint of political mass activism by artists on the left came in response to the right-wing riots of February 6-7, 1934, which led to the foundation of the 'Watch Committee of Anti-fascist Intellectuals' (*Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Anti-fascistes*, CVIA) on March 5. Focused on the defense of the Republic, it gave an unexpected boost to the Comintern's policy change from revolution to anti-fascism. Three days after the riots, a "Call to the Struggle" uniting all factions was issued by left-leaning intellectuals and artists, including André Breton and several of his surrealists. With membership skyrocketing from 2,000 in May to 4,000 in July 1934, and to 8,500 by October 1935, the CVIA became the foremost pro-democracy force ever mounted by artists during the Depression. On May 30, 1934, Paul Signac, one of the leading organizers, in a speech entitled "Message to the Artists," specified the democratic mission of artists in the association, founded on communist premises such as the union of manual and intellectual workers, the necessity to address their work to the proletariat, and the strategy of making it into a "weapon" in the anti-fascist struggle.

/ 3.2.2 **FROM MOVEMENT TO GOVERNMENT**

The culture of demonstrations, parades, and festivals sponsored by the Popular Front during the two years antedating its ascendancy to government, enacted modern artists' ambition of transcending their professional realm toward a performative

propaganda that would feed into the political process, of mobilizing their art to contribute to an electoral campaign. These artists took their cue from the demonstrations of the workers' movement, of trade unions and leftist parties, but their ultimate paradigms reached all the way back to the performative culture of the French Revolution and, more recently, to the 'Street Art' sponsored by the Party in the Soviet Union. Their functional purpose limited their artistic scope. Perhaps the most dramatic achievement of this kind of art was the wide-ranging decoration of Madrid with multicolored banners and posters during the nationalist siege in the fall of 1936, in which most of the prominent artists associated with the government took part. Covering the surfaces of a city damaged by aerial bombardments, it made propaganda warfare part of a defensive people's war.

When in the summer of 1936 Popular Front governments were formed in France and Spain, they maintained administrative links with such political artists' groups, since these had supported their electoral campaigns. They encouraged them to pursue their habit of public debates, even though they remained circumspect in meeting their expectations of working with them. The transition from political engagement to artistic cooperation was more straightforward in Spain than in France, because the Spanish government possessed the authority of setting the tasks for artists to contribute to the war effort. This was the foremost issue of political culture, where revolutionary prospects and defensive objectives needed to be compaginated as propaganda themes. In France, by contrast, the new government, relying on long-established institutional structures of art administration, kept the politicized artists' organizations at arm's length, even though its officials professed to sympathize with them. The 'Maison de la Culture,' under Communist Party direction and free of government responsibility, remained the center of artists' political engagement.

The expectations of left-leaning artists to be called upon for an art of the Popular Front were more readily fulfilled in Spain than they were in France, because only in the former was the art administration re-constituted under the authority of an artist-politician, whereas in the latter it was perpetuated with little changes from pre-Popular Front times under the direction of a non-artist career official. It is for this reason that only in Spain a fully-fledged art to suit Popular Front policies could be developed, reaching from artistically ennobled poster production to ideologically informed painting, graphic art, and even sculpture. It peaked in the art show of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo, for which the art administration assembled artists in government ateliers to work by instruction. Accordingly, the vociferous 'realism debates' organized under both governments differed in their relevance for artistic practice. While in Spain they were animated by artists working for the government and influenced its art programs, in France they were contentious competitions for acceptance by the government, affecting art policy only marginally, if at all.

/ 3.2.3 **AN ARTIST LEFT BEHIND**

The quasi-official upturn that modern art enjoyed in France and Spain during the Popular Front governments seemed to vindicate the confluence of allegiance and opportunity that had brought modern artists to the Popular Front movement when it started in 1935. It culminated in the participation of Picasso and Matisse, the leading masters of modern art, as figureheads of its artistic culture. Ranging from the overt endorsement of Picasso, who expressed his allegiance to both governments for all to see in his 4th-of-July curtain and his *Guernica* painting, to the tacit adherence of Matisse, whose works and pronouncements revealed nothing of his adherence, cooperation took many actions, forms and themes, and varied in intensity, especially in France, where the conditions for inclusion were uncertain. One painter in particular would have seemed ideally positioned to act on his often-stated conviction that modern art and Communism were made for one another. In 1935, at the height of the Popular Front movement, he explained their convergence in a lengthy treatise entitled *Confessions of a Revolutionary Artist*, which remained unpublished.

This painter was Otto Freundlich, a German who had lived and worked in Paris since 1926, where he first chaired the 'Collective of German Artists' (*Kollektiv deutscher Künstler*, KDK), an exile artists' group of leftist orientation founded in 1935. Since the final year of World War I, he had aligned his art with Communism without, however, joining the Communist Party when it was founded in 1919. Without referring to any tenet of Communist cultural policy, Freundlich struck his own equation between non-figurative art and a utopian collectivism he perceived as the destiny of communist society under the catchword 'cosmic communism.' As a member of the 'Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists' since 1933, he belonged to the supporters of the Popular Front. In 1937, the illustration of his plaster head *The New Man* on the cover of the guide for the Berlin venue of the Degenerate Art Show (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.1.3), made this work into an icon of the National Socialist victimization of modern art. It became a negative fanal for the culture of anti-fascist struggle envisioned by the Popular Front, although Freundlich had declared himself a revolutionary rather than an anti-fascist artist.

Nevertheless, in June 1938, when the Popular Front government was still in office, Freundlich was so destitute that friends, colleagues, and collectors launched a subscription for the purchase of one of the works in a current one-man show of his, to be donated to the Jeu de Paume. Arts official Jean Cassou and a galaxy of Popular Front-sponsored modern artists, from Picasso on down, were amongst the signatories. What is more, the show was inaugurated by no less than Fine Arts Director Georges Huisman and Jeu de Paume Director André Dézarrois, none of whom had done anything for Freundlich in their official capacities, neither through the purchase of a single

work nor through any of the commissions that the Popular Front government had lavished on modern artists for the Paris Expo the year before. Why did a modern artist of high quality and communist convictions end up like this? The subscription text makes no mention of Freundlich's politics but underscores the prominence of *New Man* in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition. Had it deterred the political authorities from publicly supporting an artist who might compromise the cultural rapprochement with Germany they were pursuing at the time?

/ 3.3 **POLITICAL OVEREXTENSION**

/ 3.3.1 **LE CORBUSIER'S QUEST FOR 'AUTHORITY'**

Le Corbusier's unsuccessful career as a public architect in the Third Republic goes to show how an artist whose radical projects implied a claim to social leadership that lacked institutional or political backing was put in his place by the Beaux-Arts system with its primacy of politicians and political officials and its sensitivity to professional organizations as political pressure groups. This was the lesson for Le Corbusier to learn after the private patronage for his villas during the preceding decade had dried up, prompting him to seek out public architectural commissions based on his long-standing, if hypothetical, concern for public housing. He was ready to apply the technical and aesthetic principles of functionalist modernization he had developed for those villas to this task. In the absence of official or at least political support, Le Corbusier, more than any other architect in France, sought to associate himself with various political movements from Syndicalism to the Popular Front. His code word for political support—"authority"—was ideologically neutral. It merely denoted the authorization of the architect to shape social reality as he saw fit.

Le Corbusier's various city plans, starting in 1925 with his 'Plan Voisin' and culminating in his various projections of a 'Ville radieuse,' were informed by Syndicalist ideas. Beyond technicalities, they were proposals for social reform, a habitual posture to take for modern architects concerned with urbanism, yet in his case without any perspective on political acceptance. Le Corbusier's resolve to do away with much of the historical architecture of Paris struck an imaginary posture, far more radical than that of Baron Haussmann under the Second Empire and his own contemporary Albert Speer in Germany, but, unlike them, without political appointment. No French politician or official could have taken his proposals seriously. Le Corbusier's high public profile was to compensate his lack of prominence in any of the French architects' or artists' organizations, which might have netted him sufficient recognition in the Beaux-Arts system to be charged with official projects. On the contrary, his prominence in the international CIAM jarred with the official preference for traditional architecture.

It was at the Paris Expo that the failure of Le Corbusier's political self-entitlement came back to hound him (see Chapter 2.3/2.3.3). Already in the initial competition, opened on March 1, 1932, he proposed an alternative concept for the overall choice and urbanist organization of the site, including an alternative title to the projected show, which he wanted to devote exclusively to urbanism and housing.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Two years later, his submission to the competition for the Musée d'art moderne was so summarily dismissed, already in the first selection, that Le Corbusier published an anti-establishment outcry about it in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*. In the following year, lacking funds sunk another of his museum projects, the 'Center of Contemporary Aesthetics.' When at last a contribution to the Paris Expo materialized for him, it was a minimal, temporary exhibition structure on the outskirts of the show, the 'Pavilion of New Times.' Le Corbusier used it as a panorama for advertising the social and political underpinnings of his architectural philosophy, largely in accord with that of the CIAM, but calling the bluff on the Popular Front's ambitious housing schemes.

/ 3.3.2 BRETON'S STRUGGLE WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Like numerous artists in democratic Germany and France, the Surrealists attached their revolutionary ambitions to the Communist Party, but they were the only ones who dramatized a public break with it on the grounds of artistic self-determination. They were not ready to compromise their axiomatic refusal of any social constraint for a transition from social dissent to political activity. In the Second Surrealist Manifesto of 1930, the year the surrealist journal *La Révolution Surréaliste* was retitled *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, Breton quotes the remark of party leader Michel Marty: "If you are a Marxist, you don't need to be a surrealist."⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ During the following five years, he had to own up to the failure of his efforts to associate his group with Communist politics. The formal break of the Surrealists with the Communist Party was ratified in the wake of the Congress for the Defense of Culture in June 1935, the foremost cultural manifestation of the Popular Front. The strategy for an anti-fascist struggle promoted at the Congress canceled the equation between artistic nonconformity and political revolution which the Surrealists deemed non-negotiable.

Breton's speech to the Congress—read for him by Paul Éluard late at night in an almost empty hall—, dealt only with world politics and not at all with art. Here he called the tactical alliance between France and the Soviet Union in their common strategic confrontation with Germany a betrayal of the idea of revolution, which, he maintained, would follow from of a coming war. Domestically, the ensuing participation of the Communists in the Popular Front coalition movement recalled to him the *Union Sacrée* proclaimed at the start of World War I, which had broken the international unity of working-class parties in their pacifist resolve, and of the international community of writers and artists in their pursuit of modernism.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ The beginning and the end

of Breton's belief in a Communist world revolution inspired by the Soviet Union was marked by the Surrealists' cable to the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature in Moscow of July 1930,⁽¹⁴²⁾ pledging to abide by orders from Moscow in the case of an imperialist attack, and his pamphlet *Neither Your War nor Your Peace* of September 27, 1938⁽¹⁴³⁾, which reneged on any such commitment.

The promise of tactical subordination in the earlier cable had been limited to a case of war. For the duration of peace, the Surrealists reserved themselves the right to serve Communism by their "own particular means." In the 1938 pamphlet, Breton reneged upon such a distinction. Less than one year later, the collusion between Germany and the USSR in starting World War II would relieve him of the choice. In his even-handed rejection of democracy and bolshevism, he was drawing the consequences from the orthodox Marxist assessment—shared by both Molotov and Trotsky over and above their mutual enmity—that capitalist society stood ready to adopt fascist politics because democratic forms of government could no longer contain its crisis.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ With his charge of a "scandalous complicity of the Second and Third Internationals," aimed at both parties of the Popular Front, Breton dismissed all extant forces of the Left in Western Europe. The political disorientation of artistic freedom returned full circle to political disengagement, to an ideological validation of *l'art pour l'art* as a case of political conscience.

/ 3.3.3 **RECOIL TO ANARCHISM**

In the wider context of French political culture, the surrealist artists, with their fundamentalist group identity of perpetual provocation, ended up severing freedom of speech from its foundation in democratic politics for the sake of anarchist protest. They could afford to take extreme positions on any topic of the day, because they had forgone the will to sway public opinion. It was during the decade of the Depression that the most intransigent surrealist writers and artists, led by Breton, turned from communism to an undeclared anarchism, a reversal of the opposite move during the first decade after World War I. Their alienation from the Communist Party, to which they had so ardently adhered, came to a head in the showdown of 1935. One year later, rejecting both conservative and Popular Front governments, and in defiance of the Comintern's parliamentary coalition strategy, they called for a violent takeover of power in the abstract, since there was no one to enact it. Un beholden to the working-class or any other revolutionary movement, they fancied themselves as a "fighting union of revolutionary intellectuals"⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ on their own.

In his speech of June 25, 1935, to the Paris Congress for the Defense of Culture, Breton denounced the recently concluded alliance between France and the Soviet Union in their common confrontation with Germany as a betrayal of the revolution, which he thought would follow from an imminent war. While others anticipated

war as a catastrophe, he welcomed it as an opportunity. The mutual reinforcement of radicalization and disengagement impelled Surrealist artists to oppose communism, 'fascism' and democracy in all but equal measure. In the three years between the Paris Congress and the defeat of the Spanish Republic, Breton, shunning any tactical accommodation, held on to his intransigence despite internal conflicts and defections. For all his hypothetical projections, his posture was grounded in one of the most acute assessments of ongoing world politics by any artist during the Depression. Never hesitant to denounce the aberrations of short-term political expediency, Breton personified the artist's leave-taking from political practice, an ideological self-entitlement as the solitary conscience of the age.

While the Surrealists' political judgments, spelled out in their manifestoes and public declarations, were keen responses to the vacillating politics of defiance and appeasement pursued by the ostensibly principled governments of the Popular Front, let alone their conservative successors, the art they produced and exhibited after 1935 lacked any discernible political message. Unfazed, Breton was heartened by the simultaneity of the successful International Surrealist Exhibition, held in London from June 16 to July 4, 1936, with massive strikes in France, as if it signaled a political validation of the show by the strikes. However, the Surrealists' subsequent international exhibition, held in Paris in January 1938, was staged as a high-society event. With such an unabashed dichotomy between political posturing and provocative but recondite aesthetics, the Surrealists took leave from the art politics of Third Republic. For all their publicity, they opted out of the long-term convergence between artistic culture and the public sphere to which they had owed their rise to ideological prominence during the first decade after World War I.



3/ Artists

3.1/ Political Activity p. 224

3.2/ Political Oppression p. 258

3.3/ Political Resistance p. 292

3.2/ Political Oppression

/1 THE TOTALITARIAN OPPRESSION OF MODERN ART

/1.1 THE DISCRIMINATION OF MODERN ART

/1.1.1 STRUCTURAL ANTAGONISM

During the decade of the Depression, the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism made the political oppression of artists and its repercussions and consequences into a crucial issue throughout Europe. While the term oppression denotes a mere curtailment of artistic practice, the term suppression denotes political measures of outright interdiction. The issue was confined to the oppression of modern art by totalitarian regimes but played out differently under each of the three by comparison to the preceding decade. In Italy, modern art was accepted to some degree during both periods, in the Soviet Union, it was accepted in the first but rejected in the second, and in Germany, it was rejected in both, with the difference that in the first, the National Socialist Party was not yet in power. Oppression is to be distinguished from the mere rejection of modern art for sponsorship by these regimes, which they were entitled to just like any patron would have been. It pertains to the expansion of the underlying arguments into cultural norms as part of the political regulation of society. In Italy, this never occurred, in the Soviet Union, it remained under debate, and in Germany it was enforced.

These differences relate to the alternative between individualism and modernization, the two contradictory impulses that drove the social history of modern art in general. Since all three totalitarian regimes subscribed to economic and social modernization, modern artists at first offered them their work on the assumption that it would suit their cultural policies as well. Given its social origins in a culturally dissident middle-class milieu, modern art had been always controversial. But it was only when the totalitarian regimes incorporated the rejection of modern art into their cultural ideologies and government policies, that the class-based conflict became politicized, not only in their states, but internationally as well. All three regimes regarded 'modern' individualism as incompatible with their collective ideologies of social cohesion. They deemed the cultural dissent from social norms, inherent in the history of modern art, morally irresponsible or even politically subversive, regardless of the conduct and convictions of individual artists, and despite such artists' efforts at conformity.

In both Italy and the Soviet Union, processes of clarification about the suitability of modern art for the cultural policies of their regimes were drawn out throughout the first four years of the Depression, a time when Germany was still a democracy and the National Socialist condemnation of modern art was just a negative campaign issue without alternative policy options. As a result, modern artists were permitted to accommodate their work to Fascist and Soviet requirements, while Hitler's new government merely abided by the condemnation of modern art from its electoral campaigns. During the following four years, his government failed to come up with a compelling art policy of its own, and it made the condemnation of modern art into a punitive principle. By 1937, an exceedingly aggressive enactment of the anti-modern disposition transcended art policy to become a component of the increased anti-Bolshevik propaganda in preparation of the planned attack on the Soviet Union. The Soviet government had to refrain from responding in kind, because it could not very well tie modern art to the National Socialist adversary.

/1.1.2 **PREFERENCE FOR TRADITIONAL ARTISTS**

Throughout the decade, all three totalitarian regimes relied on well-established traditional artists with little express allegiance to their ideologies for the realization of their art projects. Wary of their ideologically over-eager modern competitors, they did not need to subject them to tests of ideological conformity. Theirs was a natural choice. For traditional artists to make the necessary changes in their long-accomplished art to suit totalitarian requirements was a matter of adjustment rather than of loyalty. They had no professional ethos that would have required them to make their work be true to their own political convictions. It was the client to whose political preferences they had long learned to tailor-make their work. For totalitarian regimes, traditional art ensured an easy comprehensibility of themes and a straightforward enhancement of expression. It could be developed into a stylistic doctrine, as in Socialist Realism, modified by a consensus of conformity, as in the 'imperial' style of Fascist Italy, or left to individual artists to adapt on their own with variable success, as in Germany's unregulated art production.

In their uphill contest against this natural preference, modern artists could not afford the professional reserve of their traditional colleagues, all the less so since many of them had been publicly touting their principled nonconformity before. Now they were being watched not only with a prejudice of taste, but also with a suspicion of dissent. Bidding for work now required an emphatic profession of political conformity. In the Soviet Union and in Fascist Italy, modern artists had long been marginalized by way of competitions, debates, and publications of organized artistic culture. In Germany, the latecomer to the totalitarian trio, the Reich Chamber of Art was established to exclude them from the start. This abrupt turnabout made the ensuing vituperation a venomous

scare rather than a mere rejection. Because they were under constant obligation to prove their conformity, modern artists' bids for work, if they were permitted to participate in the venues of totalitarian competitions, could assume assiduous extremes of ideological self-recommendation. Accustomed to position themselves as an alternative to traditional art, they were now reduced to claiming a minoritarian niche beside it.

In the Soviet Union and in Germany, traditional artists, who had suffered neglect in the preceding decade, now enjoyed comebacks to belated prominence. For modern artists, the most promising way to acceptance seemed to be to rival their thematic clarity and propagandistic exaggeration on their own terms. Inevitably, this mixture of persistence and expediency brought about their failure. Espousing self-recommendation or reserve, but rarely by casting their art as a political practice, most artists, traditional or modern, attempted to adjust their styles to the perceived ideological preferences of their regimes. For the former, such a professional strategy did not necessarily touch upon their own convictions. The latter, by contrast, had to forego their previous claims to self-expression. In Italy and the Soviet Union, some modern artists even went as far as relapsing into traditional art, or at least assimilating their art to traditional legibility. In Germany, on the other hand, such changes of sides were looked at with suspicion. In one of his speeches, Hitler railed against what he regarded as turncoat artists compromised by their 'degenerate' past.

/1.1.3 MODERN ARTISTS' BID FOR ACCEPTANCE

Just as their traditionalist colleagues, modern artists did not hesitate to pronounce themselves in favor of totalitarian regimes, most assiduously in the Soviet Union and in Italy, where political conformity had long been an asset in the competition for official commissions and acquisitions. In Germany, on the other hand, their professions of allegiance sounded like apologies in the face of stern rejection. Modern artists hoping to work for totalitarian regimes stood ready to forego the expressive individualism inherent in their accustomed artistic culture, which was at variance with the totalitarian quest for social cohesion and political conformity. They stressed the alignment of modern art with functionalist architecture and industrial technology developed during the preceding decade. Eventually, however, despite their ostensible allegiance, or their assumption that their art was aloof from politics and hence safe from political objections, they found out that the political culture had become averse to the art they were practicing, and that their individual convictions did not matter. The only choices left to them were adaptation or retreat.

In Italy, the alignment of modern art with modernization proved to be the platform for being embraced by the Fascist regime. In the vociferous process of their ideological self-alignment, modern artists renounced the destructive ideals associated with their dissident posture towards the culture of the liberal upper middle-class which

had originally brought them to the Fascist movement. In the USSR, modern artists who had formed the leadership of art policy during the first three or four years of the regime, were gradually but implacably dislodged during the latter part of the twenties. Beginning in 1929, they attempted a come-back on a platform of modernization which, unlike that in Italy, entailed adjusting their styles with an expressive inclusion of realist imagery. In Germany, finally, where democratic governments had espoused modern art to a considerable degree, the National Socialist Party stridently attacked it during its struggle for power. After the Party's ascendancy to government, for two years some modern artists vainly attempted to retain a modicum of acceptance by stressing nationalism rather than modernization to prove their ideological affinity.

Nowhere was political oppression of modern art schematically applied across the board. Depending on the appraisal of their individual situation, modern artists who ran afoul of their regime's arts policy might adjust their practice, remove themselves from public visibility to the point of working in hiding, or, as a last resort, leave the country to work abroad. In Italy and the Soviet Union, numerous modern artists went far on the first strategy. Since many of them had long subscribed to Fascism or Communism they had little difficulty in trying to heed the changes of official preferences. While for Italian artists, the path to realism and classicism presented no obstacles, their Soviet colleagues faced arduous scrutiny for abiding by Socialist Realism. Germany was the sole totalitarian state where modern artists stood no chance of official approval or at least of operating on an open market. As if in mirror reverse, only here did they muster the will to fashion what amounts to an artistic counterculture, small, to be sure, and supported, if at all, by a clandestine clientele. Once in exile, it was hard for them to coalesce into a similar counterculture.

/1.2 **POLITICAL ECONOMY**

/1.2.1 **POLITICAL SUPPORT AND POLITICAL CONTROL**

When the Depression increased the reliance of artistic culture on state support, and therefore its exposure to state interference, artists were drawn into political cultures racked by ever more acerbic ideological controversies. Faced with totalitarian enforcement or democratic strife, they were obliged to take position on the political preconditions of the support they sought. Such an encroachment of political upon artistic culture was the culmination of the gradual convergence of artistic culture and the public sphere that had been long in coming. It tempted artists to foreground their ideological convictions as part of their professional standing, or, conversely, to compromise them by tailoring their work to political preferences they did not share. The dynamics of the muffled conflict between democracy and totalitarianism made the political oppression of modern artists and its repercussions into a crucial issue throughout Europe.

Only totalitarian regimes subjected artist to political oppression. Unlike the mere political guidance of government or party purchases and commissions, it meant censoring the art on the private market, that is, an ideological market regulation, part of the totalitarian regulation, or politicization, of society in general. Artistic controversies were magnified and distorted into conflicts of political morality. Such an ideological streamlining of artistic cultures was not attempted or accomplished by setting guidelines from on high, but by a vociferous environment of partly internal, partly public pronouncements and debates. All issues of artistic culture were narrowed down to reaching an understanding about how best to fulfill the expectations of totalitarian regimes. In the process, modern art was not just rejected as unsuitable for official acceptance but linked to social attitudes adverse to the social order promoted or enforced by governments. Its rejection was promulgated far beyond artistic culture for purposes of social and political propaganda. It served as a negative foil for ideological uniformity.

In Germany, the turning point from one purpose to the other came in 1937 and pertained to the struggle between Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels and Party leader Alfred Rosenberg. In 1933, the latter, a fervent adversary of modern art, had been passed over in favor of the former, who deemed a less oppressive policy more suitable for fostering an art to suit the newly-fashioned state. When in 1936-1937 it became apparent that the mass of organized German artists were failing to deliver, Goebbels changed his art policy into a quasi-Manichean confrontation between traditional and modern art, stridently promoted by their antithetical staging in the two Munich shows of 1937 (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.1.3) and in the subsequent tour of the 'Degenerate Art' show as an anti-Bolshevik propaganda event. With this aggressive and repressive anti-modern turn, Hitler and Goebbels finally swung round to Rosenberg's intransigent line, without, however, availing themselves of Rosenberg's collaboration. Only four years later, once war had started, Hitler revalidated Rosenberg's anti-Bolshevik fervor by appointing him to the government—not as a minister for culture, but for the occupied territories in the East.

/ 1.2.2 **POLITICAL MARKET REGULATION**

To what extent modern artists could pursue their work uninhibited by official requirements or warnings depended on how severely totalitarian regimes were in a position to determine their opportunities to sell. In this respect, conditions in the three totalitarian states varied widely—between near-absolute control in the USSR and near-complete market freedom in Italy, with a clandestine art market in Germany in between. While the thorough submission-and-command procedures of Soviet artists' unions precluded any formal, let alone thematic latitude, Italian artists, despite their compulsory corporative organization, were at liberty to cater to a private market

without precautions. Hence, for opposite reasons, such artists produced little if any work of inconvenient independence in either state. In Germany, the common membership of both artists and art dealers in the Reich Chamber of Art was aimed at an ideological market regulation intended to disadvantage modern art, a purely negative measure which, in and of itself, was not aimed at making traditional artists take up propagandistic themes. Some of them did, to be sure, but a clear majority stuck to their customary political vacuity.

Soviet competitions, culminating in those for the Palace of Soviets, admitted modern artists, but without any chances of success. They served to establish authoritative models for all artists to adhere to. National Socialist art, by contrast, knew no competitions, only selections from offerings of finished work without ideological reasons given, and hence unsuitable for setting paradigms. Soviet and Fascist art had shared the practice of arranging competitions. But while Soviet competitions were venues for arriving at an authoritative ideal of state art, not unlike the ostensibly collective process of policy making by Party meetings, Fascist competitions were meant to uphold artistic diversity within given ideological parameters, which was the principle of corporate order. However, for all their institutional discipline, totalitarian competitions exacerbated themselves into political infighting, as artists rivalled to make conformist art to suit the expectations of their regimes. While in the Soviet Union the risk of rejection entailed the loss of professional standing, in Italy the outcome of competitions fed into ceaseless altercations about the criteria of selection.

Regardless of political circumstances, their corporative organization appealed to artists, since it seemed to anchor their professional security in a social policy underwritten by the government. It did not require political allegiance on their part to join when the three totalitarian regimes made membership obligatory. However, their political risks were far from over. Only for Soviet artists did political submission become obligatory. Their national and regional artists' organizations included a 'cell' of Party members who steered debates about commissions. The Reich Chamber of Art, by contrast, never framed ideological prescriptions because it expected its members to sell on the open market. Italian artists' corporations spared their members political supervision of their work. The streamlined national organizations of artists emerged at the start of the Depression, which indicates its pertinence to the market realignment as the economic component of totalitarian art policy. To compaginate this effort at a viable artistic culture with the effort at fostering an art to propagate the ideologies of the regimes was a process that made modern art the loser.

/1.2.3 **TOTALITARIAN MARKET CONTROL**

Of the two totalitarian regimes in place before the Great Depression, the Soviet art administration was the first to realize that a dispossessed, impoverished

middle-class could no longer be expected to sustain a viable art market. And since this class had been the clientele of modern art before the revolution, modern artists were obliged to rely on state institutions. Thus, when the government started to withdraw their preferential treatment of modern artists, it encouraged them to address their work to the mass membership of state and party organizations which disposed of public funds for supporting an art of their choice. Inevitably, that choice fell to traditional rather than to modern artists. It prompted a vociferous competition between both camps. The April Decree of 1932, which dissolved competing artists' groups, was intended to quell their disruptive antagonism. In setting the stage for the command system under Party supervision, it confirmed traditional artists as the winning side. This practice remained contentious enough, but it was driven by ideological disagreements rather than by any antagonism between traditional and modern art.

Art policy in Fascist Italy was determined by the regime's speedy anti-revolutionary alliance with big business and industry. It favored an upper-middle-class network of collectors and critics who acted in accord with political officials. State art institutions saw no need to steer the art market toward a different clientele, but allowed it to keep offering ideologically nondescript works to upper middle-class buyers. This policy, which government and party touted as a hands-off open-mindedness, was not changed in 1926, when artists' corporations were pooled into a single syndicate for artists, and not even in 1928 when the National Confederation of Fascist Professional and Artistic Syndicates was subordinated to the Party. Its organization ensured an ample supply of conformist art without ideological guidance. To the Futurists, it came as a disappointment that the Fascist free-market culture of the arts had little use for their provocative modernism from the time before the war. Their work was unsuitable to the prevailing taste for figurative consolidation, the signature of middle-class loyalty to the Fascist regime. Corporative social policy was averse to their egocentric ideological stridency.

When the National Socialist regime belatedly joined the trio of totalitarian states, it faced a four-year slump of the art market at the peak of the Depression. In response, it took radical measures to redirect it toward lower middle-class taste. To that end, it drew all artists into the Reich Chamber of Art, a government organization hard on exclusions but soft on guidance. Because it lacked the long-term institutional consolidation of Soviet and Fascist art policy, the German regime was less successful than its two counterparts in using the political incorporation of artists for the creation of a mass art to propagate its ideology. It is for this reason that its oppression of modern art, meant as a punitive backlash against failure, turned out to be the most vindictive. On the other hand, some dealers and their clients entertained a tenuous underground market, defying the injunctions of the Reich Chamber of Art. For this reason, only in Germany was a small minority of artists able to work in a spirit of dissent,

either by producing modern art despite its official rejection or even an art imbued with an opaque critique of the regime (see below, Chapter 4.3).

/1.3 **FROM REJECTION TO OPPRESSION**

/1.3.1 **CHRONOLOGY**

It was during the first four years of the Depression, when Germany was still a democracy, that the marginalization of modern art in Italy and its rejection in the Soviet Union were ideologically articulated. When in 1933 Hitler's new regime repudiated modern art outright, the situation was different, since there had never been any rapprochement between modern art and the National Socialist movement. In both totalitarian regimes in place before the start of the Depression, the ideological terms of the ensuing decisions had been debated and differentiated, if not altogether clarified. They spelled out the criteria for countering modern artists' bids for acceptance. In Germany, which during the first three years of the Depression was still a democracy, political opposition against modern art, a long-term current in the public sphere of the Weimar Republic, surged in tandem with the National Socialist Party's speedy ascendancy to power.

In 1932-1933, ideological opposition against modern art turned into political enactment. In Italy, this turn remained too mild to altogether dislodge modern art from artistic culture, although it had enough of an impact to corner it into defensive postures. In the Soviet Union, the turn took the form of competitions, jury decisions, and exclusions, forcing modern artists into drastic accommodations or retreats. In Germany, on the other hand, the sudden imposition of totalitarian rule in 1933 excluded modern art most severely, most summarily, and most swiftly from public visibility. Implementing the Party's campaign threats, it was enacted with little debate over timid offers of conformity on the part of modern artists. The common turning point came in 1934. In Italy and the Soviet Union, modern architecture lost out in the competitions for the Palazzo del Littorio and the Commissariat of Heavy Industry. In Germany, a government-sponsored show of Futurist painting to make the case for modern art was cancelled at the shortest notice.

In 1936, the Soviet and German regimes proceeded to subject their artists to ever more stringent political supervision. On January 17, the Party Committee on the Arts was formed, and on November 27, Propaganda Minister Goebbels prohibited art criticism without a license. Only the Fascist regime continued to be satisfied with the self-regulating conformity of its artists' corporations. Finally, in 1936 and 1937 respectively, the Soviet Union and Germany, on an ideological collision course with one another, enforced political oppression of modern art by administrative means. In both states, works of modern art were removed from public museums, in the Soviet Union

into storage, in Germany for display in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition and sale abroad. Although this final suppression of modern art took different political and institutional forms, the accompanying rhetoric, aimed at fictitious threats against the two regimes by imaginary enemies—'bourgeois' and 'Bolshevik' respectively—, attained a similarly fierce pitch. Italy, basking in the peace propaganda of its newly-fashioned 'empire,' was spared this divisive extreme.

/1.3.2 **SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF ACCOMMODATION**

In Berlin, the 'Aeropittura' show of Futurist painting, which opened on March 28, 1934, with a speech by Marinetti, was intended to reassert the Fascist acceptance of Futurism. It was an official venture of Italian cultural propaganda, with German Reich Ministers Goebbels, Göring, and Rust, as well as Reich Chamber of Art president Eugen Hönig, on the honorary committee. Goebbels presence seemed to signal that the Propaganda Minister was confirming expectations to the effect that German modern artists, too, would find a place in National Socialist artistic culture, as some of them and their sympathizing critics had claimed by underscoring the German essence of Expressionism and the sense of order in modern form. However, on the day of the opening, Party Cultural Leader Alfred Rosenberg had his spokesman Robert Scholz deny in the press that Futurism was in any way representative of Fascist art in Italy, and charge that the exhibition would serve to undermine the implacable anti-modernism of the National Socialist own original art policy, as stated and reiterated since 1924.

In 1930, Alexandr Rodchenko, the foremost Soviet art photographer of internationalist observance and renown in the preceding decade, found himself sidelined by self-described 'proletarian' documentary photographers who attacked him for his 'formalism,' which, they wrote, workers would not understand. Refusing to renounce his style, he was ousted from the artists' group 'Oktjabr.' In 1933, however, he received a commission from the international propaganda monthly *USSR in Construction* for a reportage on the building of the White Sea Canal, which the GPU was organizing by means of forced labor camps and billed as a social and political re-education project. The double issue of the journal he designed proved so successful that his further collaboration was assured. By 1936, Rodchenko's standing was restored. In a self-serving article entitled "Transformation of the Artist," published in *Sovetskoe Foto*, the journal of his former adversaries,⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ he credited his overcoming of formalism to his empathy with the proclaimed socializing effect of the GPU's White Sea Canal project, as if it had also reeducated him to overcome his 'formalism.'

In 1933, Bernhard Hoetger, a German expressionist architect and sculptor, whose symbol-laden *architecture parlante* was a technically retrogressive, pictorially

overdetermined style—prominently on view in an entire segment of the Böttcherstraße built in Bremen between 1921-1931—immediately came under attack by the new regional party leader and the SS daily *Das Schwarze Korps*. The racist, 'nordic' ideology informing Hoetger's expressive style was a prime example of the regressive leanings of the 'Combat League for German Culture,' which Hitler condemned in his culture speech of 1933. Ludwig Roselius, the owner and patron of the Böttcherstraße, had to personally intervene with Hitler to spare his buildings from demolition. Undeterred, Hoetger, who had joined the NSDAP two years earlier, designed in 1936 a huge 'German Forum' for mass meetings, centered on an assembly hall in the dysfunctional shape of a swastika. He put its model on view in two exhibitions, only to be vilified again by *Das Schwarze Korps*. In 1937 some of his works were confiscated for the 'Degenerate Art' show, and in 1938 he was finally expelled from the Party.

/1.3.3 MEASURES OF ENFORCEMENT

The totalitarian exclusion of modern art from public artistic culture was not pursued by measures from on high, but by means of a vociferous environment of partly internal, partly public debates. Here the long-term convergence of artistic culture and the public sphere was narrowed down to controversies on how best to fulfill the requirements of the regimes. In the Soviet Union and Germany, the accompanying rhetoric, aimed at fictitious threats against their regimes by imaginary political adversaries, attained a comparably violent, anti-'Imperialist' or anti-Bolshevik pitch. Italy was spared this most brutal assault on modern art, because it had no part in the looming military confrontation between them. While in Italy ideologically charged attacks embattling modern architects, and, to a lesser extent, modern artists, commonly ended in corporative accommodations, in the Soviet Union and Germany they had an adverse effect on their careers, from an unforgiving rejection of their work to a public or even official denial of their standing, stopping just short of personal harassment.

Consistent with the self-regulating politicization of professional organizations in totalitarian systems, the task of monitoring the conformity of artists was largely left to their own organizations, as soon as governments had made them national and mandatory. Only their political parameters were set by the government or the party, to whom their artist leaders were accountable. In this self-regulating environment, it fell to government-sanctioned art writers and art critics to articulate the terms and issues of oppression in interaction with the artists. Such processes not only served to frame artists' attitudes and practices, they also provided political authorities with the information they needed to monitor or, if necessary, intervene. In Italy and the Soviet Union, artists' organizations developed a prolific discourse culture, complete with congresses, local meetings, publications and journals. In Germany, they accomplished

little if anything to match, for which Hitler severely reprimanded them in 1937. In his judgment, they had squandered the proverbial “four years” they had been given at the start of his regime.

When at the start of the decade, national organizations of artists were established in Italy and the USSR, they had an opposite effect on modern artists. Italian corporations were aimed at reconciling adversarial positions under the roof of Fascist ideology. Soviet organizations, by contrast, promoted a relentless oppression of modern in favor of traditional art and eventually of Socialist Realism. Both policies were the end results of a decade of art-political altercations, which by 1932 had produced the institutional consolidation of Soviet and Fascist art policies. Neither one was exclusionary. Both offered modern artists venues for revalidation, either by bolstering the ideological credentials of their work or by adjusting it to the newly dominant traditionalist preferences. Because the German regime lacked such a long-term institutional and ideological elaboration of its desired artistic culture, it was less successful in using the political incorporation of artists to act on the long-standing condemnation of modern art in its party program.

/ 2 **USSR AND GERMANY**

/ 2.1 **PROTAGONISTS OF OPPRESSION**

/ 2.1.1 **SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

Only in Germany was the suppression of modern art dramatically staged in a sweeping public fashion and with a propagandistic drive transcending cultural policy concerns. Only here was this policy kept up for the duration of five years, culminating in the spectacular ‘Degenerate Art’ Show of 1937, which toured the country for another four years. As a result, the oppression of modern art was internationally perceived as a specific German policy. Its Soviet counterpart was overlooked, because it was handled as an internal affair of cultural policy, flanked by public pronouncements and debates, to be sure, but without official measures or public interventions by government or party leaders. Only starting in 1936 were the similarities noted, and the differences disregarded, as part of the opposition to the Stalinist regime advanced by segments of the international Left. It was Lev Trotsky who, in his book *The Betrayed Revolution* of that year, was the first to point them out as an unqualified equivalence, illustrating his totalitarian equation between Hitler’s and Stalin’s regimes.

Politically, or historically, this coincidence in time remains unexplained, particularly since in the artistic culture of both regimes, the contemporary art of the other side was never addressed. While the Soviet charge against formalism lacked anti-German overtones, the anti-Bolshevik pitch of German anti-modernism was never exemplified

with Soviet works. Because the political accusations levelled against modern art were specious, if not fictitious, the flanking rhetoric does not help to explain the synchronicity between the tightened German and Soviet oppression of modern art. It may simply have pertained to the cultural enforcement of all-out social control, which both regimes embarked upon in preparation for the expected war. The differences between the arguments were due to the differing purposes of the policies. In the Soviet Union, the elimination of modern art was a stage in the setting up of Socialist Realism as a binding paradigm, still under debate. In Germany, it was being pursued as a vindictive campaign of policy enforcement, but not followed up with any specifications of an alternative style.

Two years after *The Betrayed Revolution*, Trotsky, in the Manifesto 'For an Independent Revolutionary Art' he wrote together with André Breton (see Chapter 4.2), once more denounced the monopolization of traditional and the suppression of modern art as common to both states. However, for lack of political resonance, he and his followers were unable to promulgate this commonality. A contributing factor was that the anti-Bolshevik denunciation of modern art, proclaimed in the perennial 'Degenerate Art' shows, was now inserted into an all-out propaganda campaign in preparation for the military attack upon the USSR, while the Soviet branding of modern art as 'bourgeois' was devoid of anti-German polemics, since the government was still pursuing a short-term peace policy. Thus, when the denunciation of German anti-modernism became part of the anti-fascist agitation by the Popular Front, the similarities with current Soviet art policy were ignored. The non-communist critique of Hitler's art policies in democratic states followed this one-sided judgment, since Germany was perceived as a threat and the Soviet Union as an ally in the coming war.

/ 2.1.2 **ANTI-MODERN EXHIBITIONS**

In both the Soviet Union and Germany, the enforced polarization between traditional and modern art culminated in antithetical shows. These pendant shows were not intended merely to defame modern art, but to demonstrate which kind of art was acceptable and which was compromised. Their chronology, political purpose, and configuration, however, were different. Both followed on the heels of tightened art policies, which in Germany stemmed from a change of government, but in the Soviet Union only from a change of policy. They were to put the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable art on public view, with a greater emphasis on achievement in the latter than in the former. The April Decree had acknowledged "that over recent years, literature and art have made considerable advances, both quantitative and qualitative," (see above, 1.3.2) and the two defamatory shows of 1932 and 1933 were not followed up with any other. In Germany the slogan "They had four years' time," coined in 1937, indicates a discontent an urgent need for decisive course correction.

On November 17, 1932, six months after the April Decree which placed the arts under organizational supervision by the Party, the Leningrad exhibition 'Artists of the RSFSR: 15 Years' featured modern and traditional works side by side in a historic balance. Yet a concurrent show, titled 'Art of the Imperialist Epoch,' branded 'formalist' works by modern Soviet artists as 'bourgeois' and anarchist. Here, just as in Munich five years later, derogatory inscriptions on the walls, unpleasant arrangements, and even caricaturist installations were to convey the connection of modern art with a past 'epoch' now being overcome by the accomplishment of socialism through the First Five-Year Plan. Works by several modern artists, including Kazimir Malevich, were hung in both shows. Shortly afterwards, in the Moscow venue of the Fifteen-Year Anniversary show, which opened on June 27, 1933, works were no longer arranged by antithesis, but in a three-way classification that distinguished between "proletarian art," works by "fellow travelers," and a reduced number of "formalist" works, as if to provide guidance for artists to make an appropriate choice.

In Germany, defamatory shows of modern art started to be mounted within a few months of the regime change and continued from time to time throughout the following years. However, they were never complemented with alternative shows of art favored by the regime until the pairing of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition and the 'Great German Art Exhibition' in July 1937, ordered by Hitler himself. This belated catch-up with the Soviet practice of 1932-1933 was mounted on the shortest of notice, due to Hitler's disappointment with the lack of aesthetic and ideological achievement of traditional artists submitted to the First Great German Art Exhibition. The clampdown in the face of failure had already started with the prohibition of art criticism issued by Propaganda Minister Goebbels on November 27, 1936, and was consummated in the summer of 1937 by the nationwide confiscation of modern art works at public museums. It reached its climax in Hermann Göring's decree of May 31, 1938, which ordered additional confiscations from both public and private collections.

/ 2.1.3 IDEOLOGICAL CHARGES

The charge that modern art was not appreciated by the Soviet masses or the German people was one of the common themes used by the anti-modern propaganda of both governments. The recognition that traditional art enjoyed majority support, and was hence more suitable for propaganda, was indeed similar. However, the policy objectives derived from this insight were altogether different. Whereas in Germany the charge was used to denounce what was presented as a disregard by Weimar cultural policy for the wishes of its constituent population—confirming the illegitimacy of democratic governments' sponsorship of a minority culture—in the Soviet Union it was directed against modern artists' claims that their distortions and abstractions appealed to the masses' aesthetic sensibility. When in 1933 the Soviet government launched the

new cultural policy of shaping a festive visual environment to inspire a contented feeling in the face of low material living standards, the redefinition of art as a medium of aesthetic enjoyment took precedence over that of mass agitation. Socialist Realism was to express the joyful recognition of socialist accomplishment.

When, in his opening speech for the Moscow venue of the exhibition 'Fifteen Years,' the new People's Commissar for Public Enlightenment, Andrei Bubnov—he had succeeded Anatoly Lunacharsky in 1929—attacked "formalism" as an "infantile left deviation," he was restating attacks from past debates where modern artists, led by Mayakovsky, had defended their communist orthodoxy. Claims to a communist modernism had attained a more substantive, and more lasting, political standing than the short-lived, sometimes disingenuous attempts at linking expressionism to the National Socialist 'revolution,' put forth in Germany in 1933-1934. Internationalist in orientation, it had bolstered the success of modern Soviet art abroad during the previous decade. By 1933, communist modernism, despite its international prestige, fell from favor. Now the militant competition with the capitalist powers in the international arena of the Great Depression prompted the new ideological critique of modernism under the catchwords "bourgeois" and "internationalist," both contrast terms to the nationalist significance of Socialist Realism in the making.

It was in Osip Beskin's book *Formalism in Painting*, published in 1933, that Soviet anti-modernism was first spelled out as an official policy, since the author was head of the critics' section in the Moscow Artists' Council and editor of its two art journals, *Isskusstvo* and *Tvorchestvo*. Its political impact resembles that of Wolfgang Willrich's *Cleansing of the Art Temple*, which was published four years later. Ideologically, Beskin's terms "bourgeois" and "internationalist" were apt to illustrate the economic competition between socialism and capitalism, fueled in the culture of the First Five-Year Plan, and now turning into a political confrontation with foreign blockades and domestic sabotage. The success of modern art in the West seemed to confirm the inherent antagonism. Although Willrich never matched Beskin's intellectual sophistication and institutional authority, his book enjoyed a similar if not superior status to Beskin's as a manual for German anti-modernism. Compared to his fictitious polemics against an imaginary Jewish world conspiracy in league with Bolshevism, Beskin's anti-modern reasoning was politically more to the point.

/ 2.2 **CHRONOLOGY**

/ 2.2.1 **ADJUSTMENT AND REJECTION**

While in Germany the oppression of modern art pertained to a policy of an abrupt break with the Weimar Republic, in the Soviet Union it pertained to a gradual policy change on the premise of political continuity. It was presented as a reassertion

of the principles of Communism, to the exclusion of any contentious diversity about compliance. Thus, despite their protestations, modern German artists remained fatally tied to a discarded, vilified regime. Modern Soviet artists, on the other hand, were merely compromised by ideological aberrations from a new, ostensibly coherent party line, which had been set by the guided procedures of inner-party debates. Leading modern artists, such as El Lissitzky, remained in demand. Efforts by modern Soviet artists to vindicate their work by adjusting it to the new ideological requirements were more coherent and more successful than those of their German counterparts, who merely insisted on a pre-existing ideological compatibility of their work with the new dispensation. Artists such as Emil Nolde and Franz Radziwill postured as ardent National Socialists, but kept painting as they had before.

In the Soviet Union, the systematic consolidation, organization, and public funding of artists' associations and cooperatives pursued since 1929 had been part of the overall change from a partly private to a wholly state-run economy. Since artists could no longer count on the purchase of their work by individual buyers, most sales transactions became part of the political planning process. In Germany, by contrast, the professional organization of artists in the Reich Chamber of Art, ideologically modelled on the fascist paradigm of corporate guilds, entailed little political control of what they produced. Modern artists from Otto Dix to Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, members of the Chamber all, could work and sell on a private art market, provided they stayed out of public view. Because modern artists in the Soviet Union had no such outlets, most of them—with a few notable exceptions such as Tatlin or Filonov—attempted to fulfill the new political tasks set by the party with as much accommodation as they could muster. It was by rebuffing their offerings and overtures, not by inhibiting their work, that the authorities enacted their anti-modern line.

In both states, the contentious phase of political oppression, during which modern artists vainly tried to vindicate themselves, lasted until 1936. In that year, oppression turned into suppression without chances of redress—in the Soviet Union by the enforcement of Socialist Realism as a mandatory style, in Germany by the government-directed denigration of 'degenerate art.' In the Soviet Union, modern artists desisted from the habitual claims of 'avant-gardes' to pro-actively devise ideological visions rather than adhere given policies. Their public remonstrations, despite recurrent rejections, made for the deceptive semblance of a self-adjusting art-political process in the mold of 'democratic centralism' and devoid of brutal oppression. In Germany, by contrast, the regime's unremitting condemnation of modern artists as representatives of the ousted Weimar democracy, and then as agents of 'cultural Bolshevism' hardened some of these artists' dissent into outright opposition to National Socialism, unmatched anywhere in Europe at the time, but at the price of hiding from public exposure.

/ 2.2.2 **BEFORE 1936**

Because of these differences, the pursuit of anti-modern art policy after 1933 was steadier and more relentless in the Soviet Union than in Germany, notwithstanding Hitler's, Rosenberg's, and Goebbels' shrill rhetoric. After the turn to a state-owned, planned economy in late 1928, there was no longer a private art market that could have substituted for state and Party patronage. After 1932, this patronage became ever more tightly organized by means of the newly unified artists' organizations of towns or cities, each one ostensibly autonomous, but politically under the control of a Party 'cell' within its ranks. As a result, the Party was able to supervise the production and distribution of art at the source rather than by post-facto censorship. In Germany, by contrast, anti-modern art policy stayed mired in the negative. Its defamatory shows and dismissals from art school teaching posts were not matched by any constructive undertakings. Time and again, Goebbels emphasized that the Reich Chamber of Art would not encroach on the freedom of art. This fanned a never-ending activity of art-political vigilance.

The national organization of German artists in the Reich Chamber of Art, modeled on corporate self-administration, did not exert any pervasive ideological control, let alone a political steering of what the membership produced. The efforts of some modern artists to prove to the authorities the compatibility of their accustomed ideals with the artistic culture of the National Socialist State in the making recall those of their Soviet colleagues to prove that the Communist foundation of their ideals remained viable or could be adjusted to the cultural policy changes of 1932. In Germany, such efforts appear more a matter of contorted, or even disingenuous, expediency, superimposed onto a previous non-political character of art claimed by many modern artists who were uncommitted to the Left, while in the Soviet Union they were advanced with conviction within the cultural environment of 'democratic centralism,' even in the face of recurrent rebuttals.

Institutionally leading masters of modern art in the Soviet Union, such as Vladimir Tatlin or Kazimir Malevich, were publicly vituperated in 1931-1932, to be sure, but merely sidelined to marginal subsistence jobs. In Germany, by contrast, such masters' public vituperation in 1933-1934 went along with institutional ostracism and was followed up by professional harassment. On January 17, 1931, Tatlin was granted the title 'Honored Art Worker,' but was given no more work. Malevich, who had lost his teaching post, was upon his death on May 15, 1935, honored with a state funeral. And in December 1935, Stalin hailed Mayakovsky, whose suicide on April 14, 1930, coincided with his art-political marginalization, as "the best, most talented poet of our Soviet epoch."⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ These three cases go to show that in the Soviet artistic culture of the thirties, the ideological polarization between traditional and modern art was largely confined to the

public sphere of competitions, debates and denunciations. It affected artists' fortunes, but was not personalized to the point where those on the losing side would have been deprived of all their standing.

/ 2.2.3 AFTER 1936

In 1936, oppression of artists in both states intensified, coinciding with, if not related to, the mounting military confrontation between them. The accompanying rhetoric was more vicious in Germany, to be sure, but in subjecting artists to police oversight, the Soviet Union exceeded Germany by far. Once again, policies and ideologies appeared at odds. Andrei Zhdanov's one article in the *Pravda* of March 1936, titled "On Slovenly Artists," pales before the wrath of Hitler's long-winded speeches on cultural policy delivered at the Nuremberg Party Rallies every year. While Hitler, one year later, announced nothing less than an "implacable mop-up war" against non-conformist artists, Zhdanov merely warned that 'formalism' would not "get the patronage of the Soviet people." Thus, in both states, rhetoric and implementation appear in reverse. That the political persecution of artists in the Soviet Union had little, if anything, to do with the alternative of traditional versus modern art accounts for its ideological obscurity. That professional oppression of artists in Germany was advertised in terms of this alternative coincides with the absence of violent measures.

On January 19, 1936, the ascendancy of the Party over the government in the arts was finalized by forming the Party Committee on Arts, which kept a tight oversight on the activities of artists' organizations. Its purge practice, culminating in a two-week marathon meeting of the Moscow Artist Union on May 5-19, 1937, took its toll on artists in office, who were detained, sent into prison camps to perish, or executed. In 1938, Aleksandr Gerasimov, elected and confirmed as president of the Union at this meeting, gave a chilling speech to his membership. He credited the improvement of "the creative atmosphere" and the "new wave of enthusiasm among the entire mass of artists" to the work of "our Soviet Intelligence Service," to which political charges were now referred as a matter of routine.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Yet the epithets Gerasimov showered on artists who had been "neutralized" by the secret police—"Enemies of the people, Trotskyist-Bukharinite rabble, fascist agents"—are devoid of artistic qualifications. Matthew Cullerne Bown has pointed out that we cannot discern any consistent ties between political charges and artistic positions or the untimely pursuit of out-of-favor styles.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾

Adolf Ziegler, president of the Reich Chamber of Art since late 1936, was never able to look back on similar accomplishments. As late as April 23, 1941, he pronounced his intention to "mercilessly proceed against anyone who produces works of degenerate art" and enjoined members to report all such works to the Chamber, implicitly admitting that suppression of modern art had still not quite succeeded (see Chapter

3.1/2.3.3). Unlike Gerasimov, Ziegler could not count on the SS Security Services (SD) or the Gestapo for the enforcement of his threat, although it was the SD that had brought the persistence of “decadent” art to his attention. Even though it had been critically surveying the German art scene in their regular reports since 1938, neither the SD nor the Gestapo had any executive authority over German artists. Thus, despite the scare that Ziegler’s decree was sure to raise among modern artists who read it in their Reich Chamber of Art membership bulletin, and despite the tightening of professional sanctions against some of them, including belated expulsions and even some individual controls by local police, the making of “degenerate” art could not be altogether stopped.

/ 2.3 **CLAMPDOWN AND RECALCITRANCE**

/ 2.3.1 **CONTENTIOUS OPPRESSION**

The contentious oppression of artists in the USSR and in National Socialist Germany was never completely accomplished at any point in time, but protracted throughout the decade. It allowed for diverse ways of interaction between art-political authorities and oppressed artists, resulting in conformity or self-defense, resignation or recalcitrance. The difference in this long-time oppression in both artistic cultures pertains to their unequal sense of accomplishment. The self-assurance of Socialist Realism as an articulate style of the Soviet regime made the denunciation of ‘formalism’ a mere exercise in ideological clarification, while the personalized persecution of ‘art bolshevism’ betrays an unsuccessful effort at fashioning a style of the National Socialist regime. This difference between triumphalism and vigilance had its origin in the political regulation of art production. While the Bolshevik Party’s market control was firm, the National Socialist authorities were aware that the “art of decline,” despite its unremitting official denunciation, subsisted on the private art market beyond their administrative reach, allowing artists to evade their control.

In both states, modern artists did not always take their oppression lying low. Either they remonstrated with the authorities, insisting that their art had been ideologically compatible with the regime’s political culture all along, or they tried to make some formal or thematic adjustments without succumbing to the new criteria, no matter how clearly these were stated. Accommodation came easier to Soviet than to German modern artists. The ‘formalism’ of the Soviet artists, long accustomed to complying with expectations of ideological adequacy, was flexible enough for realistic modifications. The ‘degeneration’ of their German colleagues, most of whom had kept a distance from politics, was rated as beyond recovery. In a mix of adaptation and tenacity, Soviet modern artists, from Melnikov to Rodchenko, kept striving for official approval. It was by refusing their offerings, not by censoring their work, that the authorities held them

at bay. German modern artists, on the other hand, merely reaffirmed the ideological conformity of their accustomed practice.

In both states, the endurance of artists' oppression was fanned by political priorities beyond the task of fashioning an art to the liking of their regimes. The spectacle of an essentially confrontational artistic culture, with its constant risk of being compromised, mirrored the totalitarian dynamics of an ever-tightening political subordination of society at large. In the USSR, growing oppression was not aimed at the persistence of modern art, but at the political deviations of the organizational leadership. Since 1936, it adopted the standard measures of the 'Great Terror,' including dismissals, imprisonments, and executions, with Education Commissar Andrei Bubnov, shot in 1937, as their most prominent victim. In Germany, the pairing of anti-modern and anti-Bolshevik shows, underway since 1938, was related to the government's efforts at whipping up political support for the planned attack on the Soviet Union, which was actively prepared at the Hossbach Conference of November 5, 1937. In the context of war propaganda the charge of 'art bolshevism' acquired a subversive significance.

/ 2.3.2 **LEONIDOV AND FILONOV, VILLAINS OF SOVIET ART POLICY**

Starting in 1930, two prominent Soviet modern artists, architect Ivan Leonidov and painter Pavel Filonov (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.1; 2.3 / 2.1.1), were singled out in official pronouncements and in the press as exemplary targets for the vituperation of modern art, to the point of having their names turned into deprecatory tags, "Leonidovitis" and "Filonovitis," as if their art was a disease. Leonidov had been one of the star students of the 'Higher State Artistic Technical Studios.' In 1930, at age twenty-five, he had just been appointed to a professorship at his school. The older Filonov, already prominent in the pre-war art scene of St. Petersburg, had been informally attached to the Leningrad Academy, where he taught his own master class until 1925. Since both artists were temperamentally inclined to reiterate their long-standing claims to Communist orthodoxy by unyielding public statements, they set themselves up even more as targets for the denunciation of modern art on the part of their opponents with a power base in state art institutions, intent on a rollback of previously accepted modern ideals.

In December 1930, conservative architect Arkadi Mordvinov launched the first public broadside on Leonidov in an article entitled "Break the Foreign Ideology: Leonidovism and Its Misdeeds."⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ It summarized a public debate about Leonidov staged by the Association of Proletarian Architects. Mordvinov's attack damaged Leonidov's reputation so severely he had to quit his newly acquired professorship. The matching term "Filonovitis" was, it seems, only coined as late as 1936, but public denunciations of Filonov already started in late 1930. The occasion was his projected retrospective in the

Leningrad Russian Museum, to which he had been invited in early 1929. The show was mounted, but not opened, to the public and was eventually canceled in November 1931. The public controversy about the opening of the show was accompanied, or orchestrated, by a press campaign that branded Filonov's art with terms such as morbid and crazy, full of militant formalism, metaphysical hysteria, and pathological self-expression.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Workers' delegations and committees of cultural bureaucrats inspected the paintings already hanging on the walls to pass their judgments.

As late as February 1936, Leonidov was still permitted to address the All-Moscow Conference of Architects, now wholly committed to the ideology of 'socialist realism in architecture,' with a defiant defense of his views.⁽¹⁵²⁾ "I have been tagged with a number of 'isms'—I am a Constructivist, and a Formalist, and a Schematist, and so on," he declared. Concluding his speech with the words: "One should believe in socialism—and it is hardly a fault to dream a little in this connection." Leonidov insisted on the convergence of political conformity and creative independence, which had been the elusive ideal of modern Soviet artists during the preceding decade, but which had by now been squashed by political oppression. Filonov, a more senior figure, had made this self-contradictory convergence the backbone of an elaborate theory of 'revolutionary' or 'proletarian' painting, which he promoted in printed programs and public pronouncements. As late as 1934, he was still able to defend it in public lectures and podium discussions, and to restate it in internal memoranda for his circle of followers.

/ 2.3.3 **BARLACH'S AND NOLDE'S REJECTED CONFORMITY**

Ever since museum director Max Sauerlandt and NSDAP chief ideologue Alfred Rosenberg clashed about modern art's value for National Socialist culture in the debates of summer 1933, Ernst Barlach and Emil Nolde were often paired off as outstanding targets of anti-modern art policies. In a mixture of recognition and rejection, their harassment continued throughout the decade. Both artists mounted quite different but equally tenacious, and eventually futile self-defenses aimed at a vindication of their work as they had practiced it before. Barlach insisted on the non-political but home-bound character of his figures, Nolde on his ardent National Socialist party membership. Their exceptional prestige earned both respectful treatment but no art-political leniency. In the 'Degenerate Art' show, Nolde appeared more prominently than Barlach, but in the ensuing mass raids of public collections, works by both were confiscated by the hundreds. Barlach died in 1938, too early for exclusion from the Reich Chamber of Art, which did not hit Nolde until 1941, when his success on the semi-clandestine, private art market, revealed by his tax returns, appeared to defy his defamation.

Barlach, whose expressive realism kept him remote from modernist extremes, drew National Socialist ire through his wooden war memorial of 1928 in Magdeburg

Cathedral. The Prussian government had commissioned it, but a majority of the Magdeburg community had it dismantled. Rosenberg and other critics denounced its seemingly defeatist expression and the Slavic appearance of its figures. Soon other war memorials by Barlach incurred similar attacks and were likewise dismantled or even destroyed, leading to a spreading ostracism of his work, exclusion from exhibitions and, in 1936, confiscation of a book publication of his drawings. Time and again, he protested, without, however, offering ex-post-facto National Socialist self justifications. When he died on October 24, 1938, the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* featured a full-page illustrated obituary that praised him as one of the leading but controversial German artists of the century, whose high qualifications exempted him from the charge of cultural bolshevism. All the more sharply did the author reject Barlach's "neurotic," "racially inferior" figures.

Emil Nolde outdid himself in advertising his National Socialist convictions, put forth at length in the second volume of his autobiography issued in 1934, and made official by joining the Party in that year. They were to authenticate his claims to paint in a 'Nordic' style, in line with the short-lived ideological ingratiation of expressionism with the regime during the years 1933-1934. However, Nolde's efforts to synchronize his art with his politics were repudiated, culminating in his prominence at the 'Degenerate Art' show of 1937. His disgrace did not impede his rising sales on the private art market, which peaked in the same year. As late as April 1941, when the SS Security Service hit upon his tax records, did SD chief Reinhard Heydrich see to his expulsion from the Reich Chamber of Art. Nolde never tried to adjust his art to National Socialist requirements. On the contrary, sometime in 1937 he embarked on producing a steady stream of small-scale watercolors not for show or sale. They undilutedly displayed his colorful simplifications and expressive distortions. Even more significantly, he accompanied them with aphoristic texts containing none of his National Socialist ideas.

/ 3 **EMIGRATION AND EXILE**

/ 3.1 **THE NECESSITY TO EMIGRATE**

/ 3.1.1 **INTERNATIONAL PROSPECTS**

In Italy, the corporative alignment of the arts, largely accomplished by 1932, included a limited accommodation of modern artists, even to the point of tolerance for mild expressions of dissent from government art policy. As a result, modern artists never left the country. On the contrary, the opportunities offered by Fascist support for the arts lured some of them into returning from Depression-ridden France. The Soviet regime, on the other hand, had by 1932 become successful in shaping a conformist artistic culture in which all artists of renown participated for better or

worse. Modern artists, though sidelined, were tolerated nonetheless. Thus, artists did not feel the necessity to emigrate for political reasons, as some of them—such as Marc Chagall—had done during the preceding decade. Germany was the only totalitarian state with a steady stream of artists' emigration. Although the regime had announced the exclusion of modern artists from the start, these artists tested their remaining opportunities with recurrent frustration, making for a hesitant process of emigration, until the 'Degenerate Art' policy of early 1937 deprived them of their last illusions.

Only in Germany did the newly ascendant totalitarian regime have to deal with a pre-existing, thoroughly politicized artistic culture it had vowed to abolish. However, the imperfect achievement of totalitarian control over German society at large, compared to the forcible alignment of Soviet society accomplished during the decade, enabled those artists to pursue their work, and dealers and collectors to support that work, even under adverse conditions, allowing them to develop subjective postures of recoil or continuing dissent from the regime. And when this was no longer possible, the government did not prevent them from going abroad in search of better opportunities for their work, or in certain cases, a public forum for their views. Italian artists never wished to emigrate, Soviet artists were legally prevented from doing so. Thus, art of dissent under oppression and in exile was a German phenomenon.

The roughly three hundred German artists who emigrated succeeded in positioning their art as an arguable anti-fascist alternative to the cultural policy, and the art, of the National Socialist state, most often on artistic, but at times also on political grounds. They were a living proof of the inability of that state to achieve the totalitarian goal of a monopoly culture. The relative political prominence of German artists in exile was largely personal, because they were in no position to participate in the cultural policies of their host countries. The small professional groups they managed to organize were controversy-ridden, short-lived, and only tangentially concerned with politics. The limited public impact of German artists in exile is apparent by comparison to the much higher influence of German exiled writers, who fled the country earlier and in greater numbers, because the National Socialist regime ascribed a greater subversive potential to their political dissent or literary nonconformity and hence suppressed them with more drastic measures.

/ 3.1.2 **GERMAN EXODUS**

Sweeping dismissals of modern German artists from teaching posts in April 1933, forcible membership in the Reich Chamber of Art in September of that year, vicious defamations in the press and vituperative exhibitions throughout the year all spelled a mounting threat, which politically inclined or modern artists had to consider in weighing their prospects if they stayed. Absent from such assessments were

the regime's anti-Semitic measures and lawless crackdowns on political opponents, because most modern German artists were neither Jewish nor political opponents. The anti-Semitic measures affected their dealer networks because some prominent art dealers were Jewish, but others who were not continued to do business. Only those modern artists who in the Weimar Republic had publicly sided with the Left, such as George Grosz and John Heartfield, felt so acutely threatened that they emigrated at once. Most of the others, who conceived of their art as non-political, stayed in the hope of being tolerated if they kept out of public view, and only left when their professional situation became hopeless.

What delayed German modern artists' emigration over several years was a protracted learning process regarding the National Socialists' determination to act upon their notorious, principled aversion against modern art, and to turn it from an ideology into a policy. Only gradually did it dawn on them that the regime could never tolerate an art that was fatally tied to the "system time" of the demolished Weimar Republic. It took some time for many modern artists to disabuse themselves of the hope that their oppression merely stemmed from an undue politicization of the arts, which might eventually subside. The uneven, sometimes erratic enactment of National Socialist art policy in individual cases made it appear susceptible to remonstrations, or even still open for reconsideration, particularly since it had not been legally codified. It was not until the government's draconian clampdown during the first half of 1937 that the last modern artists made up their minds to emigrate. Max Beckmann's reported decision to take a train abroad the day after listening on the radio to Hitler's opening speech at the 'House of German Art', even if apocryphal, epitomizes their moment of truth. It was his way of heeding Hitler's dictum: "They've had four years' time."

As early as March 31, 1933, Beckmann was dismissed from his professorship at the Städel art school in Frankfurt. He kept working in Berlin, where he had already moved in January, partly relying on a few wealthy collectors, partly on his clandestine business connection with the Munich art dealer Günter Franke. Only as late as July 19, 1937, did Hitler's speech convince him that his situation was untenable. Already the year before, Beckmann had discussed emigration with one of his principal collectors, Stephan Lackner, himself a Jewish émigré. Now Lackner vainly tried to mastermind his move to Paris as a stable business base. Beckmann even hoped to settle in the United States, but since he obtained no residency permit in either country, he stayed moored in Amsterdam.

/ 3.1.3 **WORKING ABROAD**

Unlike German writers in exile, who had lost their markets and were forced to build a literary counterculture in their language from abroad, German exiled artists, hoping for access to the art markets of their host countries, had few if any professional

motivations for focusing their work on German politics. As a result, they did not start out using their new-found freedom to get back at their former oppressors. However, by the time of their arrival in France, the country of refuge for most of them, the Depression had caused a domestic retrenchment of the modern art market in recession. If they had come with any confidence in the international appeal of modern art, they were disappointed. Even a celebrity such as Beckmann found it impossible to get a foothold in the network of French dealers. Rarely had these artists left Germany because of their political opinions. On the contrary, they had ascribed their oppression to what they perceived as an undue politicization of artistic culture. Before the ascendancy of the Popular Front, the non-political make-up of modern art in France did not encourage them to politicize their work.

It was the difficulty of blending into the artistic culture of their host countries, most notably that of France, center of the modern art world, that prompted German exile artists into bonding in small, variable interest groups of their own. It was not until 1936 that they claimed to represent a genuine German art, in opposition to the conformist art of the National Socialist regime. Unable or unwilling to assimilate—as German painters who already lived in Paris such as Max Ernst and Otto Freundlich had managed to do—the new immigrant artists operated within the closed circuits of exile culture. This did not improve their market chances but let them seek some political recognition in a country that avoided political confrontations with the country they had fled. It did not help that the perception of modern German art on the international market was focused on Expressionism and Bauhaus abstraction, represented by celebrities such as Max Beckmann and Vasily Kandinsky. Both these famous exile artists pointedly detached themselves from politics, banking on the internationalist cachet of modern art.

It followed from this national self-assertion by default that its inherent opposition to the National Socialist regime would fit into the anti-fascist posture, embraced since 1935 by the cultural policies of the Popular Front. It was spearheaded by two prominent left-leaning German artists—Otto Freundlich and Max Ernst—who had taken up residence in Paris long before the National Socialist regime's accession. The growing anti-fascist self-assertion of this posture provoked political counter-initiatives by the German Foreign Service to thwart its public manifestation, to which governments of the host countries, intent on appeasing Germany's increasing belligerence, were all too ready to cave in. Political restrictions imposed on foreign residents in general were now applied to artistic expression. Eventually, German artists in exile succeeded in positioning their work as an arguable alternative to the art of the National Socialist regime, and as a challenge to its oppressive art policy. Even without confronting the regime outright, they were helped by the growing international perception of German oppression of the arts as a harbinger of a war on democracy.

/ 3.2.1 **POLITICAL OR UNPOLITICAL**

Leftist artists in exile of activist temperament and with ties to communist party organizations—most prominently John Heartfield and George Grosz—did not wait for their less politically-minded colleagues to coalesce into a professional community intent on making their work into a challenge to the National Socialist regime, relying on the public profile they had attained before. It took the new inclusive cultural policy of the Popular Front to energize the self-awareness of German exile artists as a group, where leftists were in the minority, but initially acted as leaders. On its anti-fascist platform, they now aspired to nothing less than a historic alternative to National Socialist art, rooted in the 19th-century antecedents of German democracy. Faced with the aggressive foreign cultural propaganda of the National Socialist regime, which harassed them with diplomatic interventions, German artists in exile, as weak as they were as a group, met with a genuine political response. Time and again, Czech, French and British authorities, under the appeasement policies of their governments, censored or restrained their shows.

It was against all such obstacles that German artists in exile had to assert their political group identity as a means of enhancing their visibility in an unaccustomed artistic culture. The small professional organizations they could form were weak, short-lived, only tangentially concerned with politics, and had a minimal effect on the public sphere. They were in no position to participate in the political culture, let alone the cultural policies, of their host countries. The prominence a few of them attained was due to their individual determination. Furthermore, German exile artists and their associated writers, who were so keen on making their art into a vehicle for political opposition from abroad, came to realize that their ambitions were politically irrelevant or inopportune, particularly since large segments of public opinion were averse to any overt politicization of the arts, be it National Socialist or anti-fascist.

The first group of German artists in French exile, the 'German Artists' Collective,' was founded in early 1936. It included Otto Freundlich and Max Ernst as well as Communist graphic artist Hanns Kralik, who had been working underground for the resistance, in 1934 had been imprisoned in a concentration camp, and in 1935 had escaped to Holland and from there to Paris. The shared leadership of the two prominent modern painters in Paris and the former party activist from Germany personified the Popular Front coalition policy of disparate positions, deemed necessary for anti-fascist consolidation. It is suggestive of how the polarized ideals of abstraction versus realism, or modern versus traditional, had to be politically reconciled. These were the crucial issues of the realism debates within the Popular Front artistic culture of the moment.

Within the German exile artists' community, however, such debates did not take place. Here questions of the appropriate style for making anti-fascist or progressive art were suspended for the sake of expediency, which eventually got the better of anti-fascist activism.

/ 3.2.2 **POLITICIZATION**

That it should have taken the Popular Front movement for the protests and remonstrations of German artists in exile to blend in a common initiative goes to show that any aspirations on their part to meaningfully participate in the anti-fascist struggle could only be activated on a leftist platform. They were not spared the internal controversies germane to such an orientation. The foundation of the Collective of German Artists was preceded by the big exhibition of John Heartfield's anti-National Socialist photomontages, held in April and May 1935 at the communist Maison de la Culture, which established Heartfield as a role model of an artist's anti-fascist activism in the anti-fascist struggle. Leading figures of French leftist culture attended its first public meeting, held on December 4. The new group was affiliated with the 'Hotel Lutetia' Conference of German emigrants on the Left, united over and above their factional differences according to Popular Front principles. It was indeed sometimes called "the artists' group of the German popular front."⁽¹⁵³⁾ Its three leading artists—Otto Freundlich, Max Ernst, and Hanns Kralik—were all communists of various leanings.

The KDK's first chairman was Otto Freundlich, an abstract painter of doctrinaire communist convictions but without party affiliation, who had been living in Paris since 1924 and since 1933 was a member of the AEAR. In his inaugural lecture "Confessions of a Revolutionary Artist" (*Bekenntnisse eines revolutionären Malers*)⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ he dwelt on the communist significance of the term "collective" in the new group's name. Max Ernst, who had lived in Paris since 1922, had become a core member of the surrealist circle led by André Breton, whose peculiar brand of communism was now at variance with the party line. In 1935, a few months before the 'Collective's' foundation, he had produced two paintings of "Barbarians marching West," clearly anti-fascist projections of the German threat. Hanns Kralik, the newcomer to Paris, was a party-loyal communist and activist artist of working-class origin. Once in Paris, he carved a woodcut cycle titled *In Spite of Everything* as a testimony to his concentration camp experience.

The group leadership of this anti-fascist directorate did not last long. After a few months, Freundlich resigned as chairman. Many members shied away from the inescapable politicization of the arts inherent in Breton's demand (see Chapter 1.1/1.2.3). For the National Socialist regime to target them as political adversaries, they felt, was a misjudgment of their essentially non-political self-understanding. It was one thing to escape from Germany to pursue their art under conditions of

political freedom in a democratic state, and quite another to turn their escape into a deliberate response to 'fascist' oppression at home, let alone into a 'weapon' for the anti-fascist struggle. However, they had no other rallying point to turn to, particularly since the artistic cultures of their host country failed to fully embrace them. For this reason, the political engagement of the 'Collective' did not outlast the year 1936. It seems that, for a while, German artists in exile had suspended their group representation, until the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition of July 1937, which publicized their domestic oppression abroad, triggered a rebound that needed no more backing from the Left.

/ 3.2.3 THE 'GERMAN ARTISTS' LEAGUE'

In September 1937, an altogether different group of German exile artists in Paris without leftist ties met to restore the old 'German Artists' League,' disbanded by the National Socialist regime upon its accession. Their express purpose was to counter the 'Degenerate Art' show with an exhibition of suppressed German art, in order to capitalize on its new notoriety. Founded in May 1938, named 'Free German Artists' League' and later simply 'Free Artists League,' to accommodate members exiled from annexed Austria, it was aimed at mounting a group exhibition program whose sales appeal was boosted by its protest against German suppression of modern art. When these plans took shape, their ideological thrust was jeopardized by the French and German appeasement politics initiated that year. Because the League was registered with the Prefecture of Paris with the express designations "non-political" and "neutral as to party politics," it did not engage in anti-fascist activities. However, because the Popular Front regarded the defense of free culture as an activist political position to take, it was not difficult for leftist artists from the former 'Collective' to join.

It was in Prague that a looser association of German exile artists, named 'Oskar-Kokoschka League,' confronted the issue of the relationship between modern art, the Popular Front, and the anti-fascist struggle more squarely than in Paris. In its lecture program, philosopher Ernst Bloch and composer Hanns Eisler, both communists, presented a joint text titled "Avant-Garde Art and the Popular Front."⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Faced with the question of whether the Hitler regime's suppression of modern art reciprocally qualified the latter as an anti-fascist weapon of use for the Popular Front, the authors recalled the origins of modern art as a minority culture, which, despite its revolutionary rhetoric, had never been embraced by the working-class. It could however be drawn upon for the aesthetic modernization of propaganda. The text was one of the few contemporary attempts to credit modern art with an anti-fascist agency by drawing on the claims to social and political progress inherent in its age-old designation as an 'avant-garde'. The desperate reassertion of its value for a working-class culture, flew in the face of its persistent class limitation, which curtailed its political effect.

The two aims pursued by organized German exile artists in Paris and Prague—to market their work abroad and to challenge the National Socialist regime with an artistic counterculture—were contradictory. Only during the short government of the Popular Front in France did they appear compatible. Whenever appeasement policies were being pursued, they proved irreconcilable. As a result, an anti-fascist validation of modern art—or of German modern art in particular—never came to pass. Modern art had to wait for its rising popularity in the USA during the last year before the war to receive such a validation, and consequently, an ideological connotation with democracy. On this platform, the work of modern artists in exile was marketed here with some success. On January 9, 1938, Kandinsky wrote to Paul Klee from Paris that he had heard “[...] that at the moment people are getting more and more interested in the German ‘Degenerates’ [...]. In America, that is. And German artists are headed for the big time in America.”⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Klee’s own soaring sales in the following two years, after several years of fruitless marketing by various dealers, confirmed Kandinsky’s forecast.

/ 3.3 THE NEW BURLINGTON GALLERY SHOW

/ 3.3.1 CONFLICTS OF ORGANIZATION

While in early 1938 only leftist members of the Free Artists’ League contributed to the anti-fascist exhibition *Five Years of Hitler’s Dictatorship*, organized in Paris by the Thälmann Committee, the League’s first collective exhibition in its own right was held in Paris from November 4 to 18, 1938, under the title *Free German Art* in the communist Maison de la Culture. It was intended, in the words of critic Paul Westheim, to “serve [...] the cause of German culture simply by prompting the public and the press to take issue with the art dictatorship of the Third Reich and to recognize it once again, most unequivocally, in its hostility to culture.”⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ It was a deliberate response to the ‘Degenerate Art’ exhibition now circulating through German cities. Its venue in the Maison de la Culture fitted the anti-fascist culture promoted there in the name of the Popular Front, still in office at the time of planning. When it opened, however, a new, conservative government was in place. Thus, in his opening speech, League chairman Eugen Spiro stressed that the show was meant to “avoid all political tendencies and opinions.”⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Earlier in the year, from July 8 to 20, 1938, an independent consortium staged an even more comprehensive exhibition of modern German art at the New Burlington Gallery in London. Initially, it was to be titled ‘Banned Art’ as a defiant response to the ‘Degenerate Art’ exhibition.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ During the preparations, however, this confrontational impetus came to be neutralized. Although the organizers counted on the cooperation of the League in Paris, they were careful not to give any political offense. Originally,

they wanted to arrange the show according to 'schools,' including works by German artists in good standing with the authorities so as to restore a balance between both sides of the divide. Only when the League in Paris balked at this scheme did they abandon it. It was the British supporters who engineered the political conversion of the show, now innocuously titled 'German Art of the Twentieth Century,' from an anti-fascist manifestation into a fictitious compromise, in order not to provoke the German regime at a time when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's government was pursuing its appeasement policy.

The debate about this reorientation came to a head over the Free Artists' League's demand to include the fragments of a painting by Oskar Kokoschka, cut to pieces by German police during a house search in Vienna. As the London organizers rejected it, it became exhibit number one at the later Paris show, published as a postcard, and written up in press reviews. The organizers had promised to forward the show to Paris, to be mounted by the Free Artists' League, but in April revoked the agreement. On April 6, 1938, furthermore, they informed the League that Thomas Mann, cultural figurehead of German emigration, had been struck from the list of honorary sponsors. In response, the League threatened to withdraw their contributions, but eventually relented.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Since the League had at least successfully vetoed the inclusion of artists from Nazi Germany, the exhibition turned out to be a reassertion of modern German artists oppressed in their native country, although it stopped short of addressing the oppression itself. Westheim was right in calling it on its "non-interventionist policy." Only its sales were high, a market boost for modern German art abroad.

/ 3.3.2 **MAX BECKMANN'S PROMINENCE**

Max Beckmann, along with Oskar Kokoschka the most prestigious German-speaking artist in exile, was chosen for the keynote opening speech to voice the political accommodation program of the London exhibition. Here he claimed to uphold a non-political notion of artistic freedom against an unspecified specter of oppressive mass politics which recalls current definitions of totalitarianism, even though he did not use the term. Beckmann delivered his speech in German, followed by a translation, standing before his triptych *Temptation*, which he had started at home and finished in Amsterdam the year before. It featured a painter tied up on the ground before his canvas, unable to paint. However, Beckmann failed to even mention this obvious allegory of an artist's captivity, let alone its historic circumstance. His self-portrait *Der Befreite (The Liberated One)*, painted in Amsterdam that year, is a defiant response to this imprisonment scene. Here the artist is emerging from the door of a cage. The opened handcuff around his right hand hangs down with the key still inserted in the lock. With his left hand, he is grasping the chains in the arched form of a knuckleduster, as if to use them as a weapon.

The *Temptation* triptych was the centerpiece of a whole room filled with Beckmann's works, which had been brought from Paris and Amsterdam, a re-creation, as it were, of the Beckmann room in the National Gallery at Berlin, which had been assembled in 1932 and dismantled one year later. The arrangement could be understood as a restoration of Beckmann's national pre-eminence. All three panels show the main figure in captivity, featuring multiple enslavement tools: handcuffs, foot shackles, chains, a cage, a rope and a bridle that draws blood from a woman creeping on the ground. The tied-up painter is holding on to a framed but blank picture—or is it a mirror?—on his easel, helplessly watching a model who towers above him but turns away. The historic situation seems to impose an understanding of these configurations as allusions to the National Socialist oppression which had driven the artist into exile. And yet, even though the triptych was reproduced on the front page of the *Times Literary Supplement* as the lead illustration of a report about the show, such a topical understanding was nowhere voiced.

In his speech, Beckmann emphasized to “have never been politically active in any form. [...] So perhaps I have passed in blindness by many things of the real and political life. Admittedly I assume the existence of two worlds: the world of the spirit and the world of political reality. [...] The greatest danger threatening all of us human beings is collectivism. This I resist with the full force of my soul.”⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Beckmann thus maintained a non-political understanding of artistic freedom against a historically unspecified threat of oppressive mass politics. As a compensation of his self-admitted “blindness” to political reality, he conjured up a “drunken vision” of which one of his painted figures had “sung” to him, “perhaps from the *Temptation*,” the backdrop of his speech. With his clear-cut distinction between what he termed spiritual and political lives, Beckmann dodged the historical circumstances of the emergency of art to which he was alluding in his triptych and his speech. Such an evasion was just what the organizers of the exhibition wanted to keep it out of political jeopardy and in line with British appeasement policy.

/ 3.3.3 **READ'S CHALLENGE TO HITLER**

On November 9, 1938, after the exhibition had closed, British art critic Herbert Read, one of the organizers, summarized the difficulties of mounting it in a letter to Vasily Kandinsky. He complained that most of “the German expressionists [...] are so determined to make political capital out of their unhappy fate that they antagonize the only people who are likely to buy their paintings.”⁽¹⁶²⁾ “Politically and intellectually I am totally opposed to fascism and continually fight against it,” Read went on to write. “But there are political realities and there are aesthetic realities, and it is necessary to preserve the distinction,” echoing Beckmann's opening speech. “I mean, that if one strives for the freedom of art, one does not at the same time strive for the polarization

of art.”⁽¹⁶³⁾ Coming from a long-time, ardently Marxist advocate of revolutionary art, who at about this time promised André Breton his cooperation with the newly-founded Trotskyist ‘Federation of Independent Revolutionary Artists’⁽¹⁶⁴⁾, Read’s non-political stand was not only expeditious, but proved untenable at this time. Soon he found himself entangled in a public clash with Hitler himself.

Despite its political precautions, the exhibition drew Hitler’s attention. He denounced it in his opening speech at the second ‘Great German Art Exhibition,’ reported in *The Daily Telegraph* of July 11. Hitler charged that “the London exhibition [...] had been arranged for political purposes. It was another attempt by the enemies of Germany to belittle National Socialist cultural achievements.”⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ In his instant rebuttal of the *Daily Telegraph* report, Read had to backtrack on his resolve to keep the exhibition out of politics. He admitted to Hitler’s accusation that showing modern German art meant discounting National Socialist art as an achievement. Still, he insisted that the show was merely devoted to “the artists’ freedom to expression [...] This principle is ethical, not political.”⁽¹⁶⁶⁾

Contrary to Read’s misgivings, the exhibition, as far as one can tell, turned out to be a considerable sales success. Of the nine works Paul Klee contributed, five sold so quickly he had to replace them with others before it closed. Was it due to its political restraint or to the new international prominence it bestowed on the National Socialist oppression of modern art? The sales success coincided with the growing popularity of German exile art in the United States on account of its domestic oppression. Max Beckmann’s exhibition at the Buchholz Gallery in January 1938 was applauded, and so were numerous subsequent shows. At the Golden Gate exhibition in San Francisco of July 1939, he was awarded a gold medal and a price of \$1,000 for *Temptation*. The award acknowledged modern art’s new status as the democratic answer to its totalitarian oppression, which Alfred A. Barr, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, bestowed on it at the opening of the Museum’s new building (see Chapter 4.3 / 1.3.2). This status became a fundamental cachet for extolling modern art as a culture of freedom and, by implication, of democracy.





3/ Artists

3.1/ Political Activity p. 224

3.2/ Political Oppression p. 258

3.3/ Political Resistance p. 292

3.3/ Political Resistance

/1 FROM DISSENT TO RESISTANCE

/1.1 GENERAL

/1.1.1 FIELDS OF CONFLICT

Since the 19th century, if not earlier, it had become commonplace for artists to use their work to convey social or political dissent. This was an outcome of their professional transition from dependency on patronage to self-directed work for exhibition, that is, for the public sphere, where taste converged with ideology. By the time of the Depression, this turn of the arts into a vehicle of ideological opinion had become even stronger than before. Mounting state interventions in the crisis-ridden art market politicized professional competition. Embittered confrontations in the public sphere heightened the pressure to decide between alignment or dissent. This is what André Breton called a ubiquitous raising of banners (see Chapter 1.1/1.2.3). For social or political convictions to be activated into dissent, they had to be positioned on an ideological scale from Left to Right, with communism and ‘fascism’—in its generic understanding—as extremes. Democracy was absent from this scale. Only the insistence on an unaccountability of art to politics amounted to an implicitly democratic claim for free expression.

When artists’ dissent from political authority had to reassert itself against oppressive policies, it turned into defiance. And for defiance to harden into resistance, it had to link up with political opposition movements. Without such linkage, dissent fell short of political engagement and was thrown back upon itself. Resistance, on the other hand, is a reciprocal posture, whether or not it encounters a response. In an oppressive artistic culture, with few or no venues for public nonconformity, dissent did not have to manifest itself in order to be recognized as such. All it took was a minimum of sympathizers disposed to recognize the oppositional significance of seemingly innocuous themes—like-minded social circles, trusted acquaintances, or, ultimately, family and friends. The making of resistance art meant withdrawal from the open market as a gateway to the public sphere, subsisting on private sales to familiar buyers, or, rarely, joining up with clandestine opposition circles. Accordingly, it varied from deliberate defiance of official art regulations to pictorial denunciations of the government.

In the art-historical literature, the pertinent issues have been pondered under the alternative catchphrases “between resistance and accommodation” and “accommodation versus resistance.”⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ These terms equate expression of dissent with political opposition, and the undisturbed pursuit of work in an oppressive artistic culture with political subservience, in disregard for the above distinctions. Even though artists were seldom active in political resistance movements, the term resistance has been borrowed from the political struggle against dictatorships—which in the Second World War became a matter of life and death—so as to validate performative postures of mere dissent. In his three-volume novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (*Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*) of 1975-1981, Peter Weiss presents a fictional historical narrative spanning the years 1933-1945 where the belief in the resistance potential of the arts is first built up and then disenchanting by events. The art-historical literature has ignored its pessimistic conclusion.

/1.1.2 **MODERN RESISTANCE?**

Under the democratic or semi-democratic regimes of France, Germany, and Italy of the time before the First World War, modern art had flourished as a vehicle of opposition against the social or political order. Between 1918 and 1922, the revolutionary movements that inaugurated the totalitarian regimes of Russia and Italy quickly absorbed this oppositional dynamic. In the early Weimar Republic which held on to democracy, on the other hand, the Dada movement kept its disruptive potential alive to the point of provoking the government to react with legal measures. However, the opposition or oppression that modern art incurred during the Depression was a backlash against the acceptance it had already attained. Modern art’s defensive struggles were centered on the argument that political charges against it were out of place because art was non-political. Modern artists and their representatives turned a blind eye to the political preconditions of their own ascendancy. Quick to protest political decisions to their disadvantage, they would never challenge governance per se.

Under the Bolshevik and National Socialist regimes during the Depression decade, modern artists’ attitude of resistance remained essentially passive. It was a fallback position after their tenacious efforts at acceptance had been repudiated. Until 1936, modern artists in Germany and the Soviet Union argued their case in public, until their failure forced them to withdraw into privacy. In Germany, a few dealers entertained a tenuous underground market for modern art in defiance of its official denigration, and a few collectors were able to maintain private networks which shielded modern artists from public exposure. Such were the conditions under which some modern artists could stick to their styles in the spirit of opposition to the regime, while others chose to emigrate. Thus, when it comes to the issue of political resistance, their self-reassertion is no mirror reverse of their oppression. Modern artists

were non-combative victims of totalitarian oppression. Their stubborn self-defense does not qualify as political resistance.

The artistic culture refashioned after World War II has made it seem as if modern art has earned its democratic credentials from a struggle against totalitarian oppression. However, no modern artist of any renown, except for Oskar Kokoschka, devised an ideological, let alone a political, platform of resistance against their oppression other than that of being left alone. Artists who did invariably worked in figurative styles of traditional origin, no matter how inflected by a modicum of modern abstraction. The political culture informing the convictions of those on the Left had in turn rejected modern art as a 'bourgeois' escape from political reality. In both the USSR and the Hitler State, modern artists, after unsuccessful efforts at ingratiation, ended up as victims rather than opponents of their regimes.

/1.1.3 **AGAINST TOTALITARIAN OPPRESSION**

It took totalitarian oppression for dissent to turn into resistance, albeit at the price of retreating from the controlled art market and the censored public sphere. Resistance included intentional deviation from official art policy, concealed pursuit of themes critical of the regime, and, at the utmost, linking up with subversive opposition groups. How far dissenting artists were able to go in charging their work with their political views depended on how tightly their regimes monitored their professional organizations. Between near-complete control in the USSR and near-complete license in Fascist Italy, the loop-holed enforcement of German art policy left them some room for oppositional engagement. Yet, compared to literature with its media base in the public sphere, their potential for public impact was minimal. While the German regime staged a highly publicized book burning three months after its accession, it never had paintings burnt for show. And the Soviet regime persecuted writers, but not artists, to the death.

In Italy, where oppression of artists was negligible, so was artists' dissent. If it existed—as in the case of painter Renato Guttuso—it never took a thematic shape that might have prompted the authorities to intercede. In the Soviet Union, where by 1932 oppression had become near total, dissent paraded as a deviant form of communism, which the regime permitted to be voiced, at least until 1936. While the submission-and-command routine of Soviet artists' unions precluded any formal, let alone thematic opposition from arising, Italian artists, whose corporative organization was just as compulsory, were at liberty to cater to a private market that paid lip service to conformity. Thus, for opposite reasons, a clandestine culture of political resistance in the arts did not develop in either state, while in Germany, where it did, its chances to have any effect were nonexistent. Inside the Third Reich, artistic dissent depended on exclusion or withdrawal from the public sphere. In exile, where oppositional artists

lacked any clientele, they had to seek a foothold in sympathizing institutions for backing their activities.

Until 1936, the artistic cultures of all three totalitarian regimes were still disturbed by political disputes. In Italy and the Soviet Union, these were about which kind of art best suited their regimes but never questioned their legitimacy. Only Germany could boast an art of true resistance, that is, an art that rejected the regime. This fundamental difference between the three states is due to the time lag between the installation of totalitarian rule, with Germany as a latecomer by a dozen years. While it was still a democracy, Germany had the time to develop a uniquely contentious artistic culture, whose acrimonious conflicts were conditioned by the social and political antagonisms that racked the Weimar Republic throughout its existence. Although the National Socialist government successfully undid the Weimar 'system' within the first year of its tenure, it was structurally incapable of equally swiftly eliminating its artistic culture, as the slogan "They had four years' time" heralding its clampdown of 1937 goes to show. All artists who hardened their surreptitious opposition into clandestine resistance were perpetuating political positions from before 1933.

/1.2 **SOVIET ARTISTS' RESISTANCE**

/1.2.1 **THE PRESSURE OF ORTHODOXY**

After the Party's ban on political opposition in late 1927, Soviet artists who harbored any political dissent became reluctant to express it in their work. The April Decree of 1932 made institutional control of artistic culture so thorough that the grudging recalcitrance of some artists shrunk into the stubborn resistance of only a few. Since these artists were barred from emigrating, they had no chance of opposition from abroad. Still, until 1936, sidelined modern artists of strong resolve in the mold of Vladimir Mayakovsky stuck to a self-devised Communism of conviction. In their competition entries and public pronouncements, Ivan Leonidov and Pavel Filonov dared to defy Party-ordained Socialist Realism by professing to ground their stance on pristine Bolshevik tenets. Undeterred by recurrent setbacks, they publicly persisted in their non-conformity. They may have trusted in a self-adjusting art-political give-and-take according to the principle of 'democratic centralism,' which provided for a two-way interaction between leadership and membership. Since they were shut out from office, they were spared the murderous censorship that bore down on Soviet writers.

In December 1935, Stalin's posthumous canonization of Mayakovsky as "the best, most talented poet of our Soviet epoch" acknowledged that the prestige of leading modern artists had survived their professional marginalization. A small number fought losing battles for public acceptance but eventually resigned themselves to

working in near-isolation. Clinging to a combination of autobiographical coherence and ideological idiosyncrasy, they upheld the axiomatic self-determination of modern art. Closed communities of disciples or admirers supported them. In tacit recognition of their standing, the authorities subjected them to demotion and surveillance, but not to outright suppression. Unlike most of their regime-accommodating colleagues, such as Rodchenko or El Lissitzky, they clung to the long-term logic of their work. Their idiosyncratic versions of Communism would have been branded as heterodox had they publicly pronounced them. They might not have endured the current acrimonious, partly disingenuous debate routine.

By 1936, the all-penetrating police control of Soviet society prevented any underground activity. To take an adversarial posture vis-à-vis the government, even only by demanding creative freedom, would have been denounced as 'Trotskyism,' a charge that assumed a non-existent domestic network of political resistance. The specter of a surreptitious front of 'sabotage,' allegedly uncovered in the three show trials of 1936-1938, could be tied to any opposition in art policy. This distinguishes the Soviet from the German oppression of the arts, whose two keywords of Jewishness and Bolshevism were never specified, let alone codified, to substantiate an arguable charge. Any assertion of a subjective Bolshevism at variance with the Party line, whereby sidelined modern artists sought to vindicate their work, entailed the danger of retribution. In Germany, by contrast, similar efforts were merely brushed off, for the Reich Chamber of Art offered no venue for the give-and-take of accusation and defense.

/1.2.2 MALEVICH AND FILONOV

In 1929, Kazimir Malevich, who in 1927 had spent three months in police custody because of his foreign business deals, was dismissed from his teaching post at the State Institute for the History of Art in Leningrad. Still, in 1932 he was assigned a 'research laboratory' at the State Russian Museum in the same city and allowed to cultivate a small circle of followers. Under these conditions of relative license, Malevich felt safe enough to resume a line of semi-abstract figurative works with peasant imagery he had pursued from 1909-1912. He never exhibited them and left no clue as to what they meant. Their unusual period dating "1928-1932" coincides with the beginning and ending years of the First Five-Year Plan, when agriculture was violently collectivized. While the paintings of 1909-1912 foreground peasants as quasi-icons of a primitivist ideal then current in Russian modern art, those from "1928-1932" cannot but recall one of the most explosive political issues of the day. The 'formalist' idealization of faceless peasants, passively standing with their arms down, appears to signal their dejection. Yet, kept at home, the paintings incurred no reprimand.

When the April Decree interdicted all arts' groups outside of Party control, Filonov's private 'painter's collective,' provocatively self-described as "a society of

proletarian, Communist (i.e. non-Party) masters,"⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ became illegal. Yet, despite repeated interrogations and detentions of his students by the NKVD, it was tolerated, and Filonov was left unharmed. In his unabashed ideological heterodoxy, Filonov's emphatic self-designation as a communist in the time after 1936 differs from the assiduous professions of party loyalty by most other artists. His voluntary withdrawal from any intervention in art policy and his proud recoil to privacy for the sake of self-fulfillment let him get away. The gloomy intricacy of Filonov's enigmatic pictures from those years matches Socialist Realism in representational precision, but is the opposite of the cheerful view on social life mandatory for any art allowed to reach the public. The series of paintings titled *Air Raid* in particular, featuring terrorized men on the run, might even refer to arrests and interrogations.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

The license to intransigence granted these two famous modern artists came at the price of Malevich's official marginalization and Filonov's self-imposed solitude. Until 1935 and 1936 respectively, both had still been allowed to make their losing cases, but after 1936 they disappeared from public view. They had lost, in Andrei Zhdanov's words, "the patronage of the Soviet people" (see Chapter 4.2/2.2.3). Malevich, who had never professed, much less proclaimed, his communist credentials, did not give up on the loss of his prominence. The gloomy abstraction of his peasant series did not prevent him from painting the realist *Head of a Girl for the Painting 'The Socialist Village,'* shown at the exhibition 'Woman in Socialist Construction,' which opened in Leningrad on April 24, 1934. Filonov was more obdurate. To the end, he held on to extremely personalized versions of both painting and Communism, both at variance with official doctrine. Even after repeated NKVD inspections, the authorities tolerated both. One of his followers committed suicide after an interrogation, but the master and his circle were not intimidated.

/1.2.3 CHRONOLOGY

Does Malevich's and Filonov's creative independence from Party-controlled mainstream art qualify as resistance, or even as political resistance? The April Decree, rather than promoting the instant adoption of Socialist Realism, inaugurated a four-year-long internecine debate about the past, present, and future course of Soviet art as part of Party policy, which in 1936 turned deadly. During those four years, both artists were able to resist their institutional and public marginalization, just as Ivan Leonidov, as late as February 1936, was allowed to defend himself against the formalism charge in a conference speech (see Chapter 3.2/2.3.2). All three artists commanded enough respect to be spared official censure of their work. In return, none of them crossed the red line of publicly questioning the Party line. One who did was architect Mikhail Okhitovich, who as early as January 8, 1935, voiced his principled critique of the new architectural policy in a conference speech and was

quickly ostracized (see Chapter 1.1/2.3.2). However, this straightforward act of political resistance remained an exception.

Malevich did not live to see the tightening of oppression enacted by the Party Committee on the Arts, newly formed on January 17, 1936, which made political witch hunts, in the form of meetings like the Okhitovich affair, a regular instrument of purging artists' organizations of their leadership. By 1937, arrests and executions following such meetings became part of the 'Great Terror.' The standard charge raised against compromised artists was that of 'Trotskyism.' It targeted their resistance, real or imagined, against measures of control, which Trotsky had so categorically rejected while in office and which he now denounced from exile in his *Betrayed Revolution* of 1936. It gave a name to what would have constituted artistic resistance, if only as a groundless ideological accusation. The word resistance was never used, but the equivalent term 'sabotage,' already commonplace for several years, served as a catch-all term for any suspected obstruction of government art policy.

Measured with the charges against artists with organizational responsibilities, Malevich's mix of intransigence and accommodation seemed just as harmless as Filonov's dogged insistence on ideological self-determination. Although Filonov's 'school' with its "non-Bolshevik" Communism was a typical case of what the April Decree had been intended to prevent, its seclusion spared it from interdiction. Yet just as those charges were merely groundless pretexts in the deadly infighting that raged within artistic culture, there is no evidence of any other artist producing work that might have qualified as resistance, even in the muffled fashion practiced by those two outstanding painters. It is difficult to imagine what political goal, beyond professional license, resistance artists might have envisaged in the Soviet Union—certainly no toppling of the regime as their Party supervisors charged and as their more numerous German counterparts did. The conduct of Soviet art policy, more flexible than its erratic German equivalent, was also more successful in minimizing artists' options.

/1.3 **FIGHTING HITLER'S ASCENDANCY**

/1.3.1 To Stem the Tide Due to the internal antagonisms among the Weimar Republic's social segments and political movements, its artistic culture had been rent by more political strife than that of any other European state. It gave artists associated with diverse political groupings an arena to oppose the parliamentary ascendancy of the National Socialist Party during the first three years of the Depression. The two foremost artists who devoted their work to this opposition—A. Paul Weber and John Heartfield—were graphic artists who worked for journals and other publications of political groups. In a democracy, such were the preconditions for reaching the operational field of the public sphere. To what extent did these artists' public

stand express their personal convictions, to what extent was it programmed by the groups for whom they worked—by assent rather than subordination, to be sure, but still in accord with their ideologies?

The first artist to advance an anti-National Socialist polemic under the catchword 'resistance' was A. Paul Weber. He worked for the publishing house of a nationalist group called 'Widerstand' (Resistance), founded in 1926 by the political publicist Ernst Niekisch, which survived the divide of 1933 until its belated suppression in 1937. Weber became a regular contributor to, and later co-editor of, its monthly *Widerstand*. Niekisch opposed the Weimar governments' observance of the Versailles Peace Treaty and advocated Germany's emancipation from 'Western' oversight. In January 1932, he published a booklet entitled *Hitler—a German Disaster (Hitler—ein deutsches Verhängnis)*, in time for the presidential elections where Hitler drew President Hindenburg into a run-off vote. In their campaigns, the 'Hindenburg Committee' and the Prussian Social Democrats distributed it for free. One might have expected that in 1933 the National Socialist regime would have quickly retributed, but Niekisch's 'Widerstand' circle was tolerated, continued to meet, and kept publishing its *Widerstand* monthly until December 29, 1934, when it was finally banned.

The rise of John Heartfield, a founding member of the German Communist Party in 1919, to become the most popular artist of political resistance against the National Socialist regime was the end result of his cooperation with the manifold print undertakings of communist culture in the Weimar Republic, intended to foment a 'revolutionary' struggle against its support for capitalist exploitation. Comintern official Willi Münzenberg built the 'International Workers' Aid,' which in 1921 had been launched in Moscow as a front organization of Soviet foreign propaganda, into a proliferating publications network. He was the conduit of the Comintern for setting the ideological guidelines of Heartfield's work, which culminated in his regular contributions to the weekly *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung (Workers' Illustrated Journal)*. Since the start of the Depression, the recurrent themes of Heartfield's output were the alleged ineptness of successive Weimar governments in dealing with the economic crisis due to their collusion with big capital, and big capital's financial and political support for the rapid ascendancy of the National Socialist Party as the last resort to maintain the social oppression it required to secure its profits.

/1.3.2 **A. PAUL WEBER'S WORK FOR 'RESISTANCE'**

For the cover page of the brochure *Hitler, a German Disaster*, A. Paul Weber depicted a skeletal figure of death in SA uniform, raising his arm in the Hitler salute, and towering over a throng of likewise saluting followers who brandish military parade banners featuring the swastika. Although the uniform would not suit the party leader, the figure was probably meant to depict Hitler himself. An illustration in the text shows

the fulfilment of the underlying death prophecy: leaderless mass formations carrying swastika flags are storming up to the crest of a precipice, only to tumble down on the other side into a large, swastika-adorned coffin at the pit of an excavated grave. The scene seems to suggest an unwitting self-annihilation of the masses. Only in these two drawings did Weber limit himself to illustrating the “disaster” Niekisch predicted in case Hitler’s movement should succeed. As gloomy as it appears, it did not envisage war, only an internecine strife that would end in the misery of the German nation under the enforcement of the Versailles Treaty.

In the first issue of *Der Widerstand* to appear in 1933, within weeks of the National Socialist takeover, Weber published *The End of the Song: The Swamp* (*Das Ende vom Lied: Der Sumpf*). Once again, it features an endless throng of National Socialists marching in formation right into a swamp which submerges them. Only their arms raised in the Hitler salute and their tattered banners are sticking out. The drawing illustrates Niekisch’s article “Decay,” which restates the author’s opinion that National Socialism would sink into a “bourgeois swamp” because of its parliamentary politics and capitalist support, right when that strategy paid off. Weber’s drawing was the opposite of the films and photographs of masses marching through the Brandenburg Gate on January 30. *The Swamp* is one of the c. 200 drawings Weber contributed to the monthly *Widerstand* and the daily *Entscheidung*, illustrating texts by Niekisch and others that were meant to be critical of but not opposed to the new regime. The authorities must have been willing to allow for that distinction.

The death threat Weber made of Niekisch’s warnings raises the question of the degree to which his drawings expressed his own convictions at the time. After all, before he joined the ‘Widerstand’ circle, he had drawn pseudo-patriotic, even anti-Semitic illustrations for a wide range of reactionary publications. It has been observed that his correspondence is almost devoid of political opinions.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ The record of his collaboration with Niekisch shows the politician’s admiration for the artist, but no unequivocal adherence to the politician on the artist’s part. In the Hitler booklet, on the other hand, he surpassed the author in ideological acerbity. The reciprocal disparities between the two are suggestive of the uncertain move from dissent to resistance, and how successful it could be in engaging the authorities. It took the Gestapo until 1937 to close in on the ‘Widerstand’ circle after almost five years of surveillance. Both Niekisch and Weber were detained in concentration camps, but only the former received a life sentence, while the latter was soon released.

/ 1.3.3 HEARTFIELD, PARTY ARTIST

The foremost outlet for Heartfield’s work was the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* (*Workers’ Illustrated Daily*), *AIZ* in short, issued since 1921 under changing titles until the definitive title was adopted in 1927. Printed by various publishers under Münzenberg’s

oversight, it was distributed by a network run by workers in their free time, for minimal commissions, primarily to a working-class readership. Münzenberg's use of photomontage as the principal form of illustration for the *AIZ* drew on the cultivation of this technique in the workers' culture, fomented by the KPD in emulation of Soviet cultural policy. Thus, when Heartfield began to contribute in 1929, he fitted his work into an established practice. Party writers hailed his affinity to workers' photography. In 1932, when the election of July 31 gave the NSDAP its first parliamentary majority, Heartfield used two photographs of Hitler to denounce him as a stooge of big capital. One takes the form of an x-ray exposing his gold coin-filled esophagus as if it were a spine, the other shows him in small scale, raising his arm back over his shoulder in his typical salute to receive a wad of banknotes from a giant banker standing behind him.

When Heartfield went on an extended working trip to Moscow from April to December 1931, he was not only lionized by an exhibition of his work and related lectures and public discussions, but also participated in the country-wide travelling endeavors and photography instruction programs organized by the all-Russian cooperative 'The Artist,' and contributed photomontages to the journal *USSR in Construction* (see Chapter 2.3 / 3.1.2). The critical debates about his work, held by Soviet artist photographers and writers during his stay, must have made it clear to him that the propaganda purposes of photomontage in the crisis-ridden Weimar Republic had to differ from those in the upbeat Bolshevik state of the First Five-Year Plan. The 'realism' in which his critics found him wanting would have stripped his caricaturist photomontages of their critical edge. Yet the ideological line Heartfield had to heed was determined by the editorial board under Münzenberg's oversight and, through him, by the Moscow office of the Comintern, which at that time aimed at the 'revolutionary' destabilization of the Weimar Republic. Still, there is no reason to doubt that it jibed with his convictions as a Communist in good standing.

In the process, Heartfield developed the photomontage technique from the willfully paradoxical art form of his Dadaist beginnings into a political mass medium, posturing as the parody of an "illustrated journal," which replaced reportage with a propagandistic distortion pretending to reveal the supposed truth behind the surface of documentary photography. During his 1931 Moscow visit, Heartfield had the opportunity to measure up with Soviet photomontage as practiced by El Lissitsky and Gustav Klucis. Their affirmative enhancement of documentary photography to fit into the triumphalist celebration of leadership and achievement was the opposite of the combative contradiction to reality he pursued at home. It could never serve as a 'weapon' for the 'class war' raging in a capitalist democracy. Only in the photomontages devoted to the Soviet Union was Heartfield ready to abide by Soviet practice.

/2 **SUBVERSION AT HOME**

/2.1 **GOING UNDERGROUND**

/2.1.1 **OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISSENT**

From the start, Hitler's new government was determined to do away with the Weimar Republic's artistic culture of ideological strife, but was never quite successful in replacing it with a homogeneous artistic culture of ideological conformity. Artists retained a tenuous chance of expressing their dissent in private, short of any challenge that might have drawn the authorities' attention. Underground, the combative politicization of artistic culture during the Weimar Republic survived in a trickle of muffled but determined opposition to the National Socialist regime. It was carried on by a small number of sidelined artists whose firm convictions made them immune against sharing the majority's attempts at accommodation. Except for Paul Klee, none of them were of modern persuasion. Lacking any audience for shows or publications, these artists were thrown back onto addressing their work to private or even secret circles of sympathizers, either remnants of the Left or loose circles of the liberal middle-class. Only rarely did they join up with clandestine movements of political resistance.

Artists' habit of charging their work with political opinions had been conditioned by their reliance on the freedom of the private art market, which the new regime now tried to regulate but not control. All it took for them to continue was membership in the Reich Chamber of Art, which most of them initially obtained, even those politically compromised or of modern persuasion. Membership did not oblige them to abide by certain formal or thematic standards. They needed it to ply their trade, not only for access to the market, but also to obtain art materials. They faced censorship only when they showed their work in public, but were left some leeway to work and sell in private or in hiding. Even fierce opponents of the regime, such as Hans Grundig, Otto Dix, and Magnus Zeller were members of the Chamber. Grundig, a former communist, lost his membership only as late as 1936, when the long-lasting disputes between Josef Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, and Robert Ley about the Chamber's jurisdiction were finally settled, and when Goebbels, with new Chamber President Adolf Ziegler at the helm, began to tighten its political oversight mission.

Under these circumstances, art of dissent in the ideological sense of the term was more frequent than art of resistance in the political one. As long as the former remained allusive, it was hard to pinpoint and to censure. No matter how daring, its remoteness from the public sphere reduced it to an expression of outrage rather than a political intervention. True resistance came to mean withdrawal from a censored artistic culture to the secrecy of free expression. Rather than a foray against the regime,

it was a defiant retreat. There is a historic discrepancy between the quasi-didactic, fiercely derogatory panoramas by Hans Grundig, Otto Dix, and Magnus Zeller and their anticipated lack of resonance. It appears as a historic irony that Hitler's, Rosenberg's, and Goebbels' wrath struck modern artists so severely, although few if any of their works could be accused of anti-government tendencies, while those who used traditional art forms for their scathing condemnations fell through the net of surveillance.

/ 2.1.2 **DIVERSE RESISTANCE**

In the recondite artistic culture of dissent, a mode of illustrative topicality in the tradition of leftist art from the time of the Weimar Republic may be distinguished from a liberal one of allusive protest. Straightforward illustrative denunciations of the regime only came from the Left. Gloomy fantasies, myths or allegories were pursued by both. Only a few artists on the Left addressed National Socialist oppression so openly that they had to work in hiding. Artists without articulate political convictions confined their dissent to thematically vague lamentations or predictions, most often with a symbolical veneer that shielded them from charges of subversion. The difference between both modes of imagery was that the former bore the risk of persecution, while the latter was all but safe. In any case, it was not their imagery which brought political harassment upon artists, but their statements and affiliations. The sole practice of modern art entailed no more than professional sanctions, albeit sometimes of great severity.

The most straightforward resistance came from artists on the Left, not only because of their convictions, but also because of their ties, however tenuous, to Communist resistance groups that lent some agitational intention to their work. However, their seclusion threw them back upon acrimonious soliloquies. They were largely disconnected from subversive opposition movements operating inside the Third Reich. In return they were largely spared any punitive measures beyond professional interdictions. In 1933, Hans Grundig and Curt Querner painted self-portraits expressing their raging dissent. Grundig's conveyed the mindset prompting the prolific production of paintings and etchings with anti-regime subjects that he kept up until 1938, when his political ties finally landed him in a concentration camp. Querner, on the other hand, did not let his rage inform his work.

By the end of 1934, the attempts by some modern artists and their representatives to ingratiate themselves with the new regime had proven futile. Henceforth, the relationship between the two became a one-sided victimization that left the losers no chance of a comeback. All that modern artists could hope for was inattentive lenience, until the 'Degenerate Art' show of 1937 dashed such hopes. It treated modern artists as cultural delinquents rather than political opponents. And indeed, no modern artist inside the Third Reich pursued his or her work in the spirit of outspoken opposition.

Time and again they sought to vindicate themselves by insisting that their art was non-political. Thus, the contest between oppression and resistance did not pertain to the polarization between traditional and modern art which drove the art policy of the regime. For all their outcries against their denigration, modern artists and their adherents had no political stand to reaffirm.

/ 2.1.3 **MIDDLE-CLASS DISSENT**

Some artists opposed to the regime, but unrelated to the Left, devised an allusive imagery whose significance may have been obvious to sympathizers but remained obscure to the authorities. Even without apparent topicality, their works may have served as conversation pieces for confidential agreement. They contributed to a culture of muffled middle-class dissent for which the cultivation of disgraced art provided a refuge of mental reservation. Their work suited the critical mindset of an 'inner emigration' trying to hold on to the contentious culture of the Weimar Republic in the privacy of their homes. Reliance on networks of such private clienteles secured them a tenuous measure of subsistence and shielded them from public exposure. Such were the conditions for expressing a veiled but telling opposition, apt for social segments unable or unwilling to venture into open postures of resistance.

Such an allusive art of dissent could not be anything but traditional, since it had to rely upon familiar conceits from mythology, fairy tales, allegory, or everyday life in order to insinuate its critical significance. A recollection of traditional imagery as part of middle-class educational privilege was needed to bring it across, but the required *double-entendre* stopped short of any clear-cut message. It made for a peculiar take on the medley of classical mythology and Christian iconography that had been taught in academies and art schools for centuries. It was now drawn upon for allegories of dissent, not only cultivated by the 'inner emigration,' but also by the underground Left, where its thematic references were more obvious.

In a "Letter from Paris: Painting and Photography" written in 1936 for the Moscow exile journal *Das Wort*, Walter Benjamin imagines how such artists of resistance operate: "They go to work at night, with windows covered. For them, the temptation 'to paint after nature' is slight. Besides, the pallid regions of their paintings, which are peopled by specters or monsters, are not monitored from nature, but from the class state."⁽¹⁷¹⁾ He pointed to this kind of painting because he had found it nowhere mentioned in the proceedings of two international congresses about art of which his "Letter" was a report: *Entretiens: L'art et la réalité. L'art et l'état* of 1935 and *La querelle du réalisme* of 1936. The grandiloquent papers and debates about art policy published in both proceedings left no room for a subjective art of conscience. As an emigrant, Benjamin could have no knowledge of the clandestine art inside the Third Reich he so aptly characterizes. Perhaps he imagined it by analogy with comparable

works “peopled by specters or monsters” produced by artists such as Max Ernst or Pablo Picasso, who worked in the public limelight of democracy. In any event, he valued art in hiding from oppression as the true art of political resistance.

Josef Scharl was a left-leaning but politically unaffiliated painter with a successful early career. The portraits, landscapes, flower beds and still lifes he painted during the early years of the Weimar Republic were ideologically indifferent. Only since the start of the Depression did he convey his political views in some of his pictures. He took up themes of social critique with a caricaturist edge that painters of the New Objectivity had addressed before him: the arrogance of the rich, the misery of the poor, the plight of prostitutes, and the dead or mutilated soldiers of the First World War. His 1931 portrait of a war veteran with a maimed face, derived from published documentary photographs, recalls similar works by Otto Dix. With his frontal images of obnoxious officers in fantasy uniforms, he alluded to the military pomp and combative violence that flanked the National Socialist electoral ascendancy. In *Triumphal Procession (Triumphzug)* of 1932, a foolish cohort surrounds a grim-faced general—called *Dictator* in a print version of the painting—marching behind the marble statue of a Roman emperor.

In 1933, Scharl confronted the new regime as a stern opponent, although it caused him no professional harm. However, his highly stylized, colorful paintings found less and less of a market, and he could no longer make a living. By 1935-1936, he had to rely on monthly contributions from a short subscription list and on a small network of well-to do supporters. By 1938 he judged his situation so precarious that he emigrated to the USA. In this situation, Scharl joined a private circle of like-minded upper middle-class professionals and intellectuals who shared his rejection of the regime. In their regular gatherings, they combined a culture of music and modern art with reading foreign newspapers and listening to broadcasts from abroad. These ‘inner emigrants’ appreciated the images of veiled opposition Scharl painted since 1933. Some of these may have served as conversation pieces at their meetings. Alongside standard anti-war figures such as killed or mutilated soldiers, a shackled prisoner, and obnoxious commanders, they feature apocalyptic beasts and horrified men.

‘The Newspaper Reader’ (Der Zeitungsleser) of 1935 personifies the anxiety that only a like-minded viewer could have appreciated. His keen attention and shocked expression leave no doubt about the troubling news, but the garbled, cryptic lettering on the front and back pages of the paper forms no words. In 1936, the year of Germany’s accelerated remilitarization, Scharl painted *Tricephalus (Dreikopf)*, an enthroned three-headed warrior in patched-up hat and dress who is clutching the handle of a sword. His three faces have their eyes closed. The predator fangs of the middle head are dripping with blood. From the two lateral profiles, knots of serpents dart out. One of them wears Hindenburg’s, the other Hitler’s moustache. The artist must have

rated paintings such as this compromising enough to hide them away in the basement in anticipation of a house search, which however never happened. He overestimated the political risk he took with his allusive imagery.

/ 2.2 RESISTANCE FROM THE LEFT

/ 2.2.1 HANS GRUNDIG

In the Weimar Republic, Hans Grundig had been an activist member of the German Communist Party, a graduate of the 'Marxist Workers' School' of his home town Dresden. He devoted his work to a wide range of the Party's cultural activities, concentrated in the local chapter of the ASSO (see Chapter 3.1/1.3.2), with little attention to the art market. Before and after 1933, he lived on public assistance. Grundig's linocuts and flyleaves were sold for a pittance at assemblies and demonstrations or published in the Party press. In his 'class struggle pictures' of 1932, he responded to the misery of the Depression with the standard social critique pursued by leftist artists. For him, gallery painting was just another medium of agitation. As a member of the travelling theater company 'Left Turn' (*Linkskurve*), where he worked not only as a draftsman but also as an actor, Grundig found an apt environment for the politicization of his art. The participating actors, writers, painters, and musicians used to gather at his apartment. After their activity was curtailed in 1933, they still kept in touch.

Grundig's communist prominence on Dresden's pre-1933 art scene did not prevent his admission to the Reich Chamber of Art upon its foundation in September 1933. Only in 1936, after repeated house searches and detentions, was he expelled. Working for a circle of like-minded friends and fellow artists who visited his atelier, he produced a body of c. sixty dry point etchings, some of which he even managed to send abroad. In these etchings he moved from his pre-1933 social critique to allegorical denunciations of National Socialist oppression, either by proverbial slurs or by animal fables. Different from the allusive imagery of non-leftist artists, they were full of visual violence. Grundig opted for this allegorical mode not as a camouflage, but as an alternative to the illustrative topicality pursued by his wife, Lea Grundig, with whom he worked in a friendly competition on shared themes.

Between 1935 and 1938, Grundig summed up his condemnation of the regime in a large triptych with the apocalyptic title *The Millennium* (*Das tausendjährige Reich*), a spoof on the Hitler State's non-Biblical self-designation. It shows the destruction of a temporary reign of ostensible peace, but not by the righteous, as in Revelations 10, but of deranged idol-worshippers cavorting below anarchist black flags. Flying under glowing skies, airplane squads are bombing the city into craters and ruins, starting the all-out war that ends the apocalyptic interim. A block of men on the margin of the left-hand panel designate the Communist resistance as the steadfast believers of

Revelations 20:4. In the right-hand panel Lea Grundig appears as a fearless witness. In the predella, literally underground, she reappears asleep next to her husband. *The Millennium* was Grundig's magnum opus, a hidden picture only accessible to trusted friends. Nevertheless, its topicality would not have been apparent to a house search team. To place his wife with eyes wide open in the midst of the catastrophe may have been Grundig's way of acknowledging her more realistic and hence more risky pictorial approach.

/ 2.2.2 **LEA GRUNDIG**

Lea Grundig, Hans Grundig's wife, joined him in becoming a member of the KPD in 1926 and likewise participated in the multiple cultural undertakings of the Party with a steady stream of graphic work. Despite her visibility in pre-1933 Party culture, she succeeded in concealing her former membership from the Gestapo during several detentions and interrogations. Remarkably, the Gestapo surveillance she had to endure until her incarceration in 1938 did not focus on her work, but on her connections with the Party's subversive network. Her copious police files⁽¹⁷²⁾ record her most fleeting encounters, but never mention her clandestine artwork. When, at the end of 1938, both artists were permanently imprisoned—she for her efforts at emigrating to Palestine, he for suspected treason—Lea Grundig had assembled a body of unmistakable anti-regime etchings with impunity, which is even more astounding since they were meant for surreptitious distribution.

Because she was Jewish, Lea Grundig, unlike her husband, was barred from membership of the Reich Chamber of Art and hence had no working license. She thus ran a particular risk by creating her etchings in tandem with him. Her retrospective account of her friendly competition with her husband on similar subjects is hard to verify, since none of their etchings bear matching titles. Hans Grundig's fables and allegories lack the topical pertinence and tragic sarcasm of Lea Grundig's hands-on scenes of life under National Socialist oppression. The competition she recalls may refer to this principled difference in the two artists' conception of resistance art. Had her openly illustrative etchings been discovered, they would have added corroborating evidence to the Gestapo's inconclusive dossier about her subversive ties.

Surely for protective reasons Lea Grundig did not inscribe the telling titles on her etchings at the time she made them, but added them only after 1945, when she grouped the etchings into five titled cycles suggestive of her wide-ranging topical concerns: *Under the Swastika*, *War is Threatening*, *Women's Life*, *The Jew is Guilty*, and *About the War in Spain*. She thereby turned them from devices of political resistance into historical testimonies against the defeated Hitler State. But even without the titles, their topicality is hard to miss. Lea Grundig dared to push the limits of resistance farther than any other artist still working in the country. While her husband's metaphorical

or apocalyptic imagery leaves no hope for any struggle, she adhered to the axiomatic communist assurance of eventual victory against all odds. One of her etchings shows an upright standing man looking up defiantly, although he is immobilized by ropes tied all around his body. It's title *He will free himself (Er wird sich befreien) contradicts what can be seen.*

/ 2.2.3 **KÄTHE KOLLWITZ**

Käthe Kollwitz, the most famous woman artist of the Weimar Republic, a left-leaning Social Democrat, had taken a high profile in the anti-war movement, in working-class causes, and in public initiatives of support for the Soviet Union. In early 1933, she joined Heinrich Mann and other prominent intellectuals in signing an appeal to Socialist and Communist workers for unity in the elections of March 5. In retaliation, Prussian Education Minister Bernhard Rust threatened to close the Prussian Academy of Arts unless both resigned their membership. They did, but Kollwitz retained her salary and her studio for a while. Later she moved into an atelier building where other dissenting artists had taken refuge, protected by a conformist colleague. However, all her efforts to exhibit were thwarted. When in July 1936 the Soviet daily *Isvestia* published an interview with her, Gestapo officers threatened her with detention in a concentration camp unless she publicly recanted. For another eventuality like this, Kollwitz prepared herself for suicide by carrying a flask of poison on her body.

Kollwitz' activist anti-war stance was personally driven by the death in action of one of her two sons in World War I. Focused on the theme of women shielding or mourning their male children, it culminated in a pair of over-life-size granite sculptures that portrayed herself and her husband kneeling in grief, which were to be placed on her son's grave in a German war cemetery at Esseren in Belgium. Financed by the German and Prussian governments and five years in the making, in May 1932 the sculptures were on view in the entrance hall of the Berlin National Gallery to great acclaim. That Kollwitz should have submitted the plaster model of the mourning mother for the sculpture exhibition of the Prussian Academy in the fall of 1936, however, was tantamount to a defiant gesture. It was the year when the military occupation of the Rhineland, and the law to lengthen compulsory military service from two to three years' time, were stepping up German war preparations. Kollwitz' ultimate anti-war statement jarred with this belligerence. Predictably, the authorities removed the sculpture from the show before it opened.

The second work Kollwitz submitted was accepted: a small-scale bronze relief for a joint tomb of her husband and herself, completed at the end of March 1936. It featured the face of a sleeping youth emerging from the protective cover of his mother's coat. When the artist four months later prepared for suicide under duress, the serene image acquired a sinister topicality. In November 1938, under the impact of the funeral

of ostracized sculptor Ernst Barlach she had attended the month before, Kollwitz created the even smaller bronze relief *Lament*, a face with eyes closed, half covered by both hands. Taken together, the two reliefs stand out as testimonies of the defiant resignation with which Kollwitz responded to the coincidence of political oppression, curtailed public visibility, and advancing age. Her situation made her feel to be at the end of both her life and her career and impaired her will to work. To openly express such feelings was the last resistance stand for her to take.

/ 2.3 **HIDDEN PICTURES**

/ 2.3.1 **MAGNUS ZELLER'S TOTAL STATE**

At the end of World War I, Magnus Zeller had been a self-professed revolutionary artist. By 1935, he led a dangerous double life. As a member of the Reich Chamber of Art in good standing, he showed and sold conventional, ideologically innocuous landscapes and still lifes, while in the secrecy of his atelier in a village outside Berlin, he painted several large pictures denouncing the regime. Already before 1933, Zeller had joined the 'Combat League for German Culture' (see Chapter 3.1 / 1.3.2). Under the new government, he continued to be active in art politics. Ideologically, he subscribed to Alfred Rosenberg's 1933 booklet *Revolution in the Pictorial Arts?* Politically, he acted as a liaison between the 'Combat League' and the Berlin Secession. In his correspondence with his main collector, Karl Vollpracht, on the other hand, Zeller disparaged the 'Combat League's' tenets and scolded the expulsion of the Secession's Jewish members. In 1934, he stopped his art-political activities, but his career continued to run smoothly.

Starting in 1933, Zeller filled a pigskin volume with a series of drawings discrepant with his work for show and sale. They were mordant condemnations of the new regime, only to be viewed by his family—who named it *Evil Book* (*Böses Buch*)—and some friends. He developed four of these drawings into paintings hidden at his home. Their style does not resemble that of the works he made for show and sale. The genre of political caricature Zeller applied to them was designed for the public sphere, at odds with the high-risk privacy required for the situation. Total opposition required total retreat. Zeller's was the extreme case of painting in secret or in hiding, a situation he shared with artists as diverse as Emil Nolde and Otto Dix. His pictorial wrath seems all the fiercer as it stemmed from his disappointment with the regime whose art policies he had actively supported before. His accessible work gave no inkling of his subversive opinions.

Two of Zeller's four oppositional paintings date from before the outbreak of the war, both from 1938. They are quasi-apocalyptic condemnations of the Hitler State. One depicts its protagonists from Hitler on down, herded together by a huge devil on their

way to hell, the other a colossal statue enthroned between red flags on a wheeled platform, which throngs of slaves are dragging forward under the whiplashes of guards in black uniforms. The first, a small watercolor titled *Entry into Hades*, does not show a migration of the dead into the netherworld as in Greek mythology, but a mass descent into the inferno as in Christian iconography. Hitler and his chort appear before the ruins of a war as walking dead in various stages of decomposition, the leaders turning into skeletons. The original title of the second, a large oil painting, was *The Total State*, a polemical inversion of the fascist term denoting the concurrence of the ruled with their rulers into a brutal spectacle of ancient autocracy. After 1945, Zeller changed it to *The Hitler State (Der Hitlerstaat)* and painted swastikas into the flags.

/ 2.3.2 OTTO DIX' FLANDERS

In 1933, Otto Dix' highly visible participation in the Weimar anti-war movement had netted him instant dismissal from his professorship at the Dresden Academy and prominent exposure in several defamatory shows. Nonetheless he managed to become a member in good standing of the Reich Chamber of Art, so that he could make his living with innocuous landscape paintings. All the while, Dix produced several pictures of opposition to the National Socialist regime. He stored them in the private atelier he had kept at Dresden so that they would not be exposed to a house search of his home at Randegg Castle, where he had moved in the fall of 1933. Like Grundig and Zeller, he showed them only to a few confidants or friends. In 1933, Dix greeted Hitler's rise to power with a large oil painting titled *The Seven Deadly Sins (Die Sieben Todsünden)*, featuring a procession of monstrous figures, one of whom hides his face behind a mask in Hitler's likeness. The painting still represents the new regime as a carnivalesque spook that will go away. It diminishes Hitler's stature by ridiculing him as a childlike dwarf.

In 1934, however, Dix became more serious in his opposition. He decided to follow up on his famous anti-war picture *Trench* of 1921, the centerpiece of the defamatory exhibition *Mirror Images of Decay* held at Dresden town hall in September 1933, with the equally ambitious oil painting *Flanders*, which he completed only two years later. It shows three surviving German soldiers emerging from a ravaged battlefield. In the distance, another soldier is crawling through the mud. *Flanders* illustrates the prologue and the conclusion of the widely-read pacifist novel *Under Fire (Le Feu)* by French communist author Henri Barbusse, which had appeared in 1917. In 1924, in time for the pacifist commemorations of the start of World War I, the author had written the preface for a small book with reproductions of Dix' etching series *The War*. By 1935, the year he died, he was a leading activist of the international peace movement. During the two years Dix was working on *Flanders*, the German government reintroduced the draft on March 16, 1935, and extended it from one to two years on August 24, 1936.

On March 7, 1936, German troops occupied the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles Peace Treaty. And on July 18, 1936, the Spanish Civil War broke out, with German troops soon to fight on Franco's side.

True to the "vision" evoked in the prologue of *Under Fire*, *Flanders* depicts "a great livid plain unrolled, which to their seeing is made of mud and water, while figures appear and fast fix themselves to the surface of it, all blinded and borne down with filth [...] And it seems to them that these are soldiers. The streaming plain, seamed and seared with long parallel canals and scooped into water-holes, is an immensity, and these castaways who strive to exhume themselves from it are legion."⁽¹⁷³⁾ In the concluding chapter, titled "Dawn," the survivors draw a pacifist lesson from their experience: "Between two masses of gloomy clouds a tranquil gleam emerges; and that line of light, so black-edged and beset, brings even so its proof that the sun is there."⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ The three soldiers in the foreground of the painting are variations of the mourning soldiers' busts at the foot of the cross in Ernst Barlach's wooden war memorial of 1929 at Magdeburg Cathedral, which in March 1933 had been removed by a National Socialist-dominated church council. The double loop of barbed wire forming a crown of thorns confirms the reference to the crucifixion. Thus, Dix not only built on his own body of art derived from his experience as a combat soldier, as in his earlier battle paintings, but inserted his new work into the artistic and literary contributions to the current peace movement. While Barlach was lying low under unremitting oppression (see Chapter 3.2 / 2.3.3), and Barbusse was riding high as a spokesman of the anti-fascist pacifism of the Left, he put his opposition on record in the secrecy of his atelier.

/ 2.3.3 **RUDOLF SCHLICHTER'S *BLIND POWER***

For eight years, Rudolf Schlichter, a founding member of the German Communist Party in 1919 and of the 'Red Group' in 1924, had been active in various cultural undertakings of the Left, but in 1927 he reversed himself. He returned to the Catholic Church, joined a circle of nationalist conservatives around the writer Ernst Jünger, and abandoned his expressionist style of social critique. In 1933, he greeted the National Socialist takeover as an opportunity to revalidate his newly-embraced realism as a suitable style for the cultural renewal he expected from what he termed the "national revolution." When the Reich Chamber of Art was founded in September of that year, he co-authored a position paper rejecting the resurgent invocation of that term in defense of modern art. Yet in 1934, Schlichter fell into disgrace with the authorities, to the point of a temporary expulsion from the Chamber and a trial for his allegedly "un-National Socialist" sexual lifestyle. Finally, in 1937, eighteen works of his were removed from public collections, four of them to be included in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition. Only now did he turn against the regime.

In January 1932, Schlichter had exhibited a nearly life-size oil painting titled *Greatness and Doom (Größe und Untergang)*.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ It shows a half-nude warrior holding a sword and a hammer, striding forward to the brink of a rock from which he will crash at the next step because the drawn visor of his helmet prevents him from seeing where he is going. Inside his opened body a small nude couple in a sexual engagement is tormenting his entrails. In a poem he wrote at the time, Schlichter speaks of a warrior as a conflicted man suffering from an “evil breed of [...] hellish evil creatures.” They eat away at his “manly chaste heart” so that he is “exposed to the disaster of strange, unknown desires.”⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ The warrior thus appears as a moral emblem for the inner and outer threats to the artist’s self-fulfillment. It is as such an emblem that Schlichter chose a watercolor version of the painting for the cover design of the first volume of his lengthy autobiography, titled *Recalcitrant Flesch (Das widerspenstige Fleisch)*, which is largely devoted to his lifelong obsession with sex, even in its perverted forms and its destructive impact on his work, much of which had dwelt on themes of sexual depravity.

During the first three years of the new regime, Schlichter kept the painting out of public view. But when in June 1935 the Reich Chamber of Art used his autobiography as part of the evidence in a drawn-out investigation that ended in his temporary ouster, he reworked it in a few decisive places, retitled it *End of Blind Power (Ende Blinder Macht)*, and identified the warrior figure as Mars, the god of war. The two most salient alterations are the clefs that open a sight through the closed visor, and the title *Laws* on one of the volumes the warrior carries under his arm. They invest Mars with the attributes of Athena, the war goddess of the arts and law. A burning city behind him marks him as the destructive rather than the constructive of the two Greek deities of war. In a letter dated June 9, 1935 to Ernst Jünger, Schlichter owns up to the dissenting significance of the reworked painting,⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ which Jünger confirmed in a letter of January 14, 1936 with the remark: “I suspect that there is a way of painting and drawing that will immediately lead to tyrannicide.”⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Nevertheless, in 1936 Schlichter put the picture on show in two Stuttgart exhibitions of his work. In the following year, when earlier works of his were on view in the ‘Degenerate Art’ show, the Reich Chamber of Art reprimanded him for this. Henceforth, he kept the painting under wraps.

/ 3 **POLEMICS FROM ABROAD**

/ 3.1 **PRINTED PROPAGANDA**

/ 3.1.1 **PUBLIC LIMITS**

Prague, Paris, and London were the three capitals of democratic states where exiled German artists sought to strike back at the National Socialist regime. In Prague and Paris, they were able to rely on small groups of German-speaking artists for

support. In Paris, the Popular Front movement, and later government, offered them a sympathetic public forum. In London, appeasement policies curtailed their activities. In 1933, Prague became the first base of artists' resistance from abroad, because it hosted the foreign bureaus of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties after their prohibition at home. Until Czechoslovakia's annexation on March 15, 1939, German emigrés were able to issue newspapers and journals where artists found space to publish their polemical prints and drawings. In Paris, it took the new, inclusive cultural policy of the Popular Front to pool the political dissent of German exile artists into organizing as a group, where leftists, although in the minority, took the lead. Prime Minister Léon Blum's liberalized foreign resident regulations legitimized their political initiatives, which fitted into the ongoing resurgence of anti-fascist culture.

The wish of German exile artists to engage in political opposition to the National Socialist regime in order to discredit it in the eyes of foreign audiences depended on two pre-conditions: a supportive community or institution backing them and access to print media to disseminate their graphic works. They needed the public sphere to activate their dissent into resistance. Political organizations of the Left in Prague and Paris, partly under the oversight of Comintern cultural official Willi Münzenberg, provided opportunities to reach the public through print media or exhibitions. Other public manifestations, such as the exhibition *Olympics under Dictatorship*, held in Amsterdam in August 1936, were independent of the Left. Recondite or vigorous, in order to become operative artists' resistance had to be embedded in supportive environments, large or small, be it the anti-fascist exile network in Argentina, where Clément Moreau found his place, be it the minuscule committee affiliated with the organization 'Aid for Spain' at Porza in the Tessin, to which Reinhard Schmidhagen contributed his woodcut cycles.

Whenever attention-grabbing shows augmented the public impact of graphic work by German emigrant artists in opposition, it attracted diplomatic interventions on the part of the German embassies in their countries of refuge. Whether such interventions were successful or not, the ensuing controversies validated their political viability. They started in Czechoslovakia, the country most vulnerable to German pressure, with a request by the German embassy to remove several photomontages by John Heartfield from an exhibition held at Prague in April 1934, a request that was partly granted, partly refused. Heartfield addressed it in yet another photomontage added to the show as a defiant exposure of German oppression. The most spectacular intervention hit the Amsterdam exhibition *Olympics under Dictatorship*, an international show denouncing the Olympics in Berlin, in which several German exile artists participated. Repeated remonstrations by the German ambassador forced the removal of nineteen of their works and prompted the Dutch government to cancel the Rotterdam venue of the show a few days after it had opened.

/ 3.1.2 **GRAPHIC IMAGERY**

Since exile artists had to rely on the print medium to disseminate their oppositional public propaganda, their choice was limited to illustrations in black-and-white. This automatic choice of traditional over modern art suited the long-standing preference of artists on the Left, who acted at the forefront of resistance from abroad. Publishing ventures, though numerous, had small print runs and hence a limited impact on public opinion, quite different from the literature published by German exile writers regardless of their language barrier. For these, print was the only medium, whereas for artists, it was either a specialty or a sideline. As a result, no exile artists matched the stature of Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Anna Seghers, or Bertolt Brecht, writers whose widely-published books allowed for long accounts and arguments, and who could network with international colleagues to foment public debates.

The most straightforward polemical prints were illustrations of atrocities perpetrated by the regime, sometimes based on artists' own experiences, such as in Karl Schwesig's and Hanns Kralik's, sometimes on published reports, such as Clément Moreau's, complemented by caricatures of National Socialist leaders and personnel. After his escape to France, Karl Schwesig, a member of the KPD and of the communist-led ARBKD before 1933, recorded his sufferings in a SA torture cellar in a series of fifty drawings, some of which were exhibited in 1936 and 1937 in Brussels, Amsterdam, and Moscow. The German government retaliated by stripping him of his citizenship. Working from his imagination based on what he had heard and read, Clément Moreau, moored in faraway Argentina, published a stream of linocuts depicting National Socialist oppression in left-wing newspapers and journals.

A few exile artists devised a non-illustrative agitational imagery with symbolic or expressive implications, but always with sufficient thematic clarity to suit their polemical aims. Their freedom of expression and their quest for public impact shunned the allusive mode that some oppositional artists back in Germany shared with some anti-fascist artists in France and Spain. Gert Arntz applied the style he had developed for Otto Neurath's institutions of pictorial statistics in Vienna and Amsterdam, (see Chapter 3.3/2.2.2) in order to give a semi-caricaturist appearance of analytic objectivity to the woodcuts and linocuts he published in communist newspapers of several countries. On the other hand, Reinhard Schmidhagen's two woodcut cycles of 1938 about the Spanish Civil War, entitled *Guernica* and *The Other Front (Die andere Front)*, consist of large-scale compositions of unspecific victims with emotional emphasis.

/ 3.1.3 **CLÉMENT MOREAU**

When the graphic artist Clément Moreau, a life-long participant in leftist group

undertakings, had to leave Switzerland in 1935 for his lack of German citizenship, he obtained a 'Nansen Passport' (a travel document for stateless persons), which allowed him to emigrate to Buenos Aires. Here he joined a community of German expatriates who tried to counteract German diplomacy. As a drawing teacher at the German Pestalozzi School, established in 1934 as a counterweight to the government-sponsored Goethe School, he co-founded an anti-fascist aid committee called 'The Other Germany.' Headed by August Siemsen, a former social democratic Reichstag deputy, this committee grew into a veritable cultural organization by and for German emigrants in Argentina. Beyond helping German refugees to settle, it was the committee's self-declared objective to denounce the 'Third Reich' in Argentine public opinion. Moreau oversaw the cultural programs organized for this purpose, including public readings, chant performances, and even a cabaret show. In 1937, he quit his teaching job to devote himself to running them full-time.

Moreau's prolific output of prints and drawings for the two German-language journals *Argentine Daily* (*Argentinisches Tageblatt*) and *The Other Germany* (*Das andere Deutschland*) culminated in a series of 107 linocuts issued as a booklet under the title *Night over Germany* (*Nacht über Deutschland*), a step-by-step pictorial narrative of a refugee's fate, apt for the purpose of the aid committee. The series starts with the contrast between a mass meeting of conformist listeners, standing under poles with loudspeakers and swastika banners, and a small group of dissidents, listening behind closed doors to a foreign broadcast and betrayed by a neighbor. The listeners are caught by the Gestapo, some tortured or strangled in prison, but one of them escapes and ends up stranded abroad. The narrative is an unmitigated account of suffering and murder, of bureaucratic callousness at home and abroad, un beholden to the endurance creed of Communist resistance. It highlights the permanence of mistreatment on both sides of the border, from oppression to indifference. The final print shows the anguished face of the survivor crying out for help.

In 1937, Moreau started to work on a satirically illustrated sequence of excerpts from Hitler's *My Struggle*, to be serialized in the journal *Argentina Libre*. He assembled forty-three of them in a booklet with the same title, covering Hitler's youth and early political career. The series contrasts Hitler's self-confident enhancement of his biography into a course of destiny, leading from childhood to leadership, with the clueless misery of his actual origins, the brutality of his war service and the machinations of his ascendancy as a party leader. From a sorry figure of subservient conformity, Hitler develops into an unprincipled monster. Moreau may have based his illustration not just on his own derogatory response of Hitler's book, but on Rudolf Olden's and Konrad Heiden's critical Hitler biographies, which were published in 1935 and 1936 respectively to counter the international reputation *My Struggle* had acquired by then.

/ 3.2.1 **ACTIVITIES IN PRAGUE**

The National Socialists' government takeover on January 30, 1933, instantly drove the staff of the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* into exile in Prague, and Heartfield followed two-and-a-half months later. Already on March 15, 1933, they resumed publication of the *AIZ* with a print run of only 12,000 copies, a steep drop from the 500,000 it had reached in its successful pursuit of a national working-class readership at home. The change of venue reduced the *AIZ's* readership potential to the German-speaking minority of the Czechoslovak population, who would have no vital interest in the fundamental political issues of class struggle and revolution against a democratic government that guided the illustrated weekly while it had appeared in Germany. Its habitual attacks against Social Democracy were no longer relevant. Accordingly, the *AIZ's* prolific polemic against Hitler and his party became its top theme. It changed from electoral propaganda to the denigration of the Hitler State, launched from a neighboring country that was under the rising threat of annexation because of its German-speaking areas. As a result, Heartfield's work provoked mounting protests by the German embassy.

Rather than denouncing Hitler and his party as stooges of big capital, a key theme while Hitler was not yet in power, Heartfield now focused on the new regime's domestic oppression and international belligerence, while glorifying the Soviet Union as a bulwark of resistance against it. In this counterpoint of satirical and adulatory imagery, the USSR replaced the working class. Heartfield's transformations of the swastika, now Germany's state emblem, into a rotating tool of torture or execution were diplomatically most offensive. He collaged it using four blood-dripping executioner's axes, a frequently used prop, or short wooden beams, nailed at a right angle to the four ends of the cross that Christ shoulders on his way to Calvary. His photomontage of a packed crowd filling a giant arm with clenched fist raised in the communist salute was published in 1934 to invoke an "anti-fascist front," according to the caption. It illustrates the Comintern's 'United Front' strategy of ongoing revolutionary struggle, announced and enacted in the two failed workers' uprisings of Asturias and Vienna that year.

The *AIZ's* increased dependency on the Comintern's international bureau, under Münzenberg's direction, amplified the coverage of Heartfield's photomontages to issues of its world-wide strategy. Now he had to deal with the military interventions of several 'fascist' regimes, from Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in 1935 to Germany's and Italy's armed support of Franco in the Spanish Civil War and on to Japan's invasion of China in 1937. As a counterweight to this world-wide military upsurge, his celebration of the Soviet Union changed from extolling its economic and social progress to hailing its technical and military strength. His sustained comparison between Soviet

achievements and German failures was meant to encourage readers to rally to the Left. This pro-Soviet triumphalism culminated in 1934, the year of the 'United Front,' with the publication of a special *AIZ* issue commemorating the 17th anniversary of the Russian revolution. Heartfield's cover featured a giant worker's face, looking upwards with an upbeat smirk, illustrating the message of the caption: "A New Man—Master of a New World" (*Ein neuer Mensch—Herr einer neuen Welt*).

/ 3.2.2 **PROVOKING THE REGIME**

Once in Prague, Heartfield linked up with Czech liberal art circles in sympathy with his views. In April 1934, the Mánes Artists' Association included in its 'International Caricature Exhibition,' a collection of his photomontages which attacked the National Socialist regime so severely that German ambassador Dr. Koch protested to the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, demanding the removal of seven of them. The ambassador's intervention demonstrated that an artist could engage a dictatorship. In September of the same year, Heartfield was deprived of his German citizenship. The *German Newspaper Bohemia* (*Deutsche Zeitung Bohemia*), a paper of Czechoslovakia's German-speaking minority, played the incident up, fanning the conflict between nationalities that Germany would eventually invoke as a pretext for its annexation of the country. Heartfield promptly retaliated with yet another photomontage denouncing this "Intervention of the Third Reich," as its title said. It shows an exhibition wall exposing the bricks of a prison wall in the spots left bare by the unhung works. "The more pictures they hang away, the more visible does reality become," reads the inscription. The photocollage testified to Heartfield's unyielding resistance.

As it became difficult for Heartfield to obtain documentary photographs from Germany as materials for his collages, he fell back on published photographs from the compliant German press, mocking their propaganda messages by scathing quotations of their titles. He developed this technique of pictorial debunking into his primary device of argumentative attack. Some efforts were made to carry the attack back to the regime. Miniature editions of the *AIZ* were smuggled into Germany, sometimes camouflaged as classic pocketbooks. Postcards featuring Heartfield's photomontages were mailed to government and Party officials. Even postage stamps were faked by substituting familiar motifs with anti-fascist ones. Such interventions depended on Communist party agencies steered from Prague and feeding into the precarious activities of small resistance networks back home. Their impact was minimal, however. No incidents of distribution or discovery of any copies are on record.

The steady surveillance to which the German government subjected the activities of Wieland Herzfelde's and Willi Münzenberg's publishing conglomerate in Prague, and the work of John Heartfield in particular, shows how seriously it took their challenge. It was, however, less concerned with their subversive impact at home than with

their foreign propaganda effect.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Since Heartfield delayed his emigration until mid-April 1933 under orders from the Party, it seems that the Gestapo did not target him until he had started work in Prague, where he joined the editorial group of the *AIZ* only after the first issue had been published. It was the resistance from abroad which preoccupied the German authorities. Already on May 24, 1933, ambassador Dr. Koch reported about Heartfield's activities to the Gestapo in Berlin, which started to bug Heartfield's telephone in Prague. In November 1937, the SS daily *The Black Corps* (*Das Schwarze Korps*) even produced an anti-Heartfield poster based on one of his own photomontages. The SS Security Service's 'Dossier about Emigrants' Press and Literature' includes his name.

/ 3.2.3 INTERNATIONAL FAME

In the spring of 1935, a huge exhibition featuring 150 of Heartfield's photomontages was staged at the communist Maison de la Culture in Paris. It made him an international star of anti-fascist activism in the arts. For the preparation of the show, he had to travel from Prague to Paris on a detour and under cover, as if he were a secret agent. Heartfield acquired his new fame for two reasons: first, for using art as a self-declared anti-fascist propaganda tool, and second, for validating photomontage as an art form on a par with others. On May 2, the evening program of the exhibition featured ten artists and writers, including Tristan Tzara, Louis Aragon, and Léon Moussignac, in a podium discussion on the question "Is Photomontage an Art?". One year later, Aragon published his essay "Heartfield, Or Revolutionary Beauty," although by now Heartfield's work was reoriented to the Comintern's new Popular Front policy, which placed the class-transcending anti-fascist struggle at the top of the agenda over revolutionary insurrection. In any event, he hailed Heartfield's photomontage as a fulfillment of realism's political potential.

In the summer of 1936, the Comintern's change of policy became manifest in the renaming of the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte* to *Volks-Illustrierte* (*People's Illustrated Journal*). The first issue with the new title featured Heartfield's photomontage *Liberty Herself is fighting within their Ranks* (*Die Freiheit selbst kämpft in ihren Reihen*), an adaptation of Delacroix' iconic painting *Liberty is Guiding the People* of 1830, with the figure of the top-headed bourgeois outside the margin (see Chapter 2.2/2.2.2). Accordingly, the newly-titled journal changed its coverage. Its denunciations of the National Socialist regime were focused on its war preparations. They took their place among international armed conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War and the Italian colonial war in North Africa, and were counterpoised with reassuring images of Soviet military power. In his photomontages dealing with these themes, Heartfield shed much of his daring pictorial short-circuits in favor of more straightforward pictorial settings whose mocking significance depended on satirical contradictions between image and

inscription. Quoting familiar symbols and proverbs was his way of moving with the transition from revolutionary art to art for the people.

Eventually, Heartfield's manifold international undertakings—beyond the *AIZ/VZ*—netted him an unparalleled reputation for merging artistic innovation and political poignancy for the anti-fascist struggle. At the end of the decade, he had become such a celebrity that a show of his work, held from December 4 to 22, 1939, at the Arcade Gallery in London, was advertised as 'One Man's War Against Hitler.' In retrospect, Heartfield would have to cede this title to George Grosz, whose pictorial assault on Hitler had no organizational backing and found no resonance until the start of World War II (see Chapter 2.3 /3.3.1). While Heartfield's political resistance was embedded in communist party culture, Grosz had become a party apostate who broadened his anti-fascism into anti-totalitarianism and hence, like André Breton, was no longer able to take sides. Since the start of his exile in the USA, Grosz refused Wieland Herzfelde's entreaties to join Heartfield in contributing to anti-fascist publications. His *Interregnum* appeared in 1936, the same year the *Volks-Illustrierte* was given its new name. The totalitarian equation and the dismissal of artists' resistance Grosz represented in this work made it unsuitable for the anti-fascist struggle.

/ 3.3 **OSKAR KOKOSCHKA'S LEADERSHIP**

/ 3.3.1 **THE TURN TO POLITICS**

Unlike Heartfield, whose activist resistance against the National Socialist regime followed from his life-long adherence to Communism, in 1933 Oskar Kokoschka harbored no political engagement that might have programmed his resistance from the start. It is for just this reason that he came to be recognized as the leading resistance artist during the following six years. In a letter of September 1933, he still wrote, rather cynically: "It seems to me, I am against the new times, against Democracy, against Liberal-Social Communism, and for the stone age."⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ It was the National Socialist clampdown on modern art, including the instant removal of Kokoschka's works from the Dresden art collections, which prompted him to adopt a consistent strategy of denouncing the regime. Starting in late 1933 with the essay "Totem and Tabu: Mental Exercises of a Cynic," he advanced a critical assessment of National Socialist cultural policy in eight literary texts which, though unpublished, informed his frequent public interventions.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ His work, however, remained unaffected by his political activism.

Kokoschka's move from Vienna to Prague in 1934 was no emigration. With his long-established prestige in the art world of the city, he was soon granted Czechoslovak citizenship, which spared him the political restrictions imposed on German emigrants. His social networks, including several dealers and collectors, enhanced his public profile. His cooperation with cultural institutions, especially with the 'Union for Law

and Liberty' and with the 'Bert-Brecht Club,' a group of leftist German emigrants with Heartfield as a fellow member, enlarged his public platform. In March 1936, he even gave a speech at the Brussels Peace Congress as a member of the Czechoslovak delegation. The target of Kokoschka's interventions was not only the National Socialist art policy and its political preconditions, but also the authoritarian turn of Austrian governments—starting in 1934 with Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß's bloody suppression of a workers' uprising at Vienna—which in 1938 predisposed a later government to acquiesce in the country's German annexation.

By the time of his 50th birthday on March 7, 1936, Kokoschka had become such an anti-fascist celebrity within artistic culture that Willi Münzenberg's Comintern-sponsored journal *Counter-Attack (Der Gegen-Angriff)* acclaimed him, and the Vienna daily *Der Wiener Tag* featured a long article from his hand that summarized his views, not only about art, but about society and politics. One year later, a group of mainly leftist German exile artists in Prague founded a 'Kokoschka League' ('Kokoschka-Bund') for the promotion of a "genuine German humanist [and] progressive art."⁽¹⁸²⁾ Although they did not offer him membership—probably because they knew that he did not share their leftist politics—he permitted them to use him as a figurehead. Finally, after his escape from Prague to London in 1938, Kokoschka joined Heartfield and others in launching the 'Free German Culture League' ('Freier Deutscher Kulturbund'), of which he was elected co-president in 1941. By the end of the decade, he had become one of the top representatives of German exile culture.

/ 3.3.2 POLITICAL WRITINGS

With historical acumen, Kokoschka ascribed the origins of the current political crisis to the measures governments worldwide had been taking to remedy the effects of the Depression, which in his view favored rearmament over social welfare and were flanked by ideologies proclaiming the "bankruptcy of democracy, the myth of the state, [and] the restoration of hierarchy."⁽¹⁸³⁾ Kokoschka was convinced that this process was likely to end in a "war of all against all."⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ It was not merely due to the operational mode of capital, but to its political mismanagement. To counter the "general ethical failure"⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ of the powers-that-be, Kokoschka advocated an international reform of public elementary schooling that would instill peaceable reason in the general population from childhood on. To regard the onslaught of irrationalism against reason as a historic predicament was politically nondescript, however. It distinguished Kokoschka's liberalism from Heartfield's Communism. Kokoschka conceived of education as independent of political systems, yet to charge it with the restoration of reason was contingent on democracy. This de-facto democratic posture netted him his wide appeal.

Starting in 1935 at the latest, Kokoschka used the term "totalitarian state" not only on the National Socialist regime, but any kind of oppressive regime. Without naming

Italy or the Soviet Union, he applied it to both “fascism and vulgar Marxism.”⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Their populist origins, he argued, resulted from the rise of democracy after World War I. He was not concerned with the historical operation of totalitarian governance. What he singled out was its reliance on a mandate from an unenlightened populace accepting oppressive order. An internationally standardized elementary education would undo the populist pseudo-legitimacy of totalitarianism. Kokoschka’s diagnosis was as accurate as his prescription was imaginary. Convinced that the state-directed economy of totalitarian states depended on accelerated arms production, he predicted that the quest for *Lebensraum* (living space) by a “purely totalitarian state” would “lead to total war.”⁽¹⁸⁷⁾

In a lengthy unpublished text Kokoschka drafted in response to the ‘Degenerate Art’ show, he applied his condemnation of populism to the widely-held belief that the plight of modern art in the Third Reich was due to the personal prejudice of Hitler, an uneducated simpleton with a failed ambition to become an artist—the “house painter,” (*Anstreicher*), as he was commonly smeared.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ From a detailed analysis of Hitler’s address at the opening of the ‘House of German Art’ in Munich, Kokoschka construed the argument that a “simple man from the people,” swept to power by “a parliamentary plebiscite or a military putsch,”⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ had been empowered to impose, “in his simple German jargon,”⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ his resentments on the artistic culture of the country. In his contemptuous put-down of Hitler’s speech, Kokoschka skipped the question of how much the dictator was able to rely on popular assent. When he chastized a misguided popular will Hitler claimed to implement, he overlooked the class limitation that had prevented modern art from winning general acceptance to this date.

/ 3.3.3 TESTIMONIAL PAINTINGS

There are only two paintings in which Kokoschka made his resistance apparent before the start of World War II. The first was a portrait of the publisher Robert Freund he had painted in 1909. After the German takeover of 1938, the Vienna Gestapo cut it up into quarters during a search of the owner’s home. Somehow the fragments made it via Prague to Paris, where the ‘German Artists Collective’ (see Chapter 3.2/3.2.1) published it as a postcard with the backside imprint “Destroyed by the Vienna police, Gestapo, Section II H, on May 5, 1938.”⁽¹⁹¹⁾ It was as a *Corpus Delicti* that the Free Artists’ League wished to include the reconstructed painting in the exhibition it organized jointly with its London section in July 1938 at the New Burlington Gallery, which was assembled with much controversy about its diplomatic restraint. Only after critic Paul Westheim, exiled in Paris, blasted the organizers’ initial rejection was it finally hung. Since the show was intended to reassert the merits of modern art in Germany now being suppressed there, including several works by Kokoschka, it shied away from polemical works. In the end, Kokoschka, by now the most prestigious artist in public opposition to the Hitler State, could not be denied a testimony of his own victimization.

One year earlier, as a house guest of one of his collectors in July 1937, Kokoschka was painting a self-portrait for the host when he learned of the opening of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, where several works of his were shown. In a spontaneous reaction, he titled it *Self Portrait as a Degenerate Artist (Selbstporträt als entarteter Künstler)*. He does not seem to have adjusted the collected, pensive attitude with folded arms he had adopted for the sake of expressing his response to the dramatic news. However, he probably added the blurred depiction of a stag hunt in the background to match the title he gave to the finished picture. If so, this would suggest the defiance of a hunted man. Although its sense of victimization corresponded to the cut-up *Portrait of Robert Freund* at the New Burlington show, Kokoschka never used it as a public statement. The *Self Portrait as a Degenerate Artist* remained secluded at the collector's home. Only in June 20, 1939 was it first shown at a one-man exhibition of Kokoschka's work in London.

In the government-sponsored 50-year anniversary exhibition 'Today's Mánes' in Prague, which President Eduard Beneš opened on October 10, 1937, Kokoschka and Heartfield were both invited to participate as newly-appointed honorary members. While Kokoschka's exhibits are not known, Heartfield's elicited yet another request from the German embassy that five of them be removed. The two artists' prominence at the show confirmed them as the leading German-speaking artists who kept up an unremitting public resistance from abroad. On March 1, 1939, after their flight to London, they worked together in founding the 'Free German Culture League'. Still, they formed an unlikely pair. Their political socialization had been conditioned by the class division between traditional and modern art. While Heartfield's grew out of a working-class culture bent on activating art for political intervention, Kokoschka's was embedded in the culture of the upper-middle-class, which had sponsored modern art and now wished to shield it from any politicization, active or passive.





4/ Toward War

4.1 / Art Policy
and War Policy p. 326

4.2 / The Last Stand
of Revolutionary Art p. 360

4.3 / Traditional versus
Modern Art Revisited p. 392

4.1/ Art Policy and War Policy

/1 GERMAN ART SUPREME

/1.1 BUILDING AND REARMAMENT

/1.1.1 THE CAPITAL OF FUTURE CONQUEST

When the reconstruction plans for Berlin were finalized in 1936, to be publicly revealed on January 30, 1937, a functional correlation of art policy and war policy in Germany became apparent. Renamed 'Germania,' Berlin was to be turned into a capital of future conquest, both in the geopolitical range of its traffic connections and in respect to the resources needed for its reconstruction. This supra-national capital was to be exalted into a world-historical monumental cityscape on a par with ancient Babylon or Rome, shedding any national characteristics or functional correlation with the specifics of city or national governance. For such an absolute monumentality, questions of traditional or modern art, or of a characteristically German or National Socialist art, were no longer relevant. Procurement of labor and building materials was expanded beyond the private economy to include the economic enterprises and the police jurisdiction of the SS, which developed its concentration camps at Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, Sachsenhausen, and elsewhere into facilities for quarrying and cutting stone. After the start of the war, this resource base was to extend into the newly-conquered territories.

In the monumental topography of 'Germania's' projected government center, the 'Führer's Palace' and the Supreme Army Command flanked the panorama of a giant 'People's Hall' behind a plaza, shielding its entrance like a vise. Given the political emptiness of the central building, the symmetrical pair of blocks conveyed the pre-eminence of military policy in the governance of the 'Führer State.' A huge 'Soldiers' Hall' by Wilhelm Kreis, preceding the three-building group on the left-hand side, was to loom over the arrangement. It was meant to celebrate the fallen of past wars, whose remains were to be collected in a giant crypt for public view. The front wall of the barrel-vaulted hall, which looked like the nave of a Romanesque basilica, was to feature a statue of *The Victor* by Arno Breker, towering fourteen meters tall. This quasi-sacred building, which the accompanying literature likened to "a giant altar,"⁽¹⁹²⁾ was to be the site of a commemorative liturgy celebrating perennial warfare as the destiny of the German nation. Taken together with the symmetrical pair of adjacent buildings, it proclaimed the current German government's ongoing war preparations as a historic mission.

The enormous triumphal arch at the start of the central parade avenue leading up to the government center, for which Speer adapted a sketch Hitler had made in 1926 while in prison, was to be inscribed with the names of every single one of the millions of German soldiers fallen in World War I. In a reckless reversal of triumphal logic, it turned the German defeat of 1918 into an anticipation of victory. Speer's adaptation of Hitler's old drawing for the political architecture of 'Germania' matched Hitler's principled but unspecific war plans as outlined in *My Struggle*, shortly after his release from prison. Now Hitler wished to line the access route with rows of captured Soviet cannons, unequivocally anticipating an invasion of the Soviet Union. The political timeliness of the projected building contrasts with the intended significance of Alberto Libera's equally giant aluminum arch projected in March 1937, which was to surmount the 'Peace Altar' in the center of the planned E42 at Rome (see below, 2.2.3). While Mussolini's vacillations between peace and war discredited Libera's design, Speer designed his own in lockstep with Hitler's steadily unfolding war policy.

/1.1.2 **ARCHITECTURE OF AGGRESSION**

In 1936, synchronous with the introduction of the draft, the long-planned monumental addition to the Olympic Stadium in Berlin of an even larger, rectangular parade ground, called 'May Field' after the staging areas of Merovingian troops, was built. It confirmed the National Socialist view of the Greek ideal of sports as a war training, as if the Olympic Games were just a passing truce, as it had been in ancient Greece. The memorial hall in the center of the stands was named after Langemarck, the area near Ypres in the Belgian province of Western Flanders, where in October and November 1914 two thousand German soldiers were machine-gunned in a futile attempt to break through French lines. In the center of its floor, a steel slab covered earth shipped from the local war cemetery. Here the ancient Greek notion of physical fitness as the ethics of a warrior caste was displayed with historic topicality, in open contradiction to the modern Olympic ideal of a festival of peaceful competition. After the Olympics, the May Field continued to be used for political and military mass events that celebrated the convergence of sports and politics on the goal of readiness for war.

Two years later, in 1938, shortly after the annexation of Austria, a similar 'March Field,' named after the ancient Roman military staging area, opened as the last addition to the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds. It was a war games theater for 650,000 visitors, where the assembled party members, SA, and other affiliated organizations could watch the *Wehrmacht* boast its modern weaponry and combat tactics. Military games had been part of the annual Nuremberg Party Rallies since 1934, but were confined to the Zeppelin Field, which they had to share with rallies and parades, careful not to damage its stone structure. Although the March Field had been part of the initial planning, its construction had been delayed. In 1938 it was suddenly deemed

so urgent it was used for military shows while still under construction. Six times the size of the Luitpold Arena and encased by twenty-four square stone towers connected by a floating wall of swastika flags, this giant area, true to its name, looked like a Roman fortified army camp. By far the largest of the rallying grounds, it was landscaped inside to evoke a wild heathland, a natural environment for realistic battle games complete with blazing cannons and roaring tanks.

The ostentatious deployment of an ornate architecture of aggression culminated in the breakneck, semi-secret completion of the long-planned New Reich Chancellery in Berlin, replete with triumphal military imagery, signs and symbols. It was built within the time stretch between the annexations of Austria in April 1938 and Czechoslovakia in January 1939. In the official book issued on the Chancellery's completion in January 1939, Hitler made no bones about what he considered the urgency of having it ready for starting the implementation of his expansionist plans. It is here that, after dismissing his war minister and his Army commander, he began to exercise his own supreme command of the *Wehrmacht* to ready it for action. The menacing Mars head and the half-drawn sword inlaid on the front panel of the mahogany desk in Hitler's office reveal to what extent the New Chancellery was a monument of anticipated triumph in an imminent war. Hitler especially liked the half-drawn sword. "Very well, if the diplomats sitting before me at this desk will see this, they will learn to be fearful," he is reported to have said.⁽¹⁹³⁾

/ 1.1.3 ARCHITECTURAL WAR POLICY

The ever more unbridled architectural display of military power as the bedrock of both domestic stability and foreign territorial expansion quickly shed the populist and diplomatic restraints that German art policy had observed until 1936. It grew in tandem with the government's political turn towards increasingly repressive governance at home and increasingly unmitigated threats of war abroad. Hitler's vision of Berlin as a City of Future Conquest pertained to the anticipatory character of totalitarian rule. It only appears imaginary in the hindsight of its later refutation. Hitler was determined to transpose the making of architecture from the realm of social policy into that of war policy, where it was being pursued as part of Germany's eastward colonization drive. A keen if failed student of architecture, Hitler had largely assumed personal oversight of national architectural policy from the start of his regime. When in late 1937 German war preparations became operational, he used his increasingly personalized conduct of governance to correlate architectural policy with the war effort underway, micromanaging both simultaneously.

Jochen Thies, Robert Taylor and others have pointed out that the comprehensive architectural programs in Berlin, Nuremberg, and almost fifty other German cities, earmarked for rebuilding according to Hitler's notions of monumental state

architecture, could never have been implemented with the financial, material, and labor resources available in Germany alone. Rather, those programs required the resources from the Eastern territories in Poland and the Soviet Union, to be conquered in the coming war. The intended transformation of cities monumentalizing future conquests was to be part of those conquests, anticipating the split of the subject population into a German master race and a non-German mass of working slaves. Procurement of labor and building materials was increasingly expanded beyond the private sector to include the economic enterprises and the police jurisdiction of the SS, which had already developed its domestic concentration camps into facilities for quarrying and cutting stone. Extended to the conquered territories, this policy was to collect labor as a by-product of extermination.

In a crucial passage of his preface to a book on his architecture published in 1978, Albert Speer takes issue with the merely ideological understanding of his work which had been current until then. He draws the essential distinction between ideology and policy, between ideological programs and political objectives. Hitler “had to determine the sense of his buildings” if he wished to implement his policies, Speer insisted.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Indeed, he did not care to translate the commonplace elements of National Socialist ideology into his architecture. Classical to the core, it expresses nothing about race, nothing about Germanic origins, nothing about a healthy people’s community—in short, nothing of all those concepts that Rosenberg and other Party ideologues had long highlighted as ingredients of National Socialist culture. It was Jochen Thies who in 1976 first characterized Hitler’s architecture as an instrument of his policies, rather than their mere expression.⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ As in ancient Babylon, Egypt, or Rome, which Hitler looked up to as his paradigms, grand designs of state policy and architecture were pursued in tandem. Monumental building was an integral part of political strategy.

/1.2 **HITLER’S ART STRATEGY**

/1.2.1 **FROM IDEOLOGY TO POLICY**

To what extent Hitler’s professional origins as a minimally-trained painter and vainly-aspiring architect, along with his experience as a frontline soldier through all four years of World War I, determined his approach to politics, is a much-debated question, particularly since he often asserted that he formed his key convictions early on in his political career and held on to them unchanged. The first volume of *My Struggle*, published in 1925, includes only two passages of a few pages each devoted to art policy, little by comparison to the lengthy sections about republican government, war, “race,” foreign policy, and many other themes. The first passage deals with painting, the second with architecture. They address the two concerns of Hitler’s failed artistic career.

From these passages and other testimonies Thies concludes “that since 1924/26 Hitler found himself in a sort of preliminary planning phase which after his accession to the chancellorship, he stepped up from one day to the next and implemented by decisions.”⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Hitler’s origins as a semi-skilled artist and a low-rank combat soldier informed his later pursuit of art policy as war policy.

The two principal doctrines informing Hitler’s concerns for art and architecture—Anti-Semitism and Anti-Bolshevism in the visual arts, and the ideal of world-power architecture on the paradigms of Egypt, Greece and Rome—emerged as art-political guidelines of the military expansionism he pursued almost instantly upon his accession. The first doctrine was easier to pursue than the second. It was made operational in the interrelated promotion of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art exhibition in 1937, the year of the Hossbach conference, and in the subsequent continuation of both shows until the summer 1944 as endeavors of an increasingly militant propaganda mission. The interrelation between architectural policy and war policy was a project of a different magnitude. In 1941, when conquests in the USSR should have provided forced labor, the priority of arms production stopped most building in its tracks. Yet Hitler’s phantasy of power architecture kept haunting him until April 1945, when he viewed Speer’s models in his ‘Leader’s Bunker’ in Berlin, as Soviet troops were closing in above.

It is the triple relationship between long-term ideological projections initiated before 1933, medium-term strategic planning in government, and short-term tactical decisions to build at appropriate moments, which until 1939 shaped the timeline of Hitler’s architectural policy. Its up-to-the minute synchronicity between politics and building impressed contemporary beholders. Although the March Field at the Olympic Stadium complex in Berlin was part of the 1933 plan, it was only built for immediate use in 1937. The May Field at the Nuremberg Party Rally Grounds was part of the 1934 plan, but it was only built in 1938. And although plans for the New Reich Chancellery were ready in 1936, Hitler attributed its breakneck construction within one year to a political decision of January 1938. Thus, by 1938 German art policy and German war policy were meshed. Except for the short-lived, inexpensive, non-monumental art of the Spanish Republic under siege, only German art, in lockstep with German diplomacy, made the coming of war apparent for all to see. Nowhere else in Europe—the other two totalitarian states included—was art policy so keenly timed.

/1.2.2 ART POLICY FOR WAR

Already in *My Struggle*, Hitler had openly stated his expansionist geopolitical plans of quick rearmament and future conquest. However, once he had been appointed chancellor, for three years his foreign policy was designed to project a deceptive posture of peaceful coexistence, no matter how determined he remained

in the pursuit of his original intentions. The worries of other European states about this seeming contradiction, which Hitler deliberately nurtured, is the overriding political sentiment of the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. They failed to take Hitler's synchronization of architectural policy and war policy as seriously as they did his diplomacy. It was the time lag between early planning and delayed building which made this architectural policy deceptive. In July 1936, at the Olympics in Berlin, the militaristic signals of the May Field were overlooked. In September 1938, the first war games held at the partially completed Nuremberg March Field coincided with Neville Chamberlain's dictum "peace in our time" pronounced after the Munich conference.

At the secret Hossbach Conference of November 5, 1937, Hitler had decided on the timetable of a war to come. In the public forum of foreign relations, however, he pursued a deceptive policy of voicing his demands for expansion as conditions for a lasting peace. Foreign governments were aware of the contradiction between the menace of rearmament and the promise of peaceful cooperation, but nonetheless gave in. Arms production dominated the display of industrial advance at the huge show *Give Me Four Years' Time*, held in Berlin between April 30 and June 20, 1937, whose title referenced a promise Hitler had made at the time of his accession. "You are seeing only military airplanes, submarines and combat vehicles," reported French ambassador André François-Poncet.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ As late as August 25, 1939, six days before the attack on Poland, the annual Nuremberg Party Rally was planned under the motto "Reich Party Rally of Peace" ("Reichsparteitag des Friedens"), only to be cancelled the next day. That Hitler should have pursued his barely deceptive posture to the end confirms that he regarded architectural policy as both a tool of and a smokescreen for his strategy.

In a speech delivered to the commanding generals of the Army on February 10, 1939, Hitler addressed concerns about the risk of economic overextension caused by simultaneously pursuing military buildup and monumental building. He pointed out that his numerous architectural projects were intended to impress his military resolve, which the tactics of diplomacy let him conceal abroad, upon the people. "They will tell me: but you rearm.—Gentlemen, that's what the people unfortunately don't see, because of course I cannot speak about it quite openly. That's the hidden part."⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ Hence it was necessary, Hitler went on to say, to increase monumental building for creating the environment of a strong state, which would fill the people with enthusiasm. Fritz Erler's idealized Hitler portrait on display at the Great German Art Exhibition five months later is an apt illustration of his posture. It depicts Hitler as the patron of a monumental building-in-progress, standing before a huge statue of a sword-bearing warrior about to release an eagle into the sky, personifying the start of war. He is shown as a live component of a monument to his duplicitous strategy.

/1.2.3 **ALBERT SPEER**

Albert Speer, since 1934 head architect of the Nuremberg Party Rally grounds, and since 1936 General Inspector of the Reconstruction of Berlin with the authority to override local building administrations, internalized the loyalty principle of the 'Führer State' so thoroughly as a creative motivation that Hitler entrusted him with making his vision of political architecture a reality. Speer's new office in Berlin empowered him "to avail himself of the authorities of the Reich, of the Prussian State and of the City for his purposes,"⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ answerable to Hitler alone. It was an instance of the totalitarian practice of overriding established political and administrative institutions. Speer's competencies reached far beyond his practice as an architect. The New Reich Chancellery was, in Hitler's judgment, a prime example of the efficiency that enabled Speer to use his leadership for timely achievement. "No discussion, no try-outs have preceded the common work. Speer traced the marching route in a Prussian manner, [and] we met again when our results were fitted into the almost finished organism," sculptor Arno Breker characterized Speer's routine.⁽²⁰⁰⁾

As early as the fall of 1940, Speer made a futile bid for nation-wide organizational authority when he asked Hitler to create the party office of a 'Führer's Commissioner for Architecture and Urbanism,' which he himself expected to head. Here his jurisdiction would have been amplified far beyond his own building projects to include the oversight of all architects working for the government. At that time, Minister of Armaments Fritz Todt, whose authority included that of a plenipotentiary for building, still stood in the way of Speer's ascendancy. It is only after Todt's accidental death on February 8, 1942, that Hitler appointed him Todt's successor as Minister of Armaments and Ammunition, and in 1943, Minister for Armament and War Production at large. In this capacity, Speer kept war production at full tilt until the end. Speer's last appointment fulfilled the long-harbored ambition of numerous 20th-century German architects to shape social and political conditions. But while they pursued such goals by means of urbanism, public buildings and mass housing, Speer's public architecture had been ceremonial and monumental. As soon as he rose to political power, he stopped building.

Yet, unlike modern architects, Speer, for all his political ambitions, abstained from any claims to setting architectural policy. When he outlined his principles in an article of 1936, he defined architecture as a key part of the political process rather than a flanking ideological measure, and hence as an integral component of Hitler's undivided political will. The two other protagonists of art policy from the early years of the regime, Alfred Rosenberg, himself a former architect, and Joseph Goebbels, a former writer, likewise moved into crucial functions of political responsibility during the war—Rosenberg as Reich Minister for the occupied Eastern territories in 1941, and Goebbels as Reich Commissar for Total War in 1943. It seems that Hitler rated the ideological

intransigence of the three men's cultural activities as a benefit for implementing war policy with the necessary ruthlessness, a risky assignment for more sober minds. In his eyes, their reckless disregard for historical circumstance—inherent in National Socialist ideology—qualified them to steer a losing cause under the delusion of victory to the end.

/1.3 **WAR ART BEFORE THE WAR**

/1.3.1 **GUARDED WAR PROPAGANDA**

When did German preparations for expansionist warfare, secretly underway since the reintroduction of the draft on August 24, 1936, surface as a public policy, entailing war propaganda in the arts? Did Hitler's duplicitous practice of whipping up domestic sentiment for war while dangling out prospects of peace abroad impose diplomatic limits on such openness? Even though the political changes undertaken since January 1938 to prepare the German state for imminent war—shakeup of the Wehrmacht command and empowerment of the SS as a national police force—were deliberate enough, war propaganda in the arts was calibrated to balance military resolve and peaceable intentions, as Breker's pair of sculptures *Party* and *Army* proclaims. Hitler's foreign policy of territorial expansion by diplomatic pressure, backed up by threats of war, was flanked by an art policy that proclaimed adamant but peaceable strength. In 1937, at the Paris Expo, the German Pavilion, unlike its Soviet counterparts, featured neither arms nor soldiers. In his opening speech, Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht emphatically denied any German war plans.

In 1938, the difficulties of an economy gearing up for war coincided with a slump in the state-controlled artistic culture catering to the market. The number of visitors to the second Great German Art Exhibition fell from over 500,000 to 460,000, and the sales from 750,000 to 420,000 Marks. SS Security Service agents recorded artists' complaints about lacking government support.⁽²⁰¹⁾ Particularly striking was the small number of war and military themes in the three Great German Art Exhibitions of 1937-1939. Of the 896 works on view in 1937, only 16 fell under that category; of the 1,405 shown in 1938, only 27; and of the 1,564 shown in 1939, only 31. These exhibitions, it turned out, barely registered the overriding policy issue of their time. Only a few elite artists, parading their state commissions, put symbolic images of combat-readiness on view. In 1939, less than three months before the attack on Poland, Arno Breker exhibited a nude warrior walking uphill and drawing his sword, entitled *Bereitschaft (Readiness)*. It looked as if his warrior figure in the courtyard of the New Reich Chancellery from the year before was shedding his restraint and moving into action.

The near-complete absence of contemporary military imagery in the art of the state that was the driving force in the European arms race toward World War II,

betrays the circumspection whereby German art policy was handling the war theme. It went hand in hand with the absence of any foe imagery which might have given a clue as to whom German rearmament was targeting. The limited number and generic vagueness of war subjects is astonishing, since the Wehrmacht had long displayed its combat readiness in parades, shows, and films, culminating in the massive war games staged at the Nuremberg Party rallies. Perhaps the visual ubiquity of the military in the public sphere was considered out of place in an art for private enjoyment. No doubt the scarcity of war themes in the two Great German Art Exhibitions of 1938 and 1939 was due to the German public's weariness of facing the prospect of a sequel to World War I, of which in 1938 Army Chief of Staff Ludwig Beck had warned in a secret memo. Since no themes were set for participating artists, they stuck to their professional goal of finding buyers for pleasant pictures.

/1.3.2 **ANOTHER WAR**

The German war art that appeared before the start of World War II had a clear ideological focus, lacked by that of the two other totalitarian states: a revisionist commemoration of World War I, whose supposedly undeserved loss the National Socialist government pledged to reverse. This was the issue that had marred the bitterly antagonistic war memorial culture of the Weimar Republic. From 1933 on, war monuments from the Weimar Republic judged to be defeatist were removed. Starting in 1937, the traveling 'Degenerate Art' show denounced anti-war imagery from that time under the slogan "Painted Undermining of Military Strength (*Wehrkraftzersetzung*)." Such measures were aimed at suppressing any fear of loss standing in the way of yet another war within one generation. Of the scarce number of military themes in the three Great German Art Exhibitions of 1937-1939, 4 out of 16 included images of World War I in 1937, 8 out of 27 in 1938, and 19 out of 31 in 1939. These historical depictions of outdated fighting were the only war images on view. Descriptive images of the contemporary military in its new uniforms and modernized battle gear were nowhere to be seen.

Two months after the outbreak of the war, *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich* published an article entitled "Painters of the World War 1914-1918" by Werner Rittich, a collaborator of Alfred Rosenberg. Going beyond the ideological commonplace "that the National Socialist world view and the new Germany were born at the fronts of the World War,"⁽²⁰²⁾ the author construed a continuity between that war and the one just started. He reviewed some well-known war painters of 1914-1918, whose works, unlike conventional battle pictures, had foregrounded the fighting spirit and endurance of common soldiers, a "readiness for sacrifice without distinctions as to social status and origin."⁽²⁰³⁾ They could now resume their civilian work where they had left off, he expected, since the class-less ideal of a people's war was being revived. The only work by a contemporary painter illustrated in Rittich's article, Albert Henrich's *1917*, which

had just been shown at the Great German Art Exhibition of 1938, juxtaposed a German and a British steel helmet, both pierced by bullet holes. The image would have suggested an even-handed commemoration of fallen enemies, were it not for the dominant position of the German over the British helmet.

A large painting by Wilhelm Sauter, the author of the famous *Heroes' Shrine* of 1936 (see Chapter 2.2 / 3.1.2), entitled *Badensian Grenadiers at Cambrai 1917*, shown at the Great German Art Exhibition of 1939, complies with Willrich's readjustment of the topicality of World War I for tracing the political struggles of the National Socialist movement to the war effort of 1939. It shows a detachment of German infantry crawling forward through the mud in a successful counterattack to retake their positions overrun by British tanks, one of which looms, disabled, at the top of the hill. Sauter stressed the soldiers' exertion to the point of showing one of them dead or dying. However, since they are lifting their heads, no longer seeking cover, their victory seems assured. The painting refers to the month-long 'tank battle' of Cambrai between November and December 1917, where British tanks overran the German positions, only to be repelled by a comeback of German infantry using hand grenades, heavy-ammunition machine guns, and light cannon to destroy them. The battle became emblematic for German soldiers' tenacity in overcoming superior weaponry.

/ 1.3.3 **HARDSHIP AND ENDURANCE**

A widely-publicized mural cycle for the City Hall in Berlin-Schöneberg, inaugurated on January 11, 1939, struck the tone for this commemorative imagery of fierce determination. Painted by Franz Eichhorst, who had served as a frontline painter in a government art program of World War I, it linked the common soldiers' endurance to the common people's readiness to fight. For his depictions of peasants on the field and construction workers on the scaffold heeding the call to arms without hesitation, Eichhorst adapted Ferdinand Hodler's famous oil painting *Departure of the Students of Jena* of 1909. He grafted the excited disposition of university students volunteering for the Prussian War of Liberation in 1813 onto working-class conscripts. However, Eichhorst's battle scenes from World War I did not dwell on the popular war enthusiasm of summer 1914, but on the fierce endurance of steel-helmeted German shock troopers in 1917-1918. Taking a page from popular and commercial war art of those years, he even included the somber retreat of German troops after the armistice of November 1918.

Franz Radziwill, Party member and front soldier in World War I (see Chapter 3.1 / 1.1.3), now thought the time was right to paint some more of the gloomy pictures of battlefield destruction he had produced in 1929-1930, to take two paintings of shrapnel-pierced German steel helmets of 1933 and 1934 out of storage, and to assemble all of them in varying World War I series at several shows. The series culminated in a

large canvas of 1939 depicting the iconic tank battle of Cambrai, featuring two pierced German steel helmets in the foreground near a pile of empty cartridge shells. Perhaps Radziwill speculated that works like this would match the new propagandistic evocation of World War I with its non-triumphalist emphasis on hardship and endurance. Yet, perhaps because he shunned the uplifting expression of tenacity usually pervading this kind of imagery, he failed in his bid to have them purchased by regional military commanders. After his official repudiation by Reich Chamber of Art President Adolf Ziegler in late 1937, he did not follow the advice of some of his more successful colleagues to submit them to the Great German Art Exhibition of 1938.

The series of wall tapestries designed by Werner Peiner for the New Reich Chancellery in 1939-1940 set the benchmark for a German war art foregoing triumphalism for endurance. The cartoons worked out at the Hermann Göring art school at Kronenburg, which Peiner directed, were never woven, but prominently displayed at the Great German Art Exhibition of 1940 and widely reproduced. For a building whose triumphalist splendor had been intended to exalt the Third Reich's political preeminence in Europe, personified in Breker's sword-bearing warrior at the entrance, it was remarkable that two of the seven battles Peiner represented—Marienburg and Kunersdorf—depicted defeats, and three more—Teutoburg Forest, Vienna, and Cambrai—successful defenses. The last event in chronological order, the 1917 tank battle of Cambrai, which Peiner designed in 1940 after two *Blitzkrieg* victories over Poland and France, brought the historic battle cycle up to World War I, the ideological precedent of the war under way. True to its iconic significance, Peiner pitted the British tanks against German horse-drawn artillery and included several dead or wounded German soldiers.

/ 2 **TOTALITARIAN DISPARITIES**

/ 2.1 **PREPARED OR UNPREPARED FOR WAR**

/ 2.1.1 **OVERVIEW**

The next World Exposition after that of Paris opened in New York on April 30, 1939, four months before the start of World War II (see Chapter 4.2/1.1.1). It featured a Soviet Pavilion even more triumphalist than that in Paris, yet with no German one to match. This representative asymmetry obscured the political dynamics of the moment, which was to turn both adversaries into temporary allies. When the Hitler-Stalin Pact was signed on August 22, 1939, it seemed as if the two states that were now both routinely called totalitarian had arrived at a shared geopolitical strategy. The Pact seemed to confirm their political symmetry, rather than their confrontation, as the message to be drawn from their facing pavilions at the Paris Expo two years earlier,

obscuring their ongoing war preparations against each other. Even though the Italian Pavilion at the New York World Fair continued to promote the E42 as the event that would foster peaceful international cooperation on the terms of Fascist order, the Paris Expo's phantom of a monumental art of national diversity, pooling antagonistic political regimes at peace with one another, had evanesced. By the second season, the Italian and the Soviet pavilions were closed.

In the course of the decade, the art policies of the three totalitarian states regarding war drifted apart. Unlike Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union, the two states still present at the New York World Fair—for all the generic militarism of their artistic cultures—had no firm war policies in place to endow large art projects with a timely propaganda mission. After Italy's colonial mutation into an 'Empire,' war was no longer an ideological component of Mussolini's capital reconstruction scheme, which was now focused on the projected World Exposition of 1942. The E42, he reckoned, would confirm the international acquiescence to his North African conquests obtained in 1936, and would be acknowledged as a monumental setting of peace on Fascist terms. In the Soviet Union, the expansionist project of a communist world revolution, proclaimed in Vladimir Tatlin's 1921 design for a *Monument of the Third International*, no longer informed the plans for the reconstruction of Moscow in general and for the Palace of Soviets in particular, both of which were focused on celebrating the achievement of socialism in one country.

Thus, the synchronization of art policy and war policy in Germany, which proceeded in lockstep with its calibrated mix of war threats and peace promises until the Wehrmacht was ready to strike, proved to be the most consistent scheme of a totalitarian coordination of the arts with a strategic timetable, a manifestation of political will to which the other two totalitarian states had no deliberate response. Italy's lack of any art anticipating the coming war—as opposed to its earlier war art celebrating its North African aggression—followed from Mussolini's misjudgment of Hitler's short-term strategy and his reluctance to be drawn into the conflict. To design the E42 with spaces for pavilions of states that might be soon at war with one another amounted to political self-deception. The Soviet Union, which had gutted its own military command in the Tukhachevsky purge of 1937, was politically so unprepared for war that it joined Germany as a short-term ally when war was within weeks of breaking out. Although its industry was geared to match, and eventually overtake, German arms production, its artistic culture merely continued showcasing its defensive resolve.

/ 2.1.2 'INTER-WAR' CULTURE

All three totalitarian states shared a militarization of their societies and their political cultures, albeit with profound distinctions. Each one had a different ideological memory of the First World War and a different ideological anticipation of another war

to come. These differences had a bearing on the strategies that determined their military build-ups during the decade. Only Germany's political culture envisaged a coming war as a political option, ostensibly conceived as a rectification of the losses and restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. What it concealed was Hitler's long-term goal of an eastward territorial expansion, although it became ever more visible in his conduct of foreign policy after having been defined in the Hossbach conference of November 1937. In the USSR, on the other hand, the First World War, which had ended in an ignominious surrender by the incoming Bolshevik government, was never commemorated. Instead, the ensuing Civil War, which had secured the Soviet state against foreign intervention, was celebrated as a precedent of vigilance against the danger of capitalist encirclement.

Fascist Italy commemorated World War I as a hard-won victory, which had steeled the resolve of the military personnel that formed the core of the Fascist Party. Monuments to the *fante*, the common soldier, dotted the country, replete with references to this continuity. Marinetti and his Futurist artists flaunted their voluntary war service to bolster their Fascist credentials. National Socialist Germany, on the other hand, denounced the German loss of the war as undeserved, due to a treacherous political submission rather than military defeat, and to be overturned one day. Seemingly defeatist War memorials from the Weimar Republic mourning soldiers of World War I as mere victims, with an implicit or explicit pacifist message, were removed. In the USSR, by contrast, the historic precedent for the military component of political culture remained the Civil War, as it had been during the preceding decade, without noticeable enhancements, although in 1932 it acquired a new topicality after Soviet policies of linking up with the world economy had failed. And when another German attack appeared to threaten, the previous one was not invoked.

After 1936, Italy's war art was reoriented onto its victorious colonial war in North Africa, which had transformed the Fascist state into a supra-national 'Empire,' now eager for international cooperation. Hence the absence of any prospective belligerency in the political culture of the following years, as confirmed by Mussolini's declaration of neutrality as late as September 3, 1939. The USSR included the build-up of its military strength in the general triumphalism extolling the achievement of socialism in one country, with an emphasis on its readiness for defeating territorial encroachments from abroad. This was the message conveyed by the armed soldiers alternating with joyful civilians on the socle reliefs of the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. Thus, it comes as no surprise that, for all their military imagery, neither Italy nor the USSR came up with any big-time ventures of war art to match those of Germany in monumental grandeur, aggressive thrust, and, above all, coordination with long-term strategic planning. Neither one of them had an art policy designed to foster readiness, if not enthusiasm, for a war to come.

/ 2.1.3 **WAR OBJECTIVES**

Italy's imperialist glorification of its Mediterranean conquests was tempered by its ambition to make the World Exposition of 1942 into a scene of international peace, discredited in 1940 by its ill-fated invasion of Greece. In Germany, on the other hand, the surge of triumphalist war art was keyed to the military threat as a diplomatic component of its expansionist drive. Soviet art responded to the apparent German threat by abandoning the aggressive posture of a world revolution, which the Comintern called off after Hitler's accession, and parading Soviet rearmament as a salient part of the two Five-Year Plans in the triumphalist style of Socialist Realism. But it produced no visual narratives of past or recent military action. The differences in the scope and significance of war art between the three totalitarian states—first, between Germany and the other two, and second, between Italy and the USSR—point to the functional connection between war policy and art policy. Only Germany had a calculated, long-term policy of military expansion in place, to which the other two totalitarian states reacted in their different ways.

The Spanish Civil War, which for the first time pitted Germany and Italy against the Soviet Union in an armed conflict, left no trace in the arts of any one of the three totalitarian states involved, but became a major theme in the art of democratic France. Their unacknowledged interference did not require whipping up political support at home or propaganda abroad. Behind this equilibrium of muffled interventions lurked the long-term antagonism between two of the three totalitarian states supporting opposite sides. Although the art of the Civil War in Spain and France often enough denounced 'fascist' intervention, it ignored Soviet support. This asymmetry concealed the inherent German-Soviet confrontation. The lack of either coverage or political specificity about the Spanish Civil War in the art of all four states contributed to the all-pervasive but disoriented anticipation of war in the public sphere during the last three years of the decade. Hitler keenly exploited this rampant uncertainty about the start and conduct of a war that was regarded as inevitable.

Of the pre-war war arts of all four states, only those of the Soviet Union and of France manifested an underlying strategy—defense of the territory—, seemingly unspecific in the Soviet Union, directed against Germany in France. This common strategy, which in 1935 led to their military alliance, accounts for the anti-fascist or anti-German flanking ideology. The pre-war war arts of Germany and Italy, on the other hand, despite their aggressive appearance, were ideologically obtuse. Neither the revanchist ideology of German art nor the retrospective triumphalism of Italian art revealed any underlying strategy. Germany's strategy was deliberately concealed, whereas Italy's was inconsistent even after the start of the war. All these differences clouded the pre-war war art of the three other states. It was the most blatant aspect

of the discrepancies between policy and ideology pervading their artistic cultures (see Chapter 2.3). Accurate foreign assessments of current art in Germany, such as the reports of French ambassador André François-Poncet, remained exceptions without political consequences.

/ 2.2 **ART OF *PAX ROMANA***

/ 2.2.1 **MEMORIALS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

The construction of 'monuments to the fallen' of World War I, undertaken by regional and local authorities all over Italy, had never been a controversial political issue, not only because Italy counted itself on the winners' side, but also because Mussolini had promoted Italy's entry into World War I from the start, and his Fascist Party kept eulogizing this decision. Debates about the artistic makeup of such monuments, on the other hand, fanned by the elaborate competitions preceding their construction, had been fervent, but had merely focused on expressive and symbolic aspects of their imagery. The foremost issue of these debates was the alternative of mourning and triumphalism in the commemoration of the simple soldier, typecast as *fante*. Thus, Fascist Italy was spared the toxic controversies surrounding the Weimar Republic's war memorials, which were decided with a vengeance in the Hitler State. Italian war monuments did not have to convert the reality of defeat into the semblance of a victory, nor to frame the memory of World War I as an unresolved predicament to be redressed by yet another war.

The best-known case of the debate was the project of a *Monumento al Fante* on the San Michele Mountain, pursued since 1920 through several competitions, eventually commissioned from Eugenio Baroni, but cancelled by Mussolini in early 1923. Critics had denounced Baroni's depiction of the common soldiers' sufferings according to the seven stations of Christ's Calvary as defeatist. Still, because Baroni was a decorated combat officer, his approach to the subject imbued his realistic depictions of the *fante's* hardships with an experiential authenticity. As late as 1935 he prevailed over modern sculptor Arturo Martini with this approach in the protracted competition for a monument to the Duke of Aosta in Turin, started in 1932. Baroni's victory, due to Mussolini's final verdict, vindicated his populist realism against Martini's classical transfiguration of the theme. Martini's own graphic rendering of combat, including gas warfare, was confined to a set of eight bronze reliefs attached to the socles for a set of tall allegorical statues. Their realism jarred with the idealism of these figures.

In the same year, Giuseppe Terragni achieved the first intrusion by a radically modern architect into Italian war memorial culture. He was commissioned to build a non-figurative war monument at Como, his native city. Following a suggestion by Marinetti, he adapted the drawing of an imaginary building by Futurist architect

Antonio Sant'Elia, a casualty of World War I. Devoid of any imagery that might have triggered ideological disagreements, Sant'Elia's design had once been published as "the entrance of a monumental commemorative building." Terragni took it for the depiction of an electric power plant, which he may have felt to symbolize the will to fight. The structure's ad-hoc rededication as a war memorial depended on Sant'Elia's prestige as a war hero. Terragni's monument constituted a belated success for the war enthusiasm of Marinetti and his Futurists, which during World War I, for all their fervent rhetoric, had rarely been expressed in their art. It inaugurated an idealized war art that was no longer tied to the gruesome memory of World War I, a war art of which Martini at Aosta had unsuccessfully advanced a classicized version.

/ 2.2.2 ART OF THE AFRICAN CONQUEST

The conquest of Libya and Ethiopia in 1935-1936 updated the celebration of war to match the ideology of the newly-fashioned Fascist 'Empire.' Modern artists who contributed to this new war art left past controversies about the monuments of World War I behind. They were now backed by a regime intent on combining the ideologies of modernization and imperial rule. In the journal *Critica Fascista* of September 1936, Culture Minister Giuseppe Bottai demanded "to furnish ideas to the combatants: clear, even if limited, and if necessary, limited so as to be clear; ideas that spur the will to impose, to dominate: the iconography of *romanità* and imperial monumentality do not do justice to the ultimate hopes of rationalization and modernization."⁽²⁰⁴⁾ Mario Sironi's painted stele on the facade of the Mostra Nazionale del Dopolavoro in Rome, dated 1938, faithfully complies with Bottai's demands. It shows a stylized, winged victory figure flying forward over a throng of steel-helmeted soldiers on the march. With his compact streamlining, Sironi stripped the figures of both traditional realism and classical stylization.

The modern turn of war art came to a head in the "Sala della Vittoria" of the Palazzo dell'Arte at the 1936 Triennial of Milan, planned shortly after Mussolini's declaration of the 'Empire.' The winning team of Edoardo Persico, Marcello Nizzoli, and Giancarlo Palanti designed a steep, stripped-down space, encased by a colonnade of plain, square pillars with no Roman decoration. In the central axis of the white, light-flooded room, Lucio Fontana's personification of *Italy* could be seen striding forward, her arms extended, leading a pair of horses. Its pedestal was inscribed with the starting phrase of Mussolini's proclamation of the 'Empire' on May 9, 1936: "The Italian people has created its empire with its blood. It will fertilize it with its work and will defend it against anyone with its arms."⁽²⁰⁵⁾ Although Fontana has followed ancient iconography, his figure, with its thinned proportions and loose drapery, has shed any trace of classical style. On the back wall, five huge photographs featuring the sculpted portrait heads of victorious Roman leaders presented ancient imagery in a contemporary medium. Thus, all components of the installation modernized the Roman paradigm.

In the Ethiopian War, Marinetti and his Futurist painters dusted off their war enthusiasm from a quarter of a century ago. Accompanied by several other writers and artists, Marinetti even once again enlisted as a combat soldier. However, unlike during World War I, the Futurists devoted a significant part of their artwork to their personal war experience or to war subjects. "The Italian Futurist movement, which was created twenty-seven years ago with the outcry 'war is the only world hygiene,' launched by me, [...] breathed with full lungs on the day when Benito Mussolini, armed with his political and military genius, went into the great African war, crowned with a quick imperial victory today," wrote Marinetti in the preface to the Futurist section of the 20th Venice Biennial of 1936.⁽²⁰⁶⁾ And at the 21st Milan Biennial of 1938, he even presented his group as 'Futurist Aeropainters of Africa and Spain.' Their figurehead was Mario Menin, whom Marinetti styled as "the greatest painter of modern battles,"⁽²⁰⁷⁾ because Menin had sketched his works in the trenches. However, the Futurists' increasingly figurative depictions of bombing and machine-gunning met with little official approval.

/ 2.2.3 EMPIRE OF PEACE

The speedy international recognition of Italy's colonial conquests culminated on October 30, 1936 in the award of the World Exposition of 1941, later postponed to 1942 to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the 'Empire.' Although it was the Ethiopian victory which had prompted Mussolini to seek the award, the propagandistic exploitation of the conquest did not last. In the remaining three years before the war, Italy, at odds with and uninformed about the relentless war drive of Germany, its closest ally, made no discernible plans for an approaching European conflict. On the contrary, the E42 was to redeem the cultural ascendancy of Italian Fascism, promoted by the annual Volta Conference, which in 1936 was devoted to the arts. "Italy wants peace for itself and for all," the *Duce* declared on May 9, 1936, the day he proclaimed the 'Empire.'⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Unlike Hitler, who often said the same, he meant it, at least for the medium term. Thus, between 1936 and 1939 Italian art had no future war to propagate. Its outstanding monuments were focused on what Mussolini called an 'empire of peace' on the model of Emperor Augustus' *Pax Romana*.

Mussolini's peace policy was monumentalized by the restoration of Augustus' *Ara Pacis*, inaugurated on September 23, 1938. The altar commemorated Augustus's victorious wars as preconditions of the peace he had secured throughout the Empire. It was encased in a modern-style glass pavilion within the area of ancient Rome that had been excavated for public viewing. The *Ara Pacis*, revamped for exhibition, was to be matched by a 'Peace Altar' in the center of the projected E42, which Marcello Piacentini still planned in 1940, and which Arturo Martini was to cover with reliefs depicting the accomplishments of Fascist rule. This modern counterpart to the ancient monument was to serve for quasi-religious ceremonies of allegiance. The complementary pair

of ancient and modern peace altars as focal points of Fascist Rome would have been a far cry from Speer's belligerent triumphal arch, concurrently planned for National Socialist Berlin, a barely veiled announcement of a war of retribution against France and of conquest against the Soviet Union. Mussolini's art policy did not envisage Italy's participation in such wars.

It took Adalberto Libera and his team of architects and engineers four years, starting in October 1937, to work out the statics and materials for another arch spanning the 'Via Imperiale,' which was to connect the city center with the site of the E42. It was to be a match for the technical achievement of the Crystal Palace in London and the Eiffel Tower in Paris, landmarks of the 1851 and 1889 world expositions. The planning commission had specified its purpose to serve as a "triumphal arch for large military and political parades" or simply as a "monumental entrance" to the Exposition. However, no image or symbol marked it as a monument of victory. It was its size—200 m wide, 100 m high—and its daring technology which made for its significance as a historic achievement. By the time the project was finalized in March 1941, even after the E42 had been relocated, it had outlived its purpose, recklessly—or deceptively—maintained, almost a year after Italy had entered World War II. It would have been the first of the many triumphal arches built in the preceding fifteen years all over Italy that lacked any military significance.

/ 2.3 **DEFENSE OF SOCIALISM**

/ 2.3.1 **FROM CAPITALIST ENCIRCLEMENT TO THE GERMAN THREAT**

The defining precedent of Soviet war policy and war art was not the First World War, but the Civil War after the armistice and the October revolution, when Western European military contingents intervened on the counterrevolutionary side. It prompted the enduring assumption of a geopolitical encirclement by capitalist states as an answer to the Soviet ambition of world revolution. Battle imagery from the Civil War seems to have been limited to the art programs of the Red Army and its anniversary exhibitions. Aleksandr Deineka's and Boris Ioganson's semi-caricaturist paintings of prisoner interrogations by interventionist officers, or Deineka's painting of a *Mercenary of the Intervention* overtopping civilians at his feet, all dating from 1931, were reminders of a foreign threat. However, the Civil War theme did not spread into the mass-produced propaganda imagery flanking the First Five-Year Plan, which highlighted the military protection of Soviet economic achievement against foreign threats. Much less was it apt to furnish templates for a future war whose potential adversaries and allies remained uncertain.

Still, military resolve was prominent in the art of the First Five-Year Plan, when forced industrialization was organized on the command principles of what has

been called “militarized Socialism”⁽²⁰⁹⁾ and ideologically dramatized as a defiant stand against a capitalist war threat. “All art is to be redirected upon defense of the country,” the 15th Party Congress decreed in 1931.⁽²¹⁰⁾ This propagandistic war art, however, lacked a historic narrative. It was focused on two emblematic images: the lone soldier with long cloak and pointed cap, standing guard with a bayonet cocked on his rifle, and the tank as the foremost product of the Red Army’s mechanization which strategists were calling for. Taken together, they represented the origins and the future of Soviet defense. In Lev Rudnev’s initial designs of the Defense Ministry and the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow, both built from 1932 to 1938, the tank was a ubiquitous sign of military might. Rudnev even planned to convert one block of the Academy building into the socle for a full-sized tank, accompanied by a life-size platoon of bronze soldiers. Such a monumental scene would have been historically unspecific.

Soon after Hitler’s accession, the perceived all-round threat to the Soviet state was narrowed down and intensified to a German attack, against which the government sought alliances with other capitalist states. Yet, although in 1933-1934 the arms budget quadrupled, and in 1935-1939 quadrupled once more, no war art was designed to serve as flanking propaganda. Stalin’s dictum “We do not desire a single piece of alien soil. But we concede to no one as much as a foot’s length of our own,”⁽²¹¹⁾ inscribed over the entrance of a hall inside the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Expo, was, rather discreetly, illustrated by the traditional motif of single soldiers standing guard at the corners of Iosif Chaikov’s steel relief at the entrance, protecting merrymaking civilians. Why the virtual absence of a triumphalist war art in a militarized society gearing up for a war the leadership envisaged as a matter of course? Was it due to the peaceable posture of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy of treaties and agreements, which culminated in 1935 with its adherence to the League of Nations? Or was it due to the hardship which rearmament imposed on the living standard of the Soviet population?

/ 2.3.2 A PEOPLE’S ARMY AT PEACE

The Soviet Union was the only one of the three totalitarian states where the military had long cultivated an institutionalized interest in an art of its own. Surprisingly, during the decade of 1929-1939 this sponsorship did not produce any belligerent war art to match that of Germany and Italy. Rather, it stressed the Red Army’s vigilant participation in a civil society at peace. Since 1923, the Red Army Command had sponsored huge 5th-anniversary art shows in cooperation with the Association of Revolutionary Artists, which furnished realistic propaganda images on demand. One might have expected that the shows of 1933 and 1938 illustrated the intensified rearmament drive underway, but this was not the case. In the summer of 1939, a Military-Defense Commission of the Union of Artists was created, jointly shared by Union chairman Alexandr Gerasimov and War Commissar Kliment Voroshilov. It arranged

for artists to live with military units and to undergo weapons drills. What came of this initiative is unknown.

The foremost monument of the military's adaptation of Soviet architecture is the Theater of the Red Army, jointly designed by Karo Alabian, the incoming president of the Soviet Architects' Union, and Vasily Simbirtzev. It was started in 1934 and completed in 1940, less than a year before the German invasion. The press hailed it as a paragon of Soviet theater design. Alabian and Simbirtzev shaped the classical ground plan of a circular amphitheater as a five-pointed star, even though the stage and the auditorium faced one another in conventional fashion. The five-pointed star, symbol of the Soviet Union and emblem of the Red Army, recurs throughout the decoration, including the circumference of the columns ringing the building. The sculptural decor was restricted to this symbolism and its pictorial ramifications. Only the roof sculptures of the main façade depict the two standard emblems of defensive vigilance from the First Five-Year Plan—the tank and the long-cloaked Red Army soldier with his pointed cap standing guard, clutching his bayoneted rifle—updated by a squad of airplanes.

A reviewer of the Red Army anniversary exhibition of 1938 defined the unity of the army and the people as its "leading leitmotif," "expressed through images of meetings between soldiers and other sectors of society,"⁽²¹²⁾ invariably in high spirits. This leitmotif rather than any forecast of a war to come dominated military themes in Soviet art after the First Five-Year Plan. In Ekaterina Zernova's *Collective Farmers Greeting a Tank* of 1937, members of a farm collective, young and old, women and a child, flowers in hand, are hailing a tank rolling into the kolkhoz. To anyone who had suffered the military enforcement of collectivization a few years earlier, the painting must have looked cynical. At a time when tanks were being mass-produced for defense, it shows them as a prop of social harmony. Aleksandr Deineka's pair of giant oil paintings entitled *1917* and *1937*, produced as pendants in 1937, exemplifies this ideology. While *1917* shows workers and peasants rushing to enlist in the Red Army for the Civil War, *1937* shows them happily trooping forward in an environment of technical accomplishment, complete with tractor, power lines, and airplanes in the sky, but with no soldiers in sight.

/ 2.3.3 **READINESS AT RISK**

The military iconography of the First Five-Year Plan did not pinpoint any potential aggressors. It merely dwelt on the dogma of capitalist encirclement, which was historically founded on the foreign interventions of the Civil War. By 1932, this dogma seemed to be confirmed by the failure of the Soviet Union to integrate its industrialization drive into the capitalist world economy. War Commissar Mikhail Frunze's military doctrine had long conceptualized this defense posture, to the point of making arms production and army organization integral components of Soviet economic development. After his death in 1925 it was promoted by his adjunct, General Mikhail

Tukhachevsky, who in 1930 became Deputy Commissar for War. Initially, Hitler's rise to government was taken to herald a 'fascist' surge of capitalist encirclement in general. Only since 1934, when it became apparent that National Socialist Germany posed the altogether different danger of eastward colonization, did the Soviet Union seek to forge alliances with France and England, capitalist states it no longer regarded as a threat.

Since the art on view in the two Red Army shows of 1933 and 1938 is not documented, it remains a mystery why Soviet artistic culture fell as short as it did of providing a suitable propaganda for the newly focused anti-German defense efforts. Perhaps the authorities felt that during the Great Terror there was no way to mobilise the Soviet populace for war. What if anything did the execution in the summer of 1937 of Marshal Tukhachevsky, along with that of numerous officers of the Red Army high command, have to do with his adherence to Frunze's outdated military doctrine? It may have been the lagging preparation for an anticipated German attack, despite the Red Army's personnel expansion and the multiplying output of the arms industry. The Hitler-Stalin-Pact of August 28, 1939, confirmed that the Soviet military was not ready to confront the ever more apparent German threat at this time. Is this why the strident anti-Soviet propaganda in German artistic culture, even before the Hossbach conference of November 1937, remained unmatched by any Soviet show of anti-German defiance?

Aleksandr Laktionov's huge canvas *Hero of the Soviet Union N. V. Yudin Visiting KomSoMol Tank Troops (Military Cadets designing a Wall Newspaper)*, painted in 1938, one year after the murderous decimation of the Red Army officer corps, extols a relaxed, joyful attitude permeating the newly-uniformed younger officers, about to take the place of their former superiors. In view of the recent purge, this widely publicized picture of the newly-fashioned Red Army leadership by a young academy graduate drives the stereotypically joyful sentiment of Socialist Realism to an uncanny extreme. It is centered on a double portrait of Stalin and War Commissar Voroshilov on the back wall, framed by columns like an altarpiece. Instead of any show of military preparedness for war in the offing, let alone of readiness to fight, the painting illustrates propaganda work by soldiers from the Party's youth organization being applauded by a decorated officer from the Civil War. We may assume that the cadets' wall newspaper spells out their ideological fervor rather than their professional training.

/ 3 **DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY**

/ 3.1 **FRANCE**

/ 3.1.1 **THE MAGINOT MENTALITY**

Almost immediately after the end of World War I, French military planning was focused on a continuous fortification of the country's Eastern border, according

to a military doctrine of preventing yet another German invasion. In December 1929, after ten years of changes and adjustments, War Minister André Maginot pushed the plan through Parliament so that construction could start in January 1930. Since 1935, consistent with the mounting threat from National Socialist Germany, and in sync with growing French rearmament, the project steadily expanded. The “Maginot Mentality,” as it has been called⁽²¹³⁾—an obsession with never again letting the homeland be turned into a devastated battlefield—came to dominate the Third Republic’s military doctrine. That between May 11 and June 22, 1940, Germany should have defeated this all-out defense in less than six weeks’ time was due neither to any technical failures of the Maginot Line, nor to insufficient French rearmament, but to the inadequacy of that military doctrine to match an unexpected German strategy envisaging the conquest of France by invading adjacent neutral states.

When Maginot, a wounded veteran of World War I, died in office on January 7, 1932, he was given a national hero’s funeral at Invalides Cathedral, and a huge monument in his honor was built near Verdun, dedicated on August 18, 1935. It was on this occasion that war Minister Jean Fabry adopted the term “Ligne Maginot” for the fortification system under belated construction. At the far end of a vast, elevated platform, the monument by architects A. Jasson and N. Chappey presents itself as a truncated pyramid of rough-hewn stone, resting on a base of shooting embrasures and vertically shielded by an upright circular bunker lid forged from steel. It is a specimen of the massive, semi-abstract symbolic structures designed throughout Europe at the time. The bunker lid doubles as a circular glory for Gaston Broquet’s group of three bronze figures depicting André Maginot as a wounded war hero, a simple sergeant—as the inscription calls him—being rescued by two comrades after an action for which he was awarded the *médaille militaire*. Thus Maginot’s personal heroism as a front soldier was related to his political zeal as a minister of war.

The plain look of the symbolical structure jars with the expressive academic realism of the bronze group, characteristic of the countless monuments devoted to the common soldier’s self-sacrifice built all over France in the preceding decade. Broquet was a specialist in this genre, with bronze groups to his credit named *La Dernière Relève* at Chalons-en-Champagne, *La Patrouille* at Raon-l’Étape, and *L’Alerte aux gaz* at Samogneux. This retrospective imagery recalls the emphasis on hardship and endurance in contemporary German imagery of World War I, with the difference that it was animated by the pathos of high-minded heroism, long cultivated in academic tradition. The unique profusion of such monuments throughout the country is a testimony to the urgency of France’s defense policy. In their scope and cost, two giant monuments to the defensive victories of French armies in World War I at famous battle-grounds in the eastern countryside, by academic sculptors Paul Landowski and Henri Bouchard, flanked the construction of the Maginot Line. Their strategic locations and

their exorbitant funding by the national government underscored their programmatic importance.

/ 3.1.2 **LANDOWSKI'S FANTÔMES**

As early as November 21, 1919, Paul Landowski, the preeminent sculptor of France, had been commissioned with a monument to the fallen at an undetermined location. In the following year, he had a model ready, but had to sit out a decade of inconclusive deliberations about the site. Finally, on June 1, 1929, he received the go-ahead, and on July 21, 1935, President Albert Lebrun inaugurated the finished work. The site eventually selected was a hill on the Chalmont plains, near Oulchy-le-Château, where between July 15 and August 4, 1918, three French Army groups had jointly dealt a decisive blow to the German invaders, setting off the rebound to victory. The choice of the site and the date of the go-ahead coincided with the construction start of the Maginot line. Through its historic topography, Landowski's generic configuration of a group of eight dead French soldiers rising from their graves and following a young woman personifying France, who will lead their return to action, signaled the intensified defense effort marked by the two-year extension of the draft and the signing of the military pact with the Soviet Union, both in 1935, the year of its inauguration.

Landowski derived his pictorial idea from a famous episode of World War I. On April 8, 1915, staff sergeant Jacques Péricard had led his badly decimated unit out of the trenches at Bois Brûlé to a successful counterattack, reportedly shouting "Dead, Arise!" ("Debout les morts!"). War minister Joseph Gallieni reported the episode in the Senate, and writer Maurice Barrès eulogized the battle cry in *l'Echo de Paris*. Péricard's "Dead, Arise!" became a patriotic slogan of French wartime culture, popularized in a profusion of texts and images. Beyond transfiguring the common soldiers' tenacity in the defense of the homeland, it carried the Christian connotation of the resurrecting dead, as if hecatombs of soldiers killed in action were eager to emerge from their graves and to re-cycle their lives in yet another battle. After World War I, Péricard, one of France's highest-decorated war heroes, became a writer specializing in World War I memoirs, including his own, and actively engaged himself on behalf of veterans' affairs. When France declared war on September 3, 1939, he published a press appeal titled "Volunteers of Death," calling for veterans exempt from service to re-enlist.

Thus, when Landowski was at long last charged with building his generic war monument for the promotion of the Maginot Line, he could count on the recurrent topicality of the pictorial idea he had conceived in the aftermath of World War I. Placed at a strategic site, as if it were an imaginary stronghold, the monument embodied the World War I experience as an inspiration for rearmament, anachronistically suggested by the state-of-the-art assault rifle in the only helmeted soldier's hand. In a pictorial reversal of the visitors' ascent up the stairs to the sculpture group atop the hill, it

seemed as if the resurrecting soldiers were about to descend, after having dug their way out of a mass grave, with clods of earth still in their hands, some still in shrouds, others already in uniform, assembled in a closely-packed unit, ready to heed the call to duty by following the advance of the young woman at the bottom of the hill. Landowski avoided the conflation of his *La France* with the armed goddess Athena in Bourdelle's famous bronze sculpture at the war monument of Montauban (see Chapter 4.3 / 2.3.1). His version has a peaceable but determined look as she is striding forward to reclaim the land, without spear or helmet, merely armed with a bulging shield featuring figures in relief of *Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité*.

/ 3.1.3 **BOUCHARD'S MONUMENT AT MONDEMENT**

The second national war monument at a historic battlefield of World War I was also planned in 1929. It was to be placed near Mondement to commemorate a battle of September 6-11, 1914, where three armies under General Joseph Joffre put a stop to the German advance. Taken together, the two monuments marked two decisive turning points in the defense of France at the beginning and the end of World War I. In June 1930, architect Paul Bigot and sculptor Henri Bouchard won a competition to erect the monument, a tall block suggesting the irregular shape of a Celtic memorial slab, cast in reddish concrete, and carved in a non-classical figure style with archaic-looking lettering, suggestive of the ancient origins of the French nation. This imaginary prehistoric memorial stands alone, visible from afar across the land. After long delays due to the Depression, the National Assembly funded the monument with allocations from outside the budget. After the block had been cast in 1932, it should have been carved before the concrete settled, but a cancellation of financing by the Senate caused a three-year interruption. When France declared war on September 3, 1939, the work was still unfinished.

Upon the steep, pseudo-natural rock slab, a winged victory appears to be flying from the outside into the pictorial field, horizontally extended, unarmed, both hands raised in the defensive gesture of warding off the enemy. An apocalyptic storm surrounds her, with the multiple tubes of the Last Judgment jutting forward between arrows of lightning flashing from behind cumulating clouds. From cave-like cavities in the concrete slab, a group of generals and officers emerge, lined up with a folkloric simplicity recalling the Douanier Henri Rousseau. Their figures vary in size, overtowered by General Joffre, who is protectively presenting the smaller figure of a common soldier, standing at attention, as the true hero of the battle. With this combination of *Art Deco* expressiveness up in the sky and populist simplicity down on the ground, Bouchard abandoned not only his customary academic classicism, but also all other historic styles he used to imitate according to the themes of his commissions. It was his way of following the trend toward an incremental modernization of traditional art, current at the time.

More than a month after France's war declaration, on October 8, 1939, Bouchard received the commission for a monument to the common infantryman of World War I in the heart of Paris, next to the Passy cemetery, to the north of the Palais de Chaillot, where Albert Laprade's Peace Column had stood two years before. Preparatory work stopped on December 12, 1940, three months after the defeat. A competition had started on November 27, 1937, while the Peace Column was still standing. Centered on an over-life-sized statue of the common soldier, narrative relief friezes were to picture, according to the brief, "the sufferings, the misery, and the sacrifices of all these martyrs: departure, toil, gas attacks, trenches and battlements, the wounded," culminating in a "resurrection of the Dead."⁽²¹⁴⁾ As the last World War I monument undertaken in France during the Depression, Bouchard's Passy project reaffirmed the slogan "Dead, Arise!" as the foundational ideology of French rearmament. It combined the commemorative acclaim of the common soldier with the belligerent perversion of the Christian resurrection doctrine to a fantasy about a return of the fallen to the fight.

/ 3.2 **SPAIN**

/ 3.2.1 **A WAR POLICY FOR THE ARTS**

The Popular Front government of Spain, fighting a Civil War in which all three totalitarian states were intervening, while its fellow Popular Front democracy in France stayed aloof, put forth the first comprehensive war art policy pursued before the Second World War. It was the artist-politician Josep Renau who devised and enacted it with a personal authority unmatched in any other European state. From his government position as Director of Fine Arts in the Ministry of Public Instruction, headed by Communist José Hernández, Renau managed to assemble diverse cultural organizations of trade unions and political parties on the Popular Front platform, where the policy's principles were debated in the public sphere. It enabled numerous artists to produce war propaganda in non-governmental settings. By the summer of 1937, Renau had been so successful in aligning artists' political activities that he was able to set up a state workshop in Valencia, where artists congregated to tailor-make contributions for the art show in the Spanish Pavilion of the Paris Expo. In March 1938, these and other works were shown in an exhibition devoted to the war in beleaguered Madrid.

In his policy-setting tract *Social Function of Poster Art*, published in the spring of 1937, Renau ranked the poster medium as the foremost art form of the time, apt to pool diverse social groups and government organizations in a common activism. The appeal of such an art was founded on a mix of age-old Spanish realism and Soviet First Five-Year-Plan agitation. Unlike the party-guided uniformity of Soviet propaganda art, it was the diversity of sponsoring agencies which, for Renau, confirmed the Popular Front credentials of poster art, whose ideological adequacy could be secured through

loose supervision. Eventually, however, a 'Workshop of Graphic Propaganda' within the Ministry of Public Instruction took poster art under political control. Under such elastic working conditions, Renau's insistence on realism as the generic style of poster art never matched the look of uniformity characterizing Soviet posters, although Renau recommended them as models. His key term 'realism' was too important a theme for animating the public debates which attracted artists to cooperation, just as in France, but with the difference of a productive outcome.

The exhortatory presentation of social issues addressed by the art of a people's war betrays the tenuous authority of republican governance, which the Spanish Communist Party sought to tighten. Calls for volunteers to fight and admonitions to focus agriculture and industry on the war effort made it look as if the government had to advertise for support rather than impose its will. In the absence of an operative conscription policy, the panoply of fighting figures presented on posters extended from lightly-armed, bare-headed militiamen in white shirts all the way to steel-helmeted regulars strapped in leather gear and wielding bayonets the way they had been drilled. All of them featured expressions of either enthusiastic or grim determination. The catchwords 'discipline' and 'militarization' addressed the contradiction between popular self-dedication and military professionalism inherent in the ideology of a people's war. Posters commemorating the first anniversary of the Civil War on July 18, 1937 dwelt on the conversion of civilian militiamen into uniformed soldiers.

/ 3.2.2 **THE PAVILION OF WAR**

The Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo of 1937 was intended to appeal for the support of Europe's democratic states for the defensive war of the Spanish Republic, and hence at variance with the peaceable bearing of the Exposition. Placed near the pavilions of the two major European states that were militarily engaged on opposite fronts of the Civil War, its ideological challenge was hard to overlook. The Pavilion was a government priority. Under the oversight of Prime Minister Francisco Largo Caballero's office, an inter-ministerial committee worked on the planning. Largo Caballero's successor, Juan Negrín, even assumed personal oversight. Director of Fine Arts Josep Renau moved to Paris to direct the construction of the building and the installation of the exhibits. The propaganda task required a political balancing act. On the one hand, the Expo's diplomatic code of conduct forbade an open challenge to Germany and Italy, invaders in the Civil War. On the other hand, the government wished to play down the appearance of political affinity to the Soviet Union, its foreign backer. As a result, the pavilion presented the Civil War as the self-defense of a democratic state.

Most of the exhibition program was devoted to this theme. Large, exchangeable photo panels over the entrance—attached less than two weeks before the opening—boasted steel-helmeted soldiers in parade formation. Documents, graphs, and

art works extolled a people's war against unspecified aggressors and denounced generic war crimes against the civilian population. When on May 1, 1937, the government demanded an international inquiry into the German bombing of the Basque town of Guernica five days earlier, photographs and text panels backing up the charge were installed on short notice. From one day to the next, Pablo Picasso changed the theme of the mural for the auditorium he was working on into an outcry against the bombing. After the Guernica bombing pulled the stops out of diplomatic restraint, the Spanish Pavilion shattered the pacifist façade of the World Exposition, monumentalized in Laprade's peace column, called the bluff on the official creed of a peaceful coexistence between antagonistic political systems, and denounced the humanitarian brutality of contemporary warfare as a warning for the future.

One theme of the war imagery pervading the pavilion was the heroic defeat of voluntary militias assembled of armed civilians, whose strategic bumbling in the battle of Málaga a year before had prompted the government to launch its 'militarization' program, a policy to forge the disparate volunteer units into a professional army, complete with a re-fashioned general staff. An equally important propaganda theme was the plight of civilian victims under the German and Italian bombings of Madrid and other cities, and the repressive cruelty of the advancing Nationalists. It combined the political will to engage in a people's war, the trust in the strength of the Republican military, and the heroic defiance of the civilian populace. Picasso's *Guernica*, which featured a dead soldier amid terrorized women, summed up this new mesh of soldiers and civilians in contemporary warfare, albeit in such a defeatist manner that it incurred objections from some officials of the Pavilion.

/ 3.2.3 CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHY

For its pictorial war propaganda abroad, the Spanish government was able to rely on a small, international group of leftist photographers residing in France, who cultivated an argumentative concept of documentary photography and attached themselves to the International Brigades in Catalonia for access to the battlefield. Their most famous member was Robert Capa. Soon the government recruited these photographers, who conceived of their work as an act of partisan support. Prime Minister Juan Negrín befriended Capa. In December 1937, Defense Minister Indalecio Prieto invited the group, along with several other foreign photographers, to accompany him on his trip to oversee the expected Republican victory at Teruel. Catalan and national propaganda agencies featured the work of Capa and his friends in journals and special publications, most notably the album *Madrid*, published in 1937 to commemorate the capital's successful defense. They furnished the photographs of Republican regulars in parade formation of which enlargements were affixed above the entrance of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo.

In France, two communist-directed mass publications regularly featured photographs of the Civil War by Capa, 'Chim' and Gerda Taro as part of the PCF's campaign for a French intervention: the weekly *Regards*, issued since 1932 by the Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires, and the PCF daily *Ce Soir*, launched in the spring of 1937 under the editorship of Aragon. *Regards* consistently inserted its pictorial coverage of the Spanish Civil War into pleas for a Europe-wide struggle against 'fascism,' to be joined immediately rather than postponed until the conflict would engulf all Europe. In token of Popular Front solidarity, the journal juxtaposed the work of Capa and his colleagues with photographs by anonymous workers. Beyond the leftist press, Capa's war photographs appeared worldwide in journals that sympathized with the defense of the Spanish Republic, while the conservative press shunned them for the reverse reason. Since the nationalist insurgents launched no photographic propaganda to match it, the Republican perspective on the Civil War came to prevail.

Capa and his colleagues highlighted popular enthusiasm for participating in the war. In his photographs, the enlistment of laughing militiamen seemed to follow from their lifestyle, cheered on by family and friends. Although at odds with the government's militarization program, such a take suited the presentation of the internecine conflict as a people's war. A portrait photograph of Capa on the cover of the *Picture Post* of December 3, 1938, was captioned "the greatest war-photographer in the World." His widely-published snapshot of a white-shirted, helmet-less militiaman mortally hit while storming forward—a first in close-up war photography—had become an icon of self-sacrifice, more upbeat than the dismembered warrior of Picasso's *Guernica*. The snapshot was reportedly taken at Cerro Muriano on September 5, 1936, but its authenticity has been questioned. It was first printed on September 23, 1936, in the illustrated weekly *Vue* with the triumphant caption "How they fell. [...] Suddenly their ascent is cut short, a bullet has whizzed—a fratricide bullet—and their blood is being drunk by their native soil."⁽²¹⁵⁾

/ 3.3 FROM DEFIANCE TO DESPONDENCY

/ 3.3.1 WAR POLICY VERSUS SOCIAL POLICY

The Popular Front government of France, pacifist to the point of disengaging from the Spanish Civil War, and weary of the militarism espoused by its domestic right-wing opposition, never sponsored any art policy related to war policy. To acknowledge that its growing defense budgets posed a risk to its ambitious social programs, the bedrock of its popular appeal, would have alienated its constituency. In 1938, less than a year after Le Corbusier had his schemes for the Paris World Exposition sidelined to a minimally-funded makeshift 'Pavilion of Modern Times' at the outskirts of the exhibition grounds (see Chapter 2.3/2.3.3), he advanced his unconventional housing

[schemes] as a challenge to the tenuous budget situation with a book-length pamphlet entitled *Cannon? Ordnance? No Thanks! Housing, Please!* The political culture fomented by the Popular Front's supporting cultural agencies, where Communists predominated, was anti-militarist. Perceiving war as the ultimate 'fascist' threat, it kept a polemical distance from the culture of the military establishment, which remained the domain of the Right, and which was the driving force behind the monumental war art of the time.

The Spanish Republic's war effort was constrained by the simultaneous goals of social revolution and defense of the democratic state. This tensions between the two impaired the authority of its central government and its general staff. Eventually, the government felt compelled to suppress anarchist movements who insisted on social revolution in disregard of strategy. Since trade unions and other social organizations promoted voluntary military service along with the reform of agricultural and industrial production, the government's call for 'discipline' pertained not only to its 'militarization' program, most strongly supported by the Communist Party, but, more generally, to the alignment of fighting force and working society. For this reason, the artistic flourish of Republican poster production, by contrast to its meager, artistically insignificant nationalist counterpart, covers a full range of themes pertaining to a working society at war, presented in argumentative terms. Its diversified imagery heralds the all-embracing 'total war' to come, which drew upon the entire populace at its peril.

With regard to the arts, the Spanish Civil War became the determinant event of political divergence between the Popular Front governments of France and Spain. While the Spanish government had no choice but to install a vigorous war art program, the French government was entangled in the contradictions between its long-term anti-German rearmament drive and its non-intervention policy. While government-sponsored artistic culture in Spain presented the panorama of a people's war fought with a fierce defiance against all odds, that of France was split between a patriotic resolve to stop another German aggression and a plaintive anti-war sentiment vis-à-vis the losing Civil War in Spain, polarized between traditional and modern art. As a result, traditional art came to prevail in the artistic culture of the Spanish Republic, rooted as it was in both Soviet agitational realism and home-made Baroque pathos. Its propaganda purpose would not have allowed for modernist obscurity. In France, on the other hand, it fell to modern artists to bewail the unfolding loss of the Spanish Civil War beyond the border.

/ 3.3.2 **THE NUMANCIA SYNDROME**

During the First World War, patriotic claims by some modern artists to produce a topical war art—most notably by the Futurists in Italy—had largely failed to be fulfilled, even by those artists who served at the fronts. Modern-minded critics who

upheld such claims did so in vain. The abundant war art produced in all participating states was of traditional observance. Since the end of World War I, which had imperiled the pre-war international communities of modern artists, modern artistic cultures in the democratic states of Germany and France, but not in Italy and the Soviet Union, turned resolutely pacifist. Their international business networks and their newly established institutional strongholds did not allow for confrontational postures. As a result, for better or worse, the culture of modern art in France, still a minority within the national artistic culture, and shortchanged by all governments from 1932 to 1936, was unsuited for fielding any ideological response to the growing European war threat. When that threat intensified in 1936, the incoming Popular Front embraced modern art on its internationalist peace platform.

The Spanish Civil War was the only war that attracted modern artists as a theme, but it was a losing war. Starting in the summer of 1937, when the Republic's eventual defeat looked ever more likely, they were unable to muster any optimism. With their monstrous transfigurations of mythical combat, they wallowed in pessimistic allegories, first and foremost bullfight scenes. Surrealists had been especially incensed by the suppression of the anarchists' revolutionary ambitions on the part of the republican government, culminating in their bloody defeat by government troops at Barcelona in June 1937. They did not share the sham defiance displayed in Robert Capa's photo reportage from the disbanding of the International Brigades at Barcelona on October 25, 1938. Modern artists' despondent view of the Civil War found a representative expression in the Paris production of Cervantes' *Numancia* in the spring of 1937 (see Chapter 2.2 / 3.2.2). The "Numancia syndrome of the beaten," as it has been called,⁽²¹⁶⁾ may also have made Picasso change the heroic resistance sentiment in his initial version of *Guernica* into the defeatist lament in the final version.

It was Max Ernst who, in his painting *Angel of the Home* of 1937, put forth the most trenchant surrealist image of the Spanish Civil War. Its title parodies the Spanish term for women's domestic work. Derived from Aragon's and Breton's short treatise "The Demon of the Home"⁽²¹⁷⁾ of 1920, a call for women to break the bonds of family life, it was a grim accolade on women fighting as militia members. It was as a confirmation of Aragon's and Breton's call that Ernst first exhibited the painting in 1938 at the International Exposition of Surrealism under the title *Triumph of Surrealism* before he changed the title to the current one at another show the following year. His retrospective statement of 1965, where he related it to the Spanish Civil War in general, obfuscates the original significance. The figure's one foot with a horseshoe identifies it as a devil in Baudelaire's understanding as patron of outcasts and rebels, in accord with the designation "demon" in Aragon's and Breton's text. In an earlier version, the figure leaves her child behind as she is storming forward. In the later one, the child has caught up and merged with her, vainly trying to hold her back.

/ 3.3.3 **DEMOCRATIC VERSUS TOTALITARIAN WAR ART**

The democratic states of France and Spain promoted a defiant, defensive war art of traditional form and conventional symbolism; a war art that was expressly or implicitly directed against Germany—entirely and emphatically in France, and to a limited extent in Spain. Considering France's failed appeasement policy and the Spanish Republic's inexorable defeat, both variants amounted to a losers' war art. In 1937, Paul Landowski's enormous bronze monument for Field Marshal Foch, consisting of six common soldiers carrying an open bier with the marshal's body on their shoulders, was installed in the St. Ambrose chapel of Invalides Cathedral. Its long drawn-out completion, eight years after its commission in 1929, attests to the obsessive topicality of the defense theme. In the same year, Ricardo Boix' stone relief *Think of Spain's Pain*, featuring the head of a mother clutching her child and looking up in terror from behind the hand that shields her face, was shown in the art exhibition of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo. Its irregular edges made it look as if it were the fragment of a monumental sculpture destroyed by the air raid it evokes.

By contrast to the coherent, though different, war art of the three totalitarian states, the war art of the two democracies was addressed to the ideological sentiments, or even the political aspirations, of mutually antagonistic constituencies. In France, these constituencies clashed in parliament and in the public sphere, in Spain they held together for the defense of a common cause. French war art was split between the Maginot Mentality and the Numancia Syndrome, between a conservative nationalism with its pride in the military and a leftist anti-fascism with its anti-war proclivity. In Spain, it was only in the Republic that a war art was developed from the ground up, while the nationalist insurgents produced none of public significance or historic relevance. As a result, the war art of democracy fell short of representing a cohesive political posture to match the German correlation between art policy and war policy, enforced as it was by totalitarian suppression of ideological diversity, subject as it was to short-term tactical adjustments from above, and, most of all, flanking a winning strategy against first Spain and later France.

Compared to the propagandistic purpose that distorted the war art of the three totalitarian states with their different agendas, the war art of democracy was forthright by default. In France, it was focused on the anticipation of a German attack, which eventually did occur. In Spain, it was tailor-made to serve the policies for a war in progress. In both states, it argued against eventual defeat. Between French monumental pathos and Spanish agitational expression, this forthright war art of democracy contrasted with its aggressive counterparts in Germany and Italy. These were driven by deceptive strategies of a simultaneous readiness for war and peace, depending on different political calculations of the short-term trajectory on which war would unfold.

In the Soviet Union, with its lagging armament drive, the art produced during the latter part of the decade would have let on nothing about the anticipation of a German attack. Italian art gave the impression that the Fascist 'empire' of 1936 was henceforth to be at peace. And German art, bristling with military resolve, gave no inkling about how the Third Reich might proceed to strike.



4/ Toward War

4.1 / Art Policy
and War Policy p. 326

4.2 / The Last Stand
of Revolutionary Art p. 360

4.3 / Traditional versus
Modern Art Revisited p. 392

4.2/ The Last Stand of Revolutionary Art

/1 REVOLUTIONARIES TO THE END

/1.1 RIVERA THE HOST

/1.1.1 ARRANGING THE MEETING

When Lev Trotsky, Diego Rivera, and André Breton were gathered at Coyoacán, Mexico, between May 20 and July 25, 1938, they engaged in discussions to reconsider the long-standing theme of the relationship between modern art and communist politics. All three were opposed to the ideological subordination of the arts to the policies of the Comintern and the cultural organizations of the Popular Front. The outcome of these discussions was a manifesto entitled “For an Independent Revolutionary Art,” jointly written by Breton and Trotsky, but signed by Breton and Rivera. It was first published, translated into English, in the U. S. journal *Partisan Review* of fall 1938,⁽²¹⁸⁾ and shortly afterwards in French and other languages in several journals of the Trotskyist movement. Trotsky had asked Breton to write a draft of the manifesto in order to attract artists to a newly-formed subgroup of his Fourth International, in the making since 1934: the ‘Federation of Independent Revolutionary Artists’ (FIARI). Upon receiving the draft, he amended it and added several passages of his own. Finally, both authors fused their contributions into the final text. Rivera had no part in this undertaking.

In 1929, the starting year of the Depression, Trotsky had been expatriated from the Soviet Union, and both Rivera and Breton had been expelled from the Communist parties of their countries. Still, none of the three had shed their communist convictions. It was by invoking Trotsky’s authority that Rivera and Breton had tried to reassert themselves against Party conformity for several years. Rivera had joined the Party at the end of 1922, resigned on April 26, 1925, had been readmitted in July 1926, and was expelled once more on September 10, 1929. Until then, he had belonged to its leadership. His final expulsion may have been related to a world-wide purge by the Third International. It did not impair his resolve to posture as a communist during his U. S. working tour two years later. In 1934, Rivera started a correspondence with Trotsky. In late 1936, he took charge of a cabled request from Trotsky’s secretary Anita Brenner to the Mexican section of the Fourth International to support Trotsky’s application for a Mexican immigration permit and personally intervened with President Lázaro Cárdenas to grant the request. Upon arrival, Trotsky took up residence at his home.

At the time the Manifesto was written, Trotsky recalled, he had not concerned himself with artistic questions since the publication in 1924 of his world-renowned *Literature and Revolution*. As for Rivera and Breton, they had operated in different environments of political culture, represented different artistic practices, and hence were not acquainted with one another. It is Trotsky under whose auspices the three of them came together, since he had figured prominently in the works and pronouncements of both artists several years before their meeting. At this point in time, Trotsky's stream of pronouncements seemed to promise a viable alternative to the Stalinist policies of the Soviet Union and the Communist parties worldwide under the tutelage of the Comintern. However, the encounter was unplanned and took place in a personalized social setting, including the protagonists' spouses, with estrangements and reconciliations among Trotsky and the other two. It brought together three high-strung, combative individuals in a beautiful ambient with no immediate political agenda, although all three were engaged in long-term networks of political endeavors.

/1.1.2 **THE 'AUTHENTIC REVOLUTIONARY ARTIST'**

It was Rivera's initiative to bring about the meeting, since he was responsible for securing Trotsky's residency in Mexico and hosting him in his house, and later for hosting Breton when the writer, upon arrival for a lecture tour sponsored by the French government, found himself stranded without money because of botched arrangements on the part of the French embassy. His accomplishments as the leading muralist of successive Mexican governments, all of which styled themselves as revolutionary, and his provocations of two corporate sponsors in the United States whom he confronted with the communist tendency of his murals, had earned him a world-wide renown as a revolutionary artist, which he enhanced through a steady stream of programmatic writings. Surprisingly, then, Rivera had no part in the writing of the Manifesto, which Trotsky and Breton worked out among themselves. The vacuous ideal of a revolutionary artist they devised bears no resemblance to his works, self-descriptions, or pronouncements. Nevertheless, he postured as a front man for Trotsky when he signed the Manifesto in order to hide Trotsky's co-authorship.

Rivera's long-developed, flamboyant self-presentation as a revolutionary artist seems to have left no trace in the discussions at Coyoacán. Nor did the participants, on their long excursions into the surroundings, visit any of his murals. Apparently, the life and work of a *bona fide* revolutionary artist with their built-in conflicts was of no interest to Trotsky and Breton. In his published writings, Rivera had based his revolutionary self-characterization on his class-transcending professional status as a common worker, who in the initial Mexican state mural programs had toiled alongside construction crews for equal pay. The empathy with the proletariat he had thus acquired was at variance with his middle-class origins and profound education. During his aborted two-year tenure as

director of the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City, he had devised an over-lengthy, over-ambitious teaching program which required students to spend one year as common workers and then take a panoply of courses in art history, literature, and science. This preparation was to enable them to produce a viable art of the proletariat.

Rivera's claim to be a revolutionary artist depended on his assumption that by providing the proletariat with its own image, art would help it acquire class-consciousness and thus inspire it to struggle for overcoming class division. Rather than devise new art forms to this end, revolutionary artists were to avail themselves of traditional art forms and turn them against their original class base. This program had its origins in the cultural policies of the self-styled revolutionary governments of Mexico, but Rivera attempted to develop it in a communist direction. Although the Mexican Communist Party strongly opposed those governments, he continued to receive their most prestigious official commissions, which he filled with communist images and symbols without incurring any objections. The ensuing inevitable conflicts continued to accompany Rivera's highly public work. They made him conceive his artistic and political activities as a ceaseless class struggle with its attendant showdowns or compromises. Always on his own, he saw himself, in his own words, as a "propagandist"⁽²¹⁹⁾ or a "guerilla fighter,"⁽²²⁰⁾ rejecting any deference to his commissions.

/1.1.3 RIVERA'S CONTROVERSIAL CAREER

By placing dramatic scenes of barricade fighting and large-scale Soviet emblems on government buildings, Rivera sought to supersede the established ideology of the Mexican agrarian revolution with that of a world-wide class struggle uniting peasants and workers. In the last panel of his mural in the National Palace, a towering figure of Karl Marx appears pointing the way to an ideal governance. According to Rivera's self-serving account in his book *Portrait of America* of 1934, he set out to work in both the Soviet Union and the United States in order to enact his notions of revolutionary art in the two most advanced industrial states of the world. In the first, he was politically hailed but kept from working. In the second, he was applauded for his work but politically rejected. The outcomes of both geopolitical forays were equally problematical, as they touched upon the contradictions between Rivera's ideological convictions and the political preconditions of his muralism. The Marx panel he painted upon his return in 1934 in the Palacio Nacional was in fulfillment of a contract signed five years earlier. From then on, he had received no further commissions.

Rivera's work in the USA between 1931 and 1933 exacerbated the contradictions inherent in the political premises and objectives of his art. How could he uphold his self-definition as a revolutionary artist when the murals he was painting were sponsored by notorious leaders of U.S. monopoly capitalism, Edsel Ford in Detroit and John D. Rockefeller in New York? In the murals of the Detroit Institute of Art, painted in 1931,

his patron shielded Rivera in his quest to endow industrial workers with a pictorial exaltation. However, in the next mural he undertook at the Rockefeller Center in New York, he overextended himself in an accolade of Soviet politics, refused the patron's demand for at least replacing a Lenin portrait, was dismissed, and saw his work destroyed. In the end, Rivera was marginalized and radicalized to the point of painting—from July 15 until December 8, 1933—the mural panel series *Portrait of America* for the New Workers' School in New York City, run by a Communist splinter group, for free. The series depicted a blunt history of class struggle in the USA, leading into the current worldwide confrontation between communism and fascism.

It is in the *Portrait of America* panel series that Rivera's turn to Trotsky surfaces for the first time. In *Proletarian Unity*, the central panel for the head wall of the meeting hall, he adapted the Lenin segment of his aborted Rockefeller Center mural. He placed Lenin in the midst of Communist leaders, flanked by Stalin and Trotsky, as if these two could still cooperate. At the height of the Trotskyan schism, the panel projects a worldwide unity of communist parties and factions. Only a slight visual preponderance of Trotsky's over Stalin's portrait suggests Rivera's preference. Yet from a Stalinist perspective, Trotsky's mere appearance would have made the panel anathema. Stopping short of taking sides, Rivera's mural appears anachronistic or utopian. In the modified replica of the destroyed Rockefeller Center mural in the Palacio de Bellas Artes of Mexico City, which Rivera painted the following year, Trotsky makes his first appearance as Lenin's sole successor. Holding the banner of his projected Fourth International, he points the way to world revolution. A giant statue of fascism looms behind him, its head broken off, as if Trotsky had vanquished it himself.

/1.2 **TROTSKY THE LEADER**

/1.2.1 **MODERN ART AND REVOLUTION**

Lev Trotsky's authority on matters of art was founded on his widely-translated book *Literature and Revolution* of 1924, a collection of essays that combined an ideological critique of the revolutionary claims of modern art, written in pre-revolutionary exile, with a political critique of the initial dominance of modern art in Soviet cultural policy. Both critiques concluded with unqualified repudiations. In several articles Trotsky had written for various Russian exile journals during his sojourn in Vienna between 1908 and 1914, reprinted in the book, he had criticized the oppositional or even revolutionary claims of modern art as middle-class ideological self-delusions. They formed part of his critique of intellectuals as the *Bohème*, a de-classed petty-bourgeois social group. To revolutionary movements in politics, Trotsky wrote, modern art contributes nothing. By giving voice to an unfocused social critique, it plays a stabilizing role of venting tensions within bourgeois culture, which will support it the more strongly the

more provocative it appears. Its ostensibly radical aversion to bourgeois society envisages no political alternative.

Trotsky made this political critique of pre-revolutionary modern art a foundational argument for a comprehensive theory of revolutionary art in the new Soviet state. According to this argument, modern artists can only participate in the revolutionary process without submitting to government or Party control. Yet, by the same token, their contributions remain just as insufficient as before. Modern art's lack of engagement with the revolutionary events of the time before the First World War, which coincided with its breakthrough in capitalist culture, was proof of its political irrelevancy. That the organizations of workers' parties should have ignored it betrayed its class limitation. Its claims for autonomy prevented it from being embraced by the working-class. Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument of the Third International* of 1919-1920 is the only work of Soviet art that Trotsky dealt with in his book. With little patience for the symbolic significance Tatlin had attached to his three-dimensional design, he took the purpose of the project as the steel shell for a Party office building at its word, doubting its technical feasibility and objecting to its dysfunctional shape.

By asking Breton to draft the Manifesto fourteen years after the appearance of *Literature and Revolution*, Trotsky abandoned his political repudiation of modern art and endorsed its pre-war revolutionary aspirations. Forgetting or forgiving its class-bound ideological self-indulgence he had denounced then, he was now ready to grant revolutionary significance to its mere freedom. The social preconditions and political objectives enabling art to fulfill a revolutionary mission, and its acceptance by the proletariat whose dictatorship is to determine the political culture for it to unfold, had been the two main issues of *Literature and Revolution*, spelled out by a member of the government in hopes of influencing official art policy through open debate. That the Manifesto does not even touch upon these issues was realistic by default, since Trotsky was in no position to set art policy for any party, let alone for any government. Throughout his political activities in exile, he never questioned the Bolshevik state, compromised, but not invalidated by Stalinist 'bureaucracy' in his view, and never envisaged any other political system.

/1.2.2 **AUTHORITY AND INDEPENDENCE**

In *Literature and Revolution*, Trotsky had dwelt at length on the historic limitations of an art intended to promote the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, which the proletariat itself was incapable of producing, and which hence had to be fashioned from the extant art of the 'bourgeoisie.' Such an art could only be transitory, since the advent of socialism would do away with the proletariat as a class. At that time, the transition from revolution to socialism shaped the dialectical dynamics of Trotsky's thought on art. The political functions of an art responsible to the proletariat as he envisaged

it could not stop at the proletariat's idealization as a class but had to be aimed at an abolition of class society, as it was projected in the party-guided revolutionary change to socialism. The last chapter of *Literature and Revolution* projects a utopian council democracy stripped of state institutions, where a classless society will enjoy an art designed to match its needs and preferences. Art will blend into life according to 18th- and 19th-century French utopian writers Condorcet and Saint-Simon. In the conversations at Coyoacán, Trotsky still held on to this ideal.

The foremost question Trotsky raised in *Literature and Revolution* was the extent to which the Bolshevik Party or the Soviet government should control artistic culture, both by prescribing themes or styles and by interdicting art at variance with their expectations. This question most directly affected modern art, compromised in his eyes. However, Trotsky vigorously rejected any such control. In concurrence with Education Commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky's liberal art policy, he left it to the artists' own professional competency to determine their work's revolutionary significance, which was under competitive debate at the time he published his book. In his judgment, the Party lacked such a competency. Issues of commission and audience he left out of consideration. Still, Trotsky made the exemption of the arts from political control conditional on "a categorical standard of being for or against the revolution."⁽²²¹⁾ "The Revolution," as he wrote in a quasi-mythical personification of the term, would suppress any art falling short of this requirement.⁽²²²⁾ How such a prerequisite could be enforced without Party control, he did not say.

In the Manifesto, Trotsky spared himself any practical considerations about the production, purpose, and impact of revolutionary art. His sole concern was to grant artists a political license without political responsibility. Trotsky even revoked his earlier reservation, "except against the revolution," which Breton had inserted in his draft. A true artist was to be revolutionary per se. At this time, of course, Trotsky would have been at a loss to specify any extant revolutionary situation, or any extant revolutionary regime, to which such an artist would be able to adhere, let alone contribute. "In the face of the era of wars and revolutions which is drawing near, everyone will have to give an answer."⁽²²³⁾ What kind of answer, and to what question? The only revolutionary perspective Trotsky could open to artists was desperate. Already two years earlier, he had envisaged such a perspective in his book *The Betrayed Revolution*, according to which, on the precedent of 1917, the ineluctable defeat of the Soviet Union in the imminent war would spawn another revolution. This scenario of doom failed to acknowledge the anti-fascist struggle to which leftist artists were committed.

/ 1.2.3 **ANOTHER AVANT-GARDE**

In an article entitled "Art and Politics in Our Epoch," dated June 18, 1938,⁽²²⁴⁾ which appeared in the August issue of *Partisan Review* preceding the issue carrying

the Manifesto, Trotsky charted the historic moment that led him to redefine the revolutionary significance of contemporary art, reversing his denial of any such significance in his articles from before the First World War. The reversal is based on his anticipation of an end to the cycle of systemic accommodations of modern art's challenge to bourgeois society that would follow from the world-historical crisis of the Great Depression. Since this crisis had made capitalism decline beyond recovery through democratic politics, he argued, bourgeois culture had become too weak for such an accommodation. Now Trotsky modelled the expected advance of his newly planned revolutionary movement on that of the artistic 'avant-garde.' He did not use the term, but predicted that the Fourth International, to be officially launched later in the year, would eventually win the lacking mass base on the precedent of "a progressive movement" in the arts, which, though insignificant initially, eventually prevailed.⁽²²⁵⁾

In the same article, Trotsky hailed Rivera as the foremost revolutionary artist of the time. "Do you wish to see with your own eyes the hidden springs of the social revolution? Look at the frescoes of Rivera. Do you wish to know what revolutionary art is like? Look at the frescoes of Rivera."⁽²²⁶⁾ It was Rivera's adherence to the ideals of the October Revolution that earned him such an accolade. However, Trotsky also stressed Rivera's heritage of Mexican native culture, omitted his strained relationship with Mexican governments, and highlighted the rejections his work had incurred from both Soviet leaders and U.S. patrons. All this added up to near-perfect credentials for an independent artist of the Fourth International. Rivera would have been an apt interlocutor for Trotsky to frame the Manifesto, because in his long career as an artist and politician he had experienced, and written about most if not all the political issues addressed in *Literature and Revolution*. Yet he did not actively share in the writing of the Manifesto, which shows no trace of his widely publicized ideas. All he contributed was his signature.

Trotsky rather turned to Breton, whose political experience was limited to the ups and downs of his relationship with the French Communist Party, and who owed his radical postures to an uncompromising rejection of political realities and a fierce overdetermination of his personal convictions. Seventeen years Trotsky's junior, he had long looked up to him for ideological orientation. The Manifesto is not the outcome of the three-way discussions Trotsky, Rivera, and Breton may or may not have held at Coyoacán. Rather, it is a text Trotsky persuaded a reluctant Breton to draft in order to attract artists to the FIARI. And it was not intended to summarize any current political prospects of revolutionary art, only to reaffirm the artist's independence as a precondition. Trotsky's charge gave Breton the chance to have his notion of artistic independence, honed to absolute intransigence during years of struggle with, first, 'bourgeois' culture and, later, Communist party politics, validated as a political position. For him, submitting his draft for revisions and amendments to the only politician he trusted and admired was a small price to pay.

/1.3.1 **THE REVOLUTIONARY HABIT**

To the two political heavyweights with long-standing revolutionary credentials, André Breton had nothing to show except a shifting set of ideological beliefs pronounced to his small literary milieu in Paris. Why would Trotsky entrust him with writing a foundational manifesto for the artistic constituency of a world-wide political movement? And why would Rivera sign a text entirely remote from his own political agenda? For Breton, the reconciliation between making a political contribution to the revolutionary struggle and holding on to the unconditional freedom of art as a radical stand of opposition to society had been his paramount concern, even before he engaged himself with the Communist Party, and continued to determine his engagement and his final break. While Trotsky and Rivera could boast high political achievements as well as dramatic political setbacks that had netted them a world-wide celebrity as revolutionaries, Breton's reputation solely rested on his fierce defense of artistic independence from political control in the city of Paris through continuous literary altercations. But that was just what Trotsky needed for defining the main aspiration of the Manifesto.

Breton had long been the leader of an artists' and writers' movement, which in its breakup of conventional art forms and its aggressive social critique had gone farther than any other in capitalist states during the two decades between World Wars I and II. Over and beyond their work, the surrealists were prone to prove their revolutionary aspirations by disruptive interventions in the public sphere. They manifested their provocative cultural critique in group pronouncements on political issues of the day rather than in the art work of their members. The further step they took, however, starting in 1925 and culminating in 1930, of politicizing themselves by adhering to the Communist Party failed on the issue of artistic self-determination. It was this issue that drove the factionalist struggles within the surrealist group, pitting individual members against one another, struggles which Breton vainly tried to decide by personal authority and which led to defections or exclusions. When Louis Aragon submitted to Party discipline for the sake of political activism, he stopped being a surrealist.

At the start of the Depression, Breton's ties to the Communist Party reached their breaking point. Although he had already been ousted as a member in 1929, in his Second Surrealist Manifesto of 1930 he still professed allegiance to Communism in the event of a future war. Otherwise, the surrealists would pursue their revolutionary goals "by their own particular means."⁽²²⁷⁾ In the Second Manifesto Breton quotes the tart remark of Party leader Michel Marty: "If you are a Marxist, you don't need to be a surrealist."⁽²²⁸⁾ This made the surrealist version of revolutionary art appear redundant. Indeed, during the following decade surrealist art began to flourish on the upper

middle-class art market, first in France, and then abroad, with no trace of a revolutionary message. Even the class-transcending cultural policy of the Popular Front, to which the Communist Party had rallied in 1935, could not mitigate the break, because surrealist art was the opposite of popular. Thus, the political split became extreme. During the general strike of 1936 the Party urged moderation, while the Surrealists called for a violent takeover of power by armed workers' militias.

/1.3.2 CLASS LIMITATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Breton's conflicts and eventual break with the Communist Party resulted from his refusal to cede his radical ideas about art and literature to the service of Party propaganda. Not only was he unwilling to abandon the axiomatic antagonism between traditional and modern art for the sake of transmitting a political agenda, but he did not accept any agenda for the arts at all. In his efforts to engage with the culture of a mass party designed for working-class appeal, Breton saw himself required to forego his upper middle-class educational privilege. Already in his pamphlet *Legitimate Defense* of 1926, one year after signing up as a Party member, he publicly rejected the request from the editor of the Party daily *L'Humanité*, Henri Barbusse, to write instructive articles for its readers. His two-fold activities as dealer and critic in the upper-middle-class culture of modern art and as a political intellectual and writer on behalf of or at variance with a working-class party made for a self-contradictory, two-track career that dealt with two antagonistic constituencies. For him, 'independent,' the current term for modern art, meant to be beholden to neither one of them.

Although the French Communist Party's organizational discipline, ideological subservience to the Comintern and adherence to the Popular Front precipitated Breton's eventual break-off, it is doubtful that he would have been able to pursue his revolutionary ambitions within any political organization, since they were derived from the axiomatic claims of modern art for absolute autonomy. The short-lived literary opposition group called 'Contre-Attaque,' which he helped found together with Georges Bataille in October 1935, defined itself as a "fighting union of revolutionary intellectuals" ("union de lutte des intellectuels révolutionnaires.") Without a working-class constituency or audience, it nonetheless called for an "intractable dictatorship of the people in arms,"⁽²²⁹⁾ expected to violently overthrow the government. In May 1936, more than a month before the first Popular Front government was formed, Breton and several other surrealists walked out on 'Contre-Attaque,' precipitating its demise. It was the last of several organizational schemes Breton had been pursuing in literary politics. On June 16, 1936, the 'International Surrealist Exhibition' he had been organizing opened in London to great acclaim.

Breton's pamphlet *Neither Your War nor Your Peace*, published immediately after his return from Mexico, confirms his refusal to commit modern art to any political

agenda for the sake of its revolutionary purity any longer. Concurrent with his unsuccessful efforts to recruit artists and writers for the FIARI, it amounted to an unaverring retreat from politics. Breton's idiosyncrasy of political conscience contrasted with the world-embracing outreach he worked for on behalf of the growing surrealist literary and artistic network, starting with the London show of 1936 and culminating in the Paris show of January 1938, both labeled 'International.' Breton wrote up the latter as if surrealism had become an expanding world-wide movement. The coincidence of political failure and artistic success, of political breakup and artistic alliance-building, is an unexpected confirmation of the political independence which the Manifesto of Coyoacán demands for the arts. It inaugurated the surge of surrealist culture as a focus of world-wide adherence that Breton, giving up on his political aspirations, tirelessly worked for during and after the Second World War.

/1.3.3 **BRETON'S TROTSKYISM**

Breton's formal break with the Communist Party dates from a meeting the Surrealist group held on March 11, 1929, to clarify its position vis-à-vis Trotsky's recent expulsion from the Soviet Union. In the Second Manifesto, where Breton renders an account of the break, Trotsky concludes with a list of names that "circumscribe a century of truly heart-wrenching philosophy and literature: Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Jarry, Freud, Chaplin, Trotsky."⁽²³⁰⁾ Less than two years later, on December 1, 1931, Louis Aragon and Georges Sadoul, on the eve of the Second International Conference of Revolutionary Writers at Kharkov, signed a self-critical declaration where they reneged on both the 'Freudianism' and the 'Trotskyism' of the surrealists, presumably taking exception to Breton's efforts at a convergence of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Indeed, in April 1934, several surrealists followed Breton in signing his pamphlet *The Planet without a Visa*, written to protest the French government's denial of an entry visa to the exiled Trotsky. The defiant statement of a Left outside the Party ended with Trotsky's prediction that "socialism will mean a leap from the reign of necessity to the reign of freedom."⁽²³¹⁾

Applying Trotsky's notion of a permanent revolution to the violent clash between Right and Left in France on February 6, 1934, Breton felt that an upset of capitalism's social order was ineluctable and imminent. However, with his charge of a "scandalous complicity of the Second and Third Internationals," directed at the two leftist parties about to join in the Popular Front, he dismissed all extant forces of the Left. Since 1935, Breton's sympathies for Trotsky's exile politics enabled him to maintain the long-standing revolutionary self-designation of modern art at its most radical, and its most hypothetical. Like Trotsky, he held on to the communist label, rejecting the oppressive constraints that Bolshevik cultural policy had adopted after the April Decree of 1932. Finally, in February 1937, Breton hailed the coincidence in time of the

International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936 in London with widespread factory occupations in France—opposed by the Communist Party—as a common sign of incipient revolution. He echoed Trotsky’s dictum “the French revolution has begun”⁽²³²⁾ precisely in the year the Popular Front government staged the Paris Expo as a celebration of peace.

At this point in time, Trotsky was opening to Breton a political perspective of world-historical scope. It rested on his expectation that at the height of the Depression, the capitalist social order would no longer be able to muster the economic strength required to tolerate its culture of dissent, just as it could no longer gather the political will to abide by its democratic form of government. Such expectations had no bearing on Breton’s busy initiatives and activities in artistic culture, although he would at times say otherwise. The principal attraction Trotsky’s views and writings held for him was the convergence of revolutionary aspirations and unrestricted freedom, germane to the ideology of surrealism, as a precondition of communist art policy. To find himself entrusted with writing such an art policy for a world-wide revolutionary movement, however tenuous if not utopian, must have appeared as the ultimate vindication to Breton. It did not matter that Trotsky had lifted all the social and political conditions he had once specified in *Literature and Revolution*. When Breton suggested he re-issue the book in French translation, Trotsky declared it out of date.

/ 2 **THE MANIFESTO**

/ 2.1 **STRUCTURED DIGEST OF QUOTATIONS FROM THE TEXT**

/ 2.1.1 **THE HISTORIC MOMENT**

[Acute Decline of Culture:] “We can say without exaggeration that never has civilization been menaced so seriously as today. [...] today we see world civilization, united in its historic destiny, reeling under the blows of reactionary forces [...] We are by no means thinking only of the world war that draws near. Even in times of ‘peace’ the position of art and sciences has become absolutely intolerable.”

[Totalitarian Equation:] “In the contemporary world we must recognize the ever more widespread destruction of those conditions under which intellectual creation is possible. The regime of Hitler [...] has reduced those who still consent to take up pen or brush to the status of domestic servants of the regime [...]. If reports may be believed, it is the same in the Soviet Union, where Thermidorian reaction is now reaching its climax.”

[Compromised Democracy:] “It goes without saying that we do not identify ourselves with the currently fashionable catchword: ‘Neither fascism nor communism!’, a shibboleth which suits the temperament of the philistine, conservative and frightened, clinging to the tattered remnants of the ‘democratic’ past.”

/ 2.1.2 **SUBJECTIVE REVOLUTION**

[True Art is revolutionary:] "True art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time—true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society. This it must do, were it only to deliver intellectual creation from the chains which bind it. We recognize that only the social revolution can sweep clean the path for a new culture."

[Against the Popular Front:] "The totalitarian regime of the USSR, working through the so-called cultural organizations it controls in other countries, has spread over the entire world a deep twilight hostile to every sort of spiritual value. [It is promoted by persons] disguised as intellectuals and artists [...]. The official art of Stalinism, with a blatancy unexampled in history, mirrors their efforts to put a good face on their mercenary profession."

[The Psychoanalytic Subject:] "The communist revolution [...] realizes that the role of the artist in a decadent capitalist society is determined by the conflict between the individual and various social forms which are hostile to him. This fact alone, insofar as he is conscious of it, makes the artist a natural ally of revolution. The process of sublimation, which here comes into play and which psychoanalysis has analyzed, tries to restore the broken equilibrium between the integral 'ego' and the outside elements it rejects."

/ 2.1.3 **A NEW ORGANIZATION**

[Socialism in Politics, Anarchism in Art:] "If, for the better development of the forces of material production, the revolution must build a socialist regime with centralized control, to develop intellectual creation an anarchist regime of individual liberty should from the first be established. No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above! Only [then] will it be possible for [...] artists to carry out their tasks [...]."

[Freedom of Support:] "Every progressive tendency in art is destroyed by fascism as 'degenerate.' Every free creation is called 'fascist' by the Stalinists. Independent revolutionary art must now gather its forces for the struggle against reactionary persecution. Such a union of forces is the aim of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art which we believe it is now necessary to form."

[Rallying Cry:] "Our aims: The independence of art—for the revolution. The revolution—for the complete liberation of art!"

/ 2.2.1 **AGAINST ALL POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

The Manifesto starts on the assumption of a severe historic crisis that puts the work of artists everywhere in jeopardy. However, it does not relate the two historic emergencies of the decade—the economic and social impact of the Great Depression and the approaching Second World War—to one another but conjures up an unspecified political emergency without antagonists. While previous pronouncements on revolutionary art had explicitly or implicitly challenged an adversarial political or social order to be overturned, the Manifesto purports to engage the entire world. As current revolutionary movements in China and Spain were ending in defeat, it falls back on the apodictic correlation between revolutionary art and revolutionary politics on the advance. Its global extension rests on a rejection of all three political systems currently confronting one another. While in the case of communism and ‘fascism,’ the charge of oppressing artists’ independence comes as no surprise, in the case of democracy it appears unjustified. The principled communist opposition to capitalism, to which all three authors still adhered, overrides the systemic differences.

The Manifesto’s sense of historic emergency is derived from the totalitarian equation Trotsky had drawn two years earlier in *The Betrayed Revolution*. It symmetrically denounces the Hitler State and the ‘Thermidorian’ Soviet Union. The Stalinist dictatorship has invalidated their antagonism as embodiments of the clash between capitalist enslavement and communist liberation. Democracy, which can boast freedom of the arts, is excluded from the comparison of political systems, but its underlying capitalist economy is mired in a crisis the authors estimate to be terminal. Under dismal market conditions, artists also lose their independence. Economic hardship has a similar effect as totalitarian subjugation. Such an even-handed rejection of totalitarianism and democracy rests on Trotsky’s conviction that communism can be restored to freedom on its own terms. Clinging to the same ideal after his own break with the Communist Party, Breton kept advocating revolution against the Third Republic, which he opposed even more bitterly after the Party had joined the Popular Front coalition.

Trotsky and Breton realized that artists’ economic hardships caused by the Depression compelled them to adapt their work to the ideological requirements that came with party or state support. Judging it as a “period of the death agony of capitalism, democratic as well as fascist,” they no longer acknowledged democratic politics as a safeguard of artists’ freedom. Their condemnation of totalitarian art was not limited to the repressive art policies of the Soviet and German regimes, but also targeted their efforts to furnish themselves with an art of propaganda by financial support and

administrative supervision. In this political economy, only hack artists could thrive. If independence was germane to the profession, their work was no art at all. The contemptuous denunciation of the “tattered remnants of the ‘democratic’ past,” issued by a writer on a government-sponsored lecture tour and a politician under the protection of a democratic government, was specious. It recalls the Comintern’s unsuccessful attempts to topple democratic governments in the name of world revolution during the first four years after World War I.

/ 2.2.2 **A COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY**

The wholesale repudiation of all three political systems presupposed the assumption that communism’s legitimacy could be recaptured if communism was restored to independence of its current dictatorial debasement. In *The Betrayed Revolution*, Trotsky had taken pains to elaborate on his distinction between the extant capitalist and a hypothetical Soviet democracy. On the strength of this hypothesis, the Manifesto soared above the quandaries that entangled current groups or agencies promoting revolutionary art, quandaries which had mired Rivera’s monumental accomplishments and from which Breton had never been able to extricate himself. It relapsed onto an abstract, even vacuous, idea of revolution as a mere conviction of individuals. Detached from all previous or current definitions of revolutionary art pervading leftist artistic cultures everywhere, the Manifesto’s reassertion of the term was meant to sanction an art without political direction, without political purpose, and without political goal. The “independence” on which it enjoined artists to insist was based on a refusal of contemporary politics.

On December 5, 1936, the Soviet regime had adopted a new constitution, of which article 125 guaranteed three fundamental freedoms: of speech, of the press, and of public meetings. Inscriptions featuring its key provisions were scattered through the Soviet pavilion of the 1937 Paris Expo. The art show in the Soviet pavilion of the New York World Fair was billed as a testimony to Soviet democracy. Trotsky surely had this propaganda in mind when he desisted from investing the term democracy with any value. After all, the new Soviet constitution had ominously qualified its guarantees of freedom with the proviso “in conformity with the interests of the workers and with the view of affirming the socialist system.”⁽²³³⁾ Trotsky struck the analogous proviso “except against the Revolution” from Breton’s draft. Unlike the Soviet constitution, the Manifesto does address the institutional regulation of politics. Its categorical insistence on independence—rather than freedom—leaves open what artists might contribute to any specific political agenda, be it spontaneously or under obligation. It takes communism for granted pure and simple.

While the Manifesto limits its summary rejection of Communism as practiced in the USSR to the totalitarian equation with German ‘fascism,’ it focuses on “the

so-called cultural organizations [the USSR] controls in other countries." This specification targets the Popular Front cultures of France and Spain, surely on account of Breton's perpetual conflicts with them. Rejecting communist manipulation enhances the Manifesto's pitch to disaffected artists on the Left to join the FIARI as an alternative organization, this one without discipline, but also without political backing, funding, and strategy to fight for a cause. The sole impetus for artists to join is personal conviction rather than professional opportunity. The underlying exclusion of any remunerated work, no doubt because of the FIARI's lack of funds, recalls Breton's principled rejection of writing for pay. It disregards the professional needs of visual artists, with which Breton, a freelance art dealer, must have been familiar. The French Communist Party, on the other hand, fought for the rights of artists, whose works at the art shows in the Maison de la Culture were for sale.

/ 2.2.3 ANARCHISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Politically, the Manifesto does not call for a complete freedom of Communism, but only for the coexistence of "a socialist regime with centralized control" and "an anarchist regime of individual liberty" that exempts the arts from social and political incorporation by totalitarian regimes. It expects artists "to carry out their tasks" which no one is to set for them. With the rehabilitation of anarchism, the long-rejected alternative to Communism in the Marxist tradition, the Manifesto falls back on the posture of social dissent adopted by modern artists before the First World War. It revokes the contrary move from anarchism to communism which many of these artists had made after the First World War, once communist parties were in place. In the Spanish Republic, Josep Renau, the Director of Fine Arts, was a prominent representative of this transition, which had eventually propelled him to the post of Undersecretary of Fine Arts (see Chapter 3.1/3.1.3). During the losing Civil War, his government had suppressed anarchist organizations pursuing policies of what Trotsky termed permanent revolution.

Breton had failed to translate his revolutionary aspirations into politics and had never pursued them in his literary work. At the end of the day, he was reduced to shrink them into a notion of artists' moral integrity, into the independence of their "inner world." This led him to insert the psychoanalytic liberation of the subject, the fundamental surrealist tenet, into the Manifesto. Trotsky relented in letting him define the revolutionary task as restoring "the broken equilibrium between the integral 'ego' and the outside elements." A "process of sublimation" substitutes for a political practice affecting reality, as if the revolutionary mindset was to be cured from an autistic disconnection. Ideological awareness was to inform no more than the artistic imagination. No activity, only "chance" and "psychoanalysis" are conjured up to bolster the artists' visceral independence as an existential self-assertion. It was a tour de force to postulate that those two concepts both enabled and obliged artists not to take position

vis-à-vis the political conflicts of the day, but to stay ready for a hypothetical future when they would find an opportunity to act.

It comes as no surprise that the call on “revolutionary artists” to assemble under the umbrella of Trotsky’s projected Fourth International says nothing about how a revolutionary movement might advance. The Manifesto merely offers the FIARI as a haven where they can work with no requirements, an alternative to the current political environment of pressure for service. The bleak preamble about the universal threat to civilization which engulfs the arts makes the emancipation of the subject appear as a mere retreat. What follows lacks any aggressive edge against the forces of oppression, a *sine qua non* of any revolutionary movement. It merely guarantees would-be revolutionary artists the undiluted purity of their convictions, whatever they might be. The final rallying cry, which proclaims “independence” as a precondition of a struggle for “liberation,” sounds like a vicious circle. That seasoned political practitioners such as Trotsky and Rivera should have subscribed to a such a platform amounts to an unaverring resignation. Against their and Breton’s intentions, the last stand of revolutionary art was a concession of failure.

/ 2.3 **COLLABORATIVE WRITING**

/ 2.3.1 **BRETON’S TEXTS**

Several witnesses and commentators have traced the working process in which Breton and Trotsky jointly collaborated on the Manifesto, most extensively van Heijenoort, Roche and Dugrand. The latter reports that not until the final days of his stay did Breton write a long-hand draft of the entire Manifesto in green ink, which he subsequently discussed with Trotsky during several working sessions. Trotsky had long asked a reluctant Breton to write the Manifesto. Breton promised to comply but procrastinated so long that Trotsky finally expressed his impatience to him. Only then did Breton come up with a short initial version, which he submitted to Trotsky as a basis for further discussions, during which Breton must have taken notes for the elaboration of his complete text. This second long-hand version is twice as long as the first draft. Van Heijenoort seems to have typed a copy for Trotsky to cut out those parts on which both authors were in accord and paste them together with passages from a typewritten Russian text of his own. This bilingual collage was then retyped in French. Both composite texts are lost.

Breton started his first draft with a lengthy, rather academic exposition about the relationship between historic determinacy and subjective independence of art and thought according to his understanding of Marxist theory. He foregrounded the surrealist ideas of chance and autonomous creation to assert a non-fatalistic capacity of art to work for change. Breton generalized Marx’ dictum that writers should not write

for pay to cover the arts in general as a precondition for the uninhibited unfolding of artists' creativity, which should never be determined by any task. He drew only one red line to unbridled freedom: "All license, except against the Revolution," a line adapted from Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*. This short initial draft sounded rather defensive. Not a word about what the arts might contribute to the capitalized but unspecified "Revolution," much less about where, when, and how a revolution might be expected to occur. All Breton seemed to care for at this point was the axiomatic insistence on the freedom of modern art, the stumbling block in his approach to Communism.

The second, expanded draft starts with a lengthy paragraph which expands on the starting paragraph of the first. It is followed by a newly-written survey of the current world-historical situation endangering the integrity of art and the "personality" of the artist. The threat emanates from both the 'fascist' Hitler State and the Stalinist Soviet Union, paired under Trotsky's totalitarian equation. Breton extends the totalitarian threat to "the crumbling capitalist society" in a world-wide conflict between social injustice and human dignity. It imperils the individual conscience, the "ideal of the ego," which psychoanalysis works to restore. An "emancipation of man" takes the place of a collective revolution. To achieve this goal, the artist is the "predisposed ally." In order to situate the arts in a future free from historic adversity, Breton evokes Marx' doctrine of a time lead of the arts over the "general development" of society's material base. It endows authentic artists with "the gift of prefiguration," which enables them to impress the urgency of "a new order" on their contemporaries. In this projection, prophecy stands in for revolution.

/ 2.3.2 THE BLEND

The textual comparisons show that Trotsky circumscribed what he perceived as the catastrophic geopolitical preconditions for a revolutionary mission of art at the historic moment when he put the Manifesto into its final shape. He replaced the pertinent passages in Breton's second draft by more elaborate and more specific, yet still hypothetical projections. All artistic tenets of the Manifesto, approximately four fifths of the text, are taken word for word from the draft. They are hyperbolic restatements of modern art's revolutionary claims Breton had upheld through the decade, now stripped of any discernible communist partisanship. Trotsky's ideological amendments could not make up for this vacuity. In order to have the last word on the Manifesto's political purpose, Trotsky had to abandon the historical critique of modern art he had advanced fourteen years earlier in his *Literature and Revolution*. He also had to disregard the admiration for Rivera's murals expressed in his concurrent article, whose arguments found no echo in the Manifesto. Breton's and Rivera's ideas about art simply did not jibe.

No matter how emphatically stated, the absolute self-determination of an art with the claim to a world-revolutionary mission was detached from the substantive

artistic speculations Breton had entertained for years. Breton fell back on them to flesh out the political void of Trotsky's world-historical imagination. This may have been the reason for his reluctance and procrastination in coming forward with the draft. At the end of the day, the Manifesto does not call on "revolutionary" artists to join in the common pursuit of an ever so vague political goal, but only to "loudly proclaim" their "right to exist." This was the purpose of countless manifestos modern artists had issued since the beginning of the century. For Trotsky to subscribe to it served the purpose of luring modern artists to his minuscule movement. That he should have deleted Breton's assiduous proviso "except against the revolution" goes to show how far he was ready to go in granting artists an "anarchist" sphere of self-sufficient ideology. The price to pay for such a license was the disconnection between artistic independence and operative politics. The Manifesto envisages no art policy.

Of the three participants in the encounter at Coyoacán, Breton could surely raise the faintest claims to any political viability of his long-developed notions about revolutionary art. Now Trotsky provided him with an opportunity to finally overcome the persistent rift between surrealist art and any political movement on the Left. Never before had he ceded the last word to a politician. For Trotsky, on the other hand, to forego the functional correlations between art and politics he had explored in *Literature and Revolution* and to delegate the internal definition of revolutionary art to an unaffiliated writer, may have meant acknowledging the "independence" of art from politics that he wanted the Manifesto to proclaim, as long as he could have the final say about the political parameters. Thus, if it was Trotsky who put the finishing touches on the Manifesto, the substance of Breton's second draft was in line with his earlier pronouncements. It took only tactical concessions on the part of both authors to reach agreement on the final text. They were easy to make because no real political purpose were at stake, only the ideological reassurance of wavering artists on the Left.

/ 2.3.3 TROTSKY'S EDITORIAL WORK

Trotsky must have been disappointed when Breton handed him his second, expanded draft. In claiming for the arts a sanctuary of political unaccountability in exchange for a categorical allegiance to "the revolution," whatever it might be, Breton exempted artists from responsible engagement with any political movement, including the Fourth International. Since Trotsky's cut-and-paste version of the typed transcriptions of Breton's second draft and his own additions is no longer extant, it remains uncertain whether all passages in the final text that do not occur in the second draft are Trotsky's insertions, or whether some are the result of further discussions. In any event, these passages set the Manifesto's political course, as vague as it may be. The introductory passages referring to Marx, to the political world situation, and to the relationship between art and revolutionary politics have been stricken from

the second draft. The new preamble merely conjures up an “absolutely intolerable” threat to culture, after the precedent of the destruction of Roman civilization at the hands of barbarian invaders.

Still, another passage insists that totalitarian complicity in the threat does not entail a symmetrical rejection of both communism and ‘fascism.’ Since for Trotsky communism is not represented by the current Soviet regime, it remains a valid political premise for any revolution. Implacably opposed to capitalist democracy, Trotsky shies away from labelling communist freedom democratic. This is why he added the words “democratic as well as fascist” to Breton’s “death agony of capitalism,” to make sure Breton’s summary polemics against totalitarian oppression could not be construed as an espousal of democracy, which he found irretrievably compromised by the heightened social injustice perpetrated by the self-defense of capitalism in decline. At this point, Trotsky inserted an entire paragraph that reasserts a “revolutionary state’s” authority to take defensive measures against an “aggressive bourgeois reaction,” arts and sciences included. How could such a reservation jibe with the “anarchist regime of individual liberty?” It was one thing to exempt the arts from political direction, but quite another to grant artists free expression.

Thus, the definitive version of the Manifesto curbs the demand, inherent in Breton’s second draft, that artists’ freedom must remain inviolate. It does grant them the professional autonomy of choosing themes or styles, but in locating revolutionary significance in their personal convictions, their “inner world,” it still subjects them to an attenuated dose of totalitarian mind control. This is the unbridgeable double standard that follows from the coexistence of a socialist regime for economic and social development and an anarchist regime for the artistic practice. The repressive measure the Manifesto allows, the self-defense of a hypothetical “revolutionary state” against a hypothetical “reaction,” would be an inadmissible encroachment by the first regime upon the second. The concluding paragraph of Breton’s second draft included the exclamation “all liberty in art, except against the proletarian revolution,” printed in capital letters, and adapted from Trotsky’s *Literature and Revolution*.⁽²³⁴⁾ It was disingenuous for Trotsky to delete the words “except against the proletarian revolution”⁽²³⁵⁾ for the definitive text.

/ 3 **HISTORICAL CRITIQUE**

/ 3.1 **AN ARTISTS’ GROUP IN A NO-MAN’S LAND**

/ 3.1.1 **AGAINST THE POPULAR FRONT**

The two totalitarian regimes the Manifesto singles out as foremost threats to artists’ freedom lay beyond the reach of its combative edge. Even the authors’

hyperbole does not envisage standing up against their oppressive policies. Rather, the Manifesto is directed against the Comintern's support and control of the self-styled 'revolutionary' artists' movements in democratic states. In denouncing these movements as "Stalinist organizations," the authors rate the Communist Party's influence on artistic culture—personified in Louis Aragon's direction of the Maison de la Culture in Paris—as nefarious, and participation as a sacrifice of conscience. What artists should do in a rivalling group such as the projected FIARI remains unsaid. However, making the Popular Front into a venue of Stalinist dominance overestimates the pro-Soviet propaganda aims and underestimates the democratic coalition politics of its endeavors, which netted it so much non-communist support. It also underrates their contributions to an anti-fascist political culture, however unsuccessful this culture would turn out to be.

Regardless of its political and artistic quandaries, the Popular Front had put forth the single consolidated political challenge on the part of artists against fascism mounted during the decade, culminating in its short-lived ascendancy to government in France and Spain. To offer the projected Fourth International as an alternative for artists to pursue would have required at least the outlines of a program. On the one hand, there was a coalition of state and party agencies with public or private cultural associations in several countries, well-financed, publicized through congresses and journals, and animated by passionate debates. This coalition had been capable of attracting thousands of intellectuals and artists to activist engagement. It was backed by two large parties which, even after their fall from power, still had a mass base to address. On the other hand, there was a tentative alliance of minuscule communist splinter groups, not yet in existence, fleetingly adhered to by a handful of dissident artists and intellectuals enmeshed in factional disputes and prone to loss of heart. To them, Trotsky's promise of an organization without political expediency and political control offered no more than a refuge.

The Manifesto's one-sided charge of communist party dominance ignores the democratic pluralism of Popular Front culture, which was rooted in the Comintern's shift from an antagonistic revolutionary strategy to a cooperative parliamentary one for the communist parties of France and Spain. The ensuing vigorous debate environment could not be labeled as oppressive. Yet the authors were incapable of acknowledging democratic freedom for the arts, since they took democracy for just as tainted as 'fascism' and communism. For them, not only was democracy inextricably linked to capitalism, the primary target of revolution, but its diplomatic cooperation with the Soviet Union had also failed to stop the momentum of 'fascist' military encroachment. It is the fundamental contradiction of Breton's and Trotsky's reasoning that they were de facto calling for democratic freedom of the arts without espousing democracy. Hence their insistence on the independence of political conscience had no political grounds

to stand on. Their Manifesto reads as an involuntary recognition of the tentative alignment between modern art and democracy now under way.

/ 3.1.2 FROM ANARCHISM TO SOLITUDE

Breton had never experienced any oppression of the arts. The political culture of democratic France ignored the avalanche of his 'revolutionary' pronouncements, of which the Manifesto was to be the last. On the contrary, the growing success surrealist art enjoyed in France and abroad since 1936 was never endangered by censorship, because this art was devoid of politics, at least in appearance. For Breton, to enjoin artists to shed a nonexistent subjugation amounts to a reversal of the social aggression the surrealists had cultivated from the start. To rally them for solitary independence, unconcerned with economic support or public resonance, was disingenuous. The artist "must understand that his place is elsewhere," says the Manifesto, but it does not say where that is to be. It offers artists no more aesthetic or political perspectives than did Trotsky's scarce pronouncements on the culture of the Fourth International. On the contrary, the absence of any precepts was just its principle, the point of its appeal to form a coalition of politically disenfranchised or disillusioned artists thrown back onto fashioning a cause of their own.

An "anarchist regime" for the arts alone is not simply a conceptual oxymoron. To separate such a regime from a "socialist" one, which is to regulate economics and society, means setting up a sanctuary of political unaccountability. It is a reversal of the subordination of anarchism to socialism which had long been either pursued or contested in recurrent struggles to unify communist movements. The Manifesto regresses to the anarchist origins of modern art on the Left at the end of the 19th century, a posture revived by the Dada groups at the end of World War I and its aftermath. At that time, Breton's participation in the French offspring of the Zurich Dada center had triggered the politicization that eventually brought him to communism, but without acquiescence to communist discipline. The anarchist bifurcation of the Manifesto has its topical origins in the Spanish Civil War. Here, anarchists had unsuccessfully attempted to pursue what Trotsky called a "permanent revolution" (see Chapter 2.2 / 2.3.3).

For a long time, anarchism had informed collective protest movements in society or politics. The Manifesto, however, presents it as an exemption from collective responsibility, a haven for unbridled subjectivity. In Breton's view, the predicament of subjectivity in the uncertain times for which he drafted the Manifesto required psychoanalysis for ideological self-stabilization. From a public stance, manifest in the message of a work of art, revolutionary identity is introverted into an unconscious sentiment that authenticates the revolutionary sense of any heartfelt art. This is Breton's justification for the absence of revolutionary themes in the works that surrealist artists

were producing. Their revolutionary convictions need not be apparent in their art. To remedy this contradiction, the Manifesto offers psychoanalysis as the king's path to an art of freedom. Psychoanalysis is a mental stabilization practice of the middle-class and pertains to individuals detached from any organized collective. Such a prescription of soul-searching as the ultimate test of the individual's freedom compensates for the political opacity of the historic situation.

/ 3.1.3 **POLITICAL NO-MAN'S LAND**

Trotsky's belief that Communism could be redeemed through political freedom was tantamount to having it restored to democratic principles. But he was unable to conceive of any political venue for a hypothetical Soviet democracy, which he wished to categorically distinguish from the extant capitalist one. And it was only the latter that hitherto had guaranteed freedom of the arts. In vain did Trotsky insist in an unpublished letter to a handful of surrealist artists in Britain: "Blind is whoever does not comprehend that fighting for anti-fascist democracy means fighting for imperialist opposition. [...] No need to tell you, dear comrades, that it is the revolutionary path in which we hope to engage you."⁽²³⁶⁾ What Trotsky would have needed to tell them was where such a "path" could lead. Just now, communism and democracy, eventual allies of expediency in the Second World War, were forced to adopt ever-more deliberate postures in an anti-fascist struggle, while the Fourth International was sitting on the fence. A simultaneous challenge to both sides was inconceivable. The authors of the Manifesto were attempting to politicize artistic freedom in a political no-man's land.

In effect, the Manifesto's call for a revolutionary art, unilaterally defined by artists' convictions, beholden to no audience, and exempt not only from any political control, but also from any political mission, would only have allowed a democratic answer. It foreshadowed the post-war re-definition of artistic freedom as a categorical antithesis to totalitarianism right and left. In disavowing democracy while insisting on democratic liberties, the authors deluded themselves about the social conditions required for any ideology of political freedom to take root. Breton's subsequent efforts at implementing the Manifesto through a mailing list, assembling a handful of artists and writers as part of the Fourth International, lacked any social field of operations. The authors paid no attention to the incipient anti-fascist alignment of modern art with political democracy that had been going on during the last three years before the outbreak of World War II in the artistic cultures of the Popular Front in France and of the United States (see Chapter 4.3 / 1.3.2), both under the impact of modern art's oppression at the hands of the German dictatorship, the nemesis of democracy.

During those three years, the revolutionary ideal had declined everywhere in Europe. In the Soviet Union, the revolution had been declared accomplished at the end of the First Five-Year Plan. In Italy and Germany, it had been perverted into the

militarization of society. In democratic France, it had been reduced to a line of argument for social reform in the discourse of parliamentary politics. In all four states, artists or artists' groups that styled themselves as revolutionary had accommodated themselves to this political decline, either by subscribing to the totalitarian perversion of the term revolution or by exchanging their revolutionary for anti-fascist postures. The term had lost its original connotation of a forcible upset in politics as much as in the arts. In the contest between the two fundamental ideologies of revolutionary art and art for the people, the former had lost out against the latter. The Manifesto, however, does not waste a word on the people whom artists address and who would have to carry out their revolutionary aspirations. In the final analysis, it advocates a political *art pour l'art*.

/ 3.2 **SELF-CONTRADICTION AND SELF-DELUSION**

/ 3.2.1 **DELUSIONS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

Trotsky, Rivera, and Breton were probably the most prominent, and certainly the most activist public intellectuals of their time who tried to come to terms with the political confrontation of the arts, that is, the politicization of the arts to a point where they became enmeshed in the shifting confrontations of political systems racing to clash in the Second World War. With their ample records of involvement in art politics and their prolific writings about many of the attendant issues at various points in their careers, one might have expected from their joint deliberations an informed, if partisan, assessment of this historic trajectory, which would have substantiated their ideal of a meaningful involvement of artists in the politics of their time. But did they really expect art to contribute to "a complete and radical reconstruction of society," to be accomplished in the coming war they took for granted? Or did they merely indulge in an extreme of the self-overestimation which had been commonplace throughout the cultural discourse of the decade? Extreme to the point of paradox, because it was based on the refusal of any involvement in current politics?

When the three celebrities from the public sphere of culture met at Coyoacán for the first time, they tried to compaginate their views on art and politics. The two artists, to whom Trotsky had long provided an alternative to the constraining doctrines of the Communist Party, now reciprocated by providing him with an ideological platform for an artists' group as an contribution to his movement. It was a passing convergence of three individuals whose careers were built on a maximal publicization of their views, overestimating the political impact of the public sphere with its speeches, interviews, declarations, and protests. And yet, over the course of the decade, the reliability of the public sphere as a medium and an index of political processes had steadily diminished. The Manifesto only existed in the form of three journal articles in English, French, and

Spanish with little circulation—and perhaps in a few typed sheets Breton sent to prospective members—and had no political impact whatsoever. Beside Breton, the author, there was no person to proclaim it, no gathering to discuss it, no group to adopt it anywhere. Its declarative pathos sounds like a call in the desert.

Breton and Trotsky must have realized that a self-confinement of the arts in an untouchable realm of independence was bound to shut them out of the historical process with its give-and-take of politics and ideology. Hence their promise that only in the future “will it be possible for scholars and artists to carry out their tasks, which will be more far-reaching than ever before in history.” It is because of its focus on a hypothetical artists’ constituency of the future that the Manifesto does not refer to any historical conditions or events of the present time, when such conditions or events affected the arts as never before. Silent about class conflict, it gives no answer to the question of who is to engage in a revolutionary struggle against whom. Unlike most other art manifestos of the Left, it appears non-partisan. Indeed, the roundabout challenge to all three political systems of the day would have made it impossible for any prospective adherent to be a partisan of any political position such as they had been thus far articulated. Trotsky did not expect the restoration of a libertarian Communism against the totalitarian power of the Soviet state from any revolutionary action, only from the imminent war.

/ 3.2.2 **CONCEALED LEADERSHIP**

Breton’s obsequious deference to Trotsky, different from Rivera’s self-assured, contentious adherence, made Trotsky into a counter-figure to Hitler and Stalin, the supreme patrons of totalitarian and oppressors of free art. Never before had Breton relinquished the verbal lead of his political initiatives. Now he adjusted his texts to fit into Trotsky’s ideological frame. Aboard the ship that took him back to France, Breton wrote Trotsky a letter expressing this deference—he called it “Cordelia complex”—in hypertrophic terms the recipient found embarrassing.⁽²³⁷⁾ He included a professional portrait photograph of himself, inscribed with a dedication that expresses some of the ambivalence between freedom and leadership inherent in his own position. A few months later, in another letter discussing Trotsky’s break with Rivera which had occurred in the meantime, Breton conceded him a deciding authority on all political matters where—as opposed to artistic questions—no agreement could be reached.⁽²³⁸⁾ In the restricted realm of the ideologically overcharged Paris art scene, he was used to claiming such an authority for himself.

So much did Trotsky value Breton’s commitment that he described the Fourth International as a political endeavor by analogy to avant-garde movements in the arts. Just like these movements, he asserted, it was starting out as a small minority but would eventually gain the strength to prevail. He never raised the question of popular

backing. That Trotsky should have left it to Breton and Rivera to sign the Manifesto, despite his oversight and co-authorship and despite Rivera's non-participation, may have been meant to make it appear not as a politician's call but as the profession of two creative artists on their own account. Yet those two artists had no professional concerns in common, only their adherence to Trotsky's ideas. Trotsky may have expected their international prominence would invest their signatures with the power of a rallying call, but at this point in time, neither one represented ideologically like-minded movements any longer. At home, both were confronted with communist hostility or internal disarray. They brought no followers to the FIARI.

The deceptive signatures cannot conceal that the Manifesto, rather than giving voice to the shared aspirations of an extant community of artists or writers, as the two Surrealist Manifestos of 1925 and 1930, also written by Breton, had done, is actually an ideological blueprint for the political orientation of a future artists' association that did not yet exist. If the Manifesto advances political demands at all, it does so only in the negative. Its point is the absence of any political prescription. It reads like an indiscriminate invitation to freedom-loving artists of whatever revolutionary stripe. In fact, it addresses communist sympathizers, loath to submit to communist discipline, without mentioning communism. At an impasse in their efforts to compaginate their own artistic and political activities, the two artistic celebrities who put their names under the Manifesto were signing on to what they must have taken for a radically new beginning. Breton, who had been able to imbue it with many of his key ideas, was to work for its dissemination to the end. Rivera, whose ideas it ignored, jumped ship within a year.

/ 3.2.3 **CIRCULAR REASONING**

The fundamental contradiction of the Manifesto consists in the assumption that art must be independent and revolutionary at the same time. Yet a revolution cannot presuppose freedom, the objective of its struggle. The October Revolution did not strive for freedom, but for social justice, to be attained under the dictatorship of the proletariat and to be enforced by terror. According to Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*, revolutionary art cannot promote the revolutionary process. Its revolutionary agency can only be developed in tandem with the social and political revolution in process. The "complete independence" the Manifesto calls for would detach it from its base. Indeed, the Manifesto does not presuppose any such base. It is hard to imagine how an artist—or any individual for that matter—could "subjectively assimilate" the political conditions that require or favor a revolution, if such conditions don't exist. And if they did exist, "subjectively assimilate" would mean internalizing the revolutionary strategy, meant to be "served" by artists to the point of unconditional self-identification.

To expect art to aim for “a complete and radical reconstruction of society,” as the Manifesto would have it, little more than a year before the outbreak of World War II—which all three participants took for granted—presupposed a disregard for historical reality in favor of an elusive avant-garde ideal. The Manifesto remains silent about the specifics of the current historical scenario, but we know from other sources that Trotsky envisaged an uprising of Soviet workers against the Stalinist regime in the event of a German attack. Not unlike Lenin, but less confident, he conceived of an imminent world war and a concomitant revolution as converging trajectories. How artists could position themselves vis-à-vis this quasi-apocalyptic future, what, if anything, they could contribute to its revolutionary outcome, the Manifesto does not say. Could they work for its advent? Or could they at least give a clear-sighted testimony of its progress? Whatever the answer, the Manifesto grants them no activist role.

The Manifesto’s tacit definition of artistic freedom by default, as a mere absence of control, had long been a commonplace demand in the apologetics of modern art. But it does not touch upon the opposition between traditional and modern art on which this demand was originally predicated. A traditional and a modern artist joined to sign it in the name of free political expression. The term “political indifference” denotes detachment from any organizational ties that might impede the artist’s independent judgment. Artists are to be empowered to participate in a generic revolution on their own. At which point they might join the mass movement any revolution requires, remains unsaid. The authors were at a loss to envisage any mass movement. In his missive to the FIARI of December 22, 1938, addressed to Breton and printed in the journals *Bulletin of the Opposition*, *Clarté* and *Partisan Review*, Trotsky conceded: “FIARI is not an aesthetic or political school and cannot become one. But FIARI can oxidize the atmosphere in which artists breathe and create.”⁽²³⁹⁾ The “atmosphere” pervading the free arts nine months before the war was ideologically obfuscated beyond therapy.

/ 3.3 **TOO LATE**

/ 3.3.1 **FIARI’S FAILURE**

Immediately upon his return from Mexico in early September 1938, Breton embarked on a membership drive for the FIARI in France and England which met with minimal success.⁽²⁴⁰⁾ The only modern artist of renown he was able to enlist was André Masson. A group of surrealist artists and writers in England even actively opposed him on ideological grounds.⁽²⁴¹⁾ Only in the United States did the Manifesto have any impact,⁽²⁴²⁾ thanks to a group of Trotskyist writers and academics who published it, and other texts by Trotsky, in their journal *Partisan Review*. However, they did not print the Manifesto as a leaflet for general distribution, as Breton had hoped, and did not form a

chapter of the FIARI.⁽²⁴³⁾ Already on September 17, 1938, Breton wrote to this group that the FIARI had gathered “about fifty adherents in France.” “From now on we can have full confidence in the results of our common enterprise,” he concluded,⁽²⁴⁴⁾ but this initial response soon fizzled. Lack of funds for printing hampered the publicity required. In Mexico, only two painters signed on.⁽²⁴⁵⁾

Already aboard the ship on his return from Mexico, on August 9, 1938, Breton wrote to Trotsky of his fears that the Manifesto would come too late to influence the French intellectual scene, compared to the years between 1926-1931, when “many writers and artists” looked to Trotsky for guidance.⁽²⁴⁶⁾ He was losing the political self-assurance which in the past had never failed to fire up his penchant for ideological prescriptions. In the letter from aboard ship, he implored Trotsky to provide him with written instructions on how he should proceed “in the domain where you can hold me qualified.”⁽²⁴⁷⁾ This request was at variance with the independence claimed for artists in the Manifesto he had signed. On June 2, 1939, Breton had to report that, because of Rivera’s defection and of internal squabbles amongst the editors of *Clave* and *Clé*, enrolments in the FIARI were too “platonic” or “distrustful” to help it advance. Contributions to the journal were not forthcoming, printing funds were lacking, and it did not sell. He did not rate it as a viable publication. All told, he could do no more.⁽²⁴⁸⁾

There are two reasons why the Manifesto failed to take hold. One was its Trotskyist challenge to the Communist Party, which, in sync with the Comintern, was all out to squash the Trotskyist opposition. The other was that the Manifesto gave no clue as to what revolutionary artists were expected to do, what kind of art they should make, and, above all, for what political goal they should work. Whoever took Trotsky’s world-historical predictions literally would have had to forego any revolutionary activity, immobilized by the inexorable anticipation of a world war needed to create the cataclysmic conditions for a revolution to break out. Trotsky’s expectation of a Soviet defeat flew in the face of the commonplace belief in the USSR as a bulwark against a German attack. The ‘independence’ that the Manifesto claimed for artists precluded entrusting them with any task, either to promote or to prevent such an event. It meant that artists, deprived of any political orientation, were stuck in a holding pattern of immobilized self-defense.

/ 3.3.2 RIVERA’S DEFECTION

Rivera’s break with Trotsky and the leadership of the FIARI in January 1939 over his objections to Trotsky’s organizational decisions was a decisive blow to the impact of the Manifesto. It incensed him so much that he charged Trotsky with ‘Stalinist’ methods. His attitude was the opposite of the near-submissive deference to Trotsky which drove Breton’s tireless activism after his return to Paris. On January 11,

1939, Trotsky declared that he no longer felt any “moral solidarity” with Rivera’s “anarchist politics.”⁽²⁴⁹⁾ With this judgment, he drew a sharp line between anarchism in the arts, which the Manifesto demanded, and in politics, which it excluded. For Rivera’s undivided self-understanding as an artist and politician, such a split could never work. Within six months, the break deprived the fledgling FIARI of its most famous artist, who might have helped it advance as a figurehead, if not as a leader. Although the Manifesto lacked any reference to Rivera’s thought, Trotsky, in his article of August 1938, had banked on Rivera’s world-wide prestige as a revolutionary artist. Now the anarchism he had conceded to artists in the Manifesto came back to haunt him.

Rivera’s defection deeply affected Breton, whose unwavering admiration for Trotsky kept him going in his promotion of the FIARI. He studiously avoided taking sides. Working to organize a show of Frida Kahlo’s work in Paris, he had to uphold relations with Rivera. However, in his attendant writeup of Mexican culture, he characterized him not as a revolutionary artist, but as a tragic figure. Almost nine months after his return, Breton addressed Rivera’s art in the last issue of his journal *Minotaure*, which appeared on May 12, 1939, three weeks before he wrote to Trotsky that his promotion of FIARI had come to nothing. The issue carried Fritz Bach’s group photograph of the three participants of the meeting at Coyoacán, but no account of the meeting itself, and not a word about the Manifesto. Breton placed Rivera into an illustrated travel report entitled “Memories of Mexico.” With nostalgic admiration, he recalled Rivera’s grand mural cycles of the past. For several years, he wrote, Rivera had received no more commissions and retreated on painting expressive landscapes, as if the adverse conditions evoked in the Manifesto had prevented him from making the revolutionary art it called for.

Rivera’s front cover picture for Breton’s Mexico insert in the last *Minotaure* issue shows the dead Minotaur, wrapped in what appear to be the swathes of a mummy, with splashes of blood splurging from his throat. He is surrounded by the skulls and bones of his sacrificial victims and by the brick walls of the labyrinth. The yellow rope that has guided his killer Theseus back to the exit unwinds along the corridors. On the back cover, Theseus with his knife and Ariadne with the spool of the yellow rope are standing at the entrance, which takes the form of toothed jaws snapping shut around them. Unlike what the myth says, Theseus has failed to rescue the boys and girls who had been offered to the Minotaur. Their remains are scattered throughout pockets of the labyrinth. Whatever Rivera intended to convey with his pictorial alterations of the myth, the image does not carry the upbeat sentiment, however hollow, which the Manifesto seeks to convey about the success of a future revolution. It rather seems to confirm Breton’s downcast description of him as a revolutionary artist at a loss, invalidating Rivera’s proxy signature on Trotsky’s behalf.

/ 3.3.3 MASSON VERSUS PICASSO

No doubt it was Breton who assigned the outer covers of the last *Minotaure* issue, published on May 12, 1939 to André Masson, the only important artist member of the FIARI. By contrast to his melancholic pages about Rivera, his article “André Masson’s Prestige” concludes with the confident acclamation: “In his person we plainly reconcile the authentic artist and the authentic revolutionary.”⁽²⁵⁰⁾ And yet, Masson’s cover pictures were even gloomier than Rivera’s inside. On the front, the eyeless skull of the Minotaur, one horn broken off, contains the circular brick walls of the labyrinth. Where the mouth should be, a bloody victim on an altar seems to be devoured by the beast. On the back, the labyrinth, a solid tower with no entrance, accessible only to the imagination. Breton may have aimed at a reconciliation of sorts when he brought the loyal adherent of and the apostate from the FIARI together on both sets of covers. Yet it is hard to say which one conveys a sadder message: Rivera’s fortress of failed rescue or Masson’s internalization of mortal conflict. In their different ways, both seem to confirm the Manifesto’s involuntary despondency.

Sometime in late 1938 or early 1939, Pablo Picasso filled a sheet of FIARI stationery with lines of unreadable letters. He must have obtained it from Breton, perhaps with the request of writing a statement in support of the projected group. Instead, he drew a pattern of obscure signs which only looks like a text. Less than two years after having painted *Guernica*, he was no longer in the mood for politics. In his “Political Position of Surrealism,” written in June 1935 to draw the line against the Communist Party, Breton had reprinted an interview from the same year where he recalled Picasso’s explanation of the peculiar shape in which he drew the hammer and sickle emblem (see Chapter 2.2/2.2.2). “If the handles of the tools were made into one, so that a single hand could seize it.”⁽²⁵¹⁾ He took it to denote the subjective integrity of conviction. Perhaps Breton knew about Picasso’s tentative pictorial deviations from his two Popular Front commissions—the July 4 inauguration curtain and the *Guernica* mural—and expected him to subscribe to the Manifesto’s call for independence. Yet Picasso, an adherent of the Popular Front, which had never dared to encroach upon his freedom, used the letterhead to illustrate his view that FIARI made no sense.

During the nine months or so when Breton tried and failed to get the FIARI going, the Spanish Civil war was lost, and the German annexation of Czechoslovakia was enacted as a prelude to World War II. Under these circumstances, no tentative launch of one more ‘revolutionary’ artists group could work on the desperate hope that just this coming war would give a communist revolution another chance. The Manifesto’s abstinence from world-political partisanship was bound to leave any artist at a loss about what to aim for in this end phase of the political confrontation of the arts. Masson’s pictures of introspective self-torment (see Chapter 4.3 / 3.3.3) were

representative of this end phase in the unintended sense of suffering from politically irrelevant independence. Given the scarce distribution of the Manifesto, it may be unrealistic to blame the ideological vacuity of its contents for its lack of resonance. Only in retrospect has it acquired its historic relevance. The three international protagonists of revolutionary art had ended up in a blind alley. Their meeting at Coyoacán turned out to be their last stand.



4/ Toward War

4.1 / Art Policy
and War Policy p. 326

4.2 / The Last Stand
of Revolutionary Art p. 360

4.3 / Traditional versus
Modern Art Revisited p. 392

4.2/ Traditional versus Modern Art Revisited

/1 VIEW FROM THE USA

/1.1 THE NEW YORK WORLD FAIR OF 1939

/1.1.1 MONUMENTALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY

The motto of the New York World Fair of 1939—"The World of Tomorrow"—hailed technical modernization as a path to social progress. It expressed the business-oriented philosophy of the Fair's organizing committee, which was dominated by private industry. The government merely played a supporting role by way of legal regulation and financial assistance. Still, in the words of committee chairman George McAneny, the Fair "should celebrate the cultural progress of America, its progress in social and educational directions, in government and administration."⁽²⁵²⁾ Several grand pavilions representing some of the biggest US corporations provided an unabashed demonstration of US leadership in technological productivity and social wellbeing. It was for this reason, rather than because of any government guidance, that the all-pervasive ideology of the architectural and pictorial setup was largely focused on the democratic political system of the host country. It culminated in a giant statue of its first president, George Washington, dressed in the robes of his 1789 inauguration, whose 150th anniversary coincided with the Fair.

At the center of the exhibition area stood the monumental 'Federal Building' as a backdrop for the 'Court of Peace,' flanked by a 'Tower of the Judiciary' and a 'Tower of Legislature.' It was filled with a didactic show, explaining the workings of the federal government in the twelve areas of its jurisdiction. Large murals depicting key events in US history decorated its walls. At the center court, adjacent to the 'Trylon' and the 'Perisphere,' a multi-figured sculptural ensemble by Paul Manship, attached to an enormous sundial entitled *Time and the Fates of Man*, along with a quartet of allegorical figure groups entitled *Moods of Time*, was placed on the reflecting surface of a pool. These sculptures transfigured the pictorial paean to democracy into cosmic dimensions. Elsewhere, Leo Friedlander's four plaster statues, over 10 meters in height, depicted *Freedom of Speech*, *Freedom of Religion*, *Freedom of Press*, and *Freedom of Assembly*, fundamental tenets of the US constitution. At the Paris Expo, only the Soviet Pavilion had featured a comparable political iconography. All the more remarkably, the government had no hand in the design of this ideological display.

The most suggestive visual evocation of democracy, however, was not an artwork but an animated show installed inside the 'Perisphere.' It featured a large-scale model of an urban area in motion under changing lights, to be viewed by visitors from two rotating galleries above. Billed as the view of a generic city as it would appear in 2039, the model showcased Futuristic technologies of urban planning. Named 'Democracy,' and advertised as "Democracy in the World of Tomorrow," the show transfigured the capitalist productivity of the United States into a world-wide political order to humanize modernization. One could view it as a democratic answer to the ongoing capital reconstruction projects of the three totalitarian regimes in Europe, where monumentality took precedence over urbanism. At the Paris Expo two years earlier, it had been the reverse. Le Corbusier's initial proposal to devote the whole event to urbanism had been rejected. The Italian and the German pavilions had been decorously designed by the architects in charge of monumental capital reconstructions. Le Corbusier's urbanistic vision had been banished to a makeshift tent at the outskirts of the exhibition grounds.

/1.1.2 **RECONFIGURATION OF PAVILIONS**

The 'Federal Building' amounted to a de-facto US pavilion in the central location which at the Paris Expo had been assigned to the Palais de Chaillot. This building had represented a supra-national, and hence non-political, ideal of bringing art and technology together. A French pavilion had been altogether missing, leaving the confrontation of the arts to the three totalitarian states. At the New York World Fair, where democracy appeared supreme, such a competitive configuration of pavilions was no longer to be seen. Germany, poised for a war within five months after the opening, did not participate. France, one of Germany's first intended targets, featured an artistically nondescript, functional pavilion, anachronistically focused on export, tourism, and gastronomy. This left Italy and the Soviet Union as the only two of the four European states to use their pavilions for advertising their political systems, and they did so in even more triumphalist terms than they had in Paris. The enthroned goddess Roma and a single male worker stretching a glowing red star up to the sky were lifted atop, soaring structures no longer configured for comparison.

The organizers of the Soviet pavilion seem to have overtly taken up the challenge of democracy as the guiding notion of the Fair. "In his work the Soviet artist primarily addresses the people. His art is democratic," asserted the introduction to the catalog, citing the hundreds of thousands of visitors to art exhibitions in the USSR as a fulfilment of the ideal of an 'art for the people' (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.2). Two enormous wall-to-wall murals, *Meritorious Personalities* and *Sports Parade*, were produced by 'painters' brigades' under the direction of Vasily Yefanov and Yury Pimenev,—converts to Socialist Realism. They depicted packed masses of enthusiastic people marching

forward in parade formation, embodying the structured order of totalitarian mass 'democracy.' As if to match the US version of democracy with the Soviet one, Nikolai Andreyev's steel figure of a worker raising the red star atop the building emulated the posture of the Statue of Liberty. On the reliefs of the lateral façades, groups of soldiers and armed civilians appeared to advance, imbued by "the heroic spirit of the Civil War." They were aggressive versions of the festive groups on the Paris pavilion.

In 1936, Fair Corporation President Grover Whalen had travelled all the way to Rome seeking to obtain Italy's participation from Mussolini in person. *Time* magazine ranked the Soviet pavilion, one of the largest and most expensive of the Fair, as the best foreign exhibit. Public and press seemed unconcerned with the looming collision course between both states. Indeed, unlike the artistic and iconographic contrast between the Italian and the Soviet pavilions at the Paris Expo, these two pavilions looked deceptively similar. And, unlike the forward-charging sculptures of their predecessors, theirs were at rest, and seemingly at ease. Each appeared to celebrate its own triumph, reassuring the public of a peaceful coexistence with democracy. One year later, at the second season of the Fair, both pavilions were gone. Soon after the Hitler-Stalin Pact was signed on August 23, 1939, and the USSR had joined Germany in occupying Poland on September 1, the Soviet Pavilion was first closed and later razed. And when in June 1940 Italy declared war on France, the Italian Pavilion was also closed, yet left standing as a dark and empty shell.

/1.1.3 THE UNBUILT 'GERMAN FREEDOM PAVILION'

The World Fair's propagandistic emphasis on democracy must have encouraged the 'Free Artists League,' the minuscule association of German exile artists in Paris, to try to fill the gap left by Germany's non-participation in the Fair by a "German Freedom Pavilion" of their own. In New York, a large committee chaired by mayor Fiorello LaGuardia supported the initiative. However, in March 1939, the German Embassy in Paris filed an official objection with the International Bureau of Expositions against this unwanted replacement of a government pavilion by an anti-government one. A backup plan to show at least parts of the exhibit at another New York site for the duration of the Fair came to nothing, since meanwhile political support for it had dwindled. The artistic centerpiece of the aborted exhibition was to be a sequence of thirty (or thirty-three according to other sources) painted plywood panels entitled *Germany, Yesterday and To-Morrow*. The panels added up to a pictorial survey of German history leading up to the democratic republic founded after World War I, its abolition by the National Socialist regime, and its hoped-for restoration.

The project description, no doubt elaborated in contentious group meetings, reiterated the term democracy as the key value of a German liberal tradition, starting with the revolution of 1848, and continuing through the November revolution of 1918

and the communist-led February revolution of 1919. It invoked an imaginary “German Popular Front” to challenge the current dictatorship. The title of the show alluded to the “World of Tomorrow” in the motto of the Fair, but also drew on the title of a 1935 speech by communist painter Otto Freundlich—“German Art Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”—in which Freundlich had argued for including modern art in the cultural policy of the Popular Front. However, its celebration of 19th-century bourgeois democracy prevailed over communist rhetoric. This was the most ambitious manifestation of German artists in exile as a force of political resistance, in fact the only one of any consequence. But it was accomplished at the price of a didactic poster realism that overrode the styles of individual members, particularly those of modern persuasion. The panels were shipped to New York City in early 1939, when the show had already been cancelled, and eventually got lost.

The cooperation of over a dozen members of the ‘Free Artists’ League’ excluded any personal deviation from the didactic realism of this sweeping primer in German political history, particularly any adjustments to a modern style, which by necessity would have been personal, impairing the series’ visual, and hence ideological, coherence. As a result, the group’s three most prominent members of modern persuasion—Otto Freundlich, Heinz Lohmar, and Max Ernst—consented to having both their trademark styles and their communist convictions sidelined for the sake of sharing an argumentative platform with their traditionalist colleagues which did not lend itself to Popular Front coalition pluralism. Freundlich, the most doctrinaire of the three, withdrew from active cooperation within the leadership committee. The other two were flexible enough to subordinate their artistic and political profiles in order to accomplish the group’s objective for the occasion, which placed the pictorial invocation of political democracy over the defense of modern art against oppression.

/1.2 **STATE ART OF DEMOCRACY**

/1.2.1 **STATE SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS**

Of all democratic states affected by the Depression, the United States alone possessed the economic resources and the political will to enact multiple programs of government support for the arts that proved a match for those of the totalitarian states in Europe. They were likewise meant to feed into the government’s art of self-representation but were steadily contested within a democratic political culture. Those programs—the Public Works of Art Project (1933-1934), the Section of Painting and Sculpture (1934-1943), the Treasury Relief Art Project (1935-1943) and the Federal Art Project (1935-1943)—were part of a comprehensive recovery initiative, the Works Progress Administration, whose promise had swept Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Democratic Party into office in 1932. Their success during the remainder of the

decade demonstrated that a state policy for the support of artists which sponsored traditional imagery and was aimed at popular appeal could be implemented just as well in a democratic as in a totalitarian state, albeit only at the price of endless public and political controversies which pitted government agencies, artists' groups, and the press against one another.

Those multifarious art programs had to stand the test of political debates in Congress and the public sphere, debates which spared none of their political, ideological, and aesthetic merits or liabilities and did not shy away from addressing their apparent similarities to their totalitarian counterparts. By 1939 they had lost so much support that the government allowed them to lapse. Their fundamental political intent—to bring the artist “into far closer touch with his community and thereby into closer touch with American life”⁽²⁵³⁾—did recall the populism of Soviet and German art policy. The difference was that rather than merely serving as an ideology for the regulation of the art market, they were tailor-made for regional or local institutions, apt to embed the arts in social life. They particularly resembled the Soviet policy of keying art works to the propaganda of a general policy aimed at regulating working society at large. The difference was that such a propaganda function could not be imposed as a party line but had to endure the democratic give-and-take between government agencies, business and civic pressure groups, the press, and the artists themselves.

However, social and political relevance was not the sole acknowledged target of U.S. art support programs. As Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. emphasized in his executive order of October 16, 1934, establishing the Public Works of Art Project, his aim was to promote the “best art the country was capable of creating with merit as the only test.”⁽²⁵⁴⁾ The question of how politics and quality could be reconciled was limited to traditional art in its various forms between academic orthodoxy and ‘social realism.’ Modern artists, a small minority in any case, had little chance of complying with the populist government program. This de-facto exclusion of modern art, never addressed on principle, faintly echoes its totalitarian suppression. In their quest for representations of contemporary life, in a way that made ordinary citizens view their own concerns according to the premise of social equity as a precondition for economic recovery, those programs also recalled their totalitarian counterparts, with the difference that their underlying ideology was subject to political debates whose charges varied between propaganda and censorship.

/1.2.2 **CONTROVERSIAL ENACTMENT**

Through its competing artists' associations, congresses, shows, and journals, US artistic culture of the Depression unfolded within a charged-up public sphere where all art-political issues were contested and defended with unmitigated acuity, rather than being decided from above as in the totalitarian states of Europe or obviated by the

governments of democratic France, except during those of the Popular Front. In this contentious culture of democracy, the competition between traditional and modern art, the political relevancy of the so-called avant-garde, the incommensurability of elite art and a mass public, the artist's political engagement, and, above all, the alignment of both traditional and modern art with the Left, were all addressed as issues of state art policy. The underlying fundamental conflict was that between state art policy and the private art market, whose failure to provide most artists with a living had spawned the Federal Government's relief programs to begin with. It was not only the art market's Depression-prompted slump, but also its ingrained overvaluation of prestigious artists, which seemed to make it fail in rooting the arts in a popular culture.

Unlike the state-controlled, corporative artists' organizations of the totalitarian states in Europe, artists' organizations in the United States, which had been springing up since 1933, were voluntary interest groups negotiating with the agencies of the Federal Arts Programs on their own behalf. And, unlike similar artists' groups arising at that time in France, they did not merely lobby for support, nor did they shy away from opposition. One of the foremost political conflicts regarding the enactment of the Federal Arts Programs was with Communist-initiated artists' associations such as the Unemployed Artists' Group and its successor, the Artists' Union, whose quest for work those programs promised to fulfill, even though the CPUSA had initially opposed the recovery policies of the Roosevelt Administration. Because of the Programs' practice of paying wages to artists for commissioned work, the Artists' Union attempted to affiliate with national labor unions, first in 1935—unsuccessfully—with the AFL and then in 1938—successfully—with the CIO. Taking a page from the unions' confrontational labor-strife tactics to press for their demands, artists took to picket lines, demonstrations, work stoppages, and sit-ins.

The leftward ideological drift of the Federal Arts Programs increased after the creation, in the summer of 1935, of the Popular Front, a broad alliance between the CPUSA and New Deal Democrats which did not attain political representation—as it did in France and Spain—but some prominence in the public sphere. Now the CPUSA dissolved its affiliated artists' groups, encouraging their membership to join the Federal Art Programs. The resulting influx of leftist artists prompted administrators of those Programs to start monitoring their work so as to prevent their all-too strident social critique from interfering with the Programs' propaganda mission of promoting the co-operative work ethics of the WPA. Unlike the implacable Soviet screening of commissioned work, however, they often met with resistance. The high point of an artists' political organization in a democracy, not only independent of, but opposed to the government, was reached in February 1936 with the convention of the First American Artists' Congress. This leftist, if not outright Communist, assembly debated not just art policy but politics at large, taking its cue from the USSR.

/1.2.3 **POLITICAL CLOSURE**

This comprehensive effort to fashion a state art of democracy within a competitive economy came to an end within six years, because it was contingent on changing electoral majorities and exposed to professional opposition arising from the public sphere. Tied as it was to the contested recovery policy of President Roosevelt and his Democratic Party, it did not survive the recovery's setback of 1938. In that year, seventeen fine art societies joined to form the Fine Arts Federation of New York, founded to oppose the creation of a permanent government art agency in the name of private enterprise. Denouncing an alleged collusion between labor unions and the state aimed at overriding artistic quality in favor of political objectives, they claimed to uphold the free market against state support. "The proposal introduces a certain totalitarian concept of Federal functions incompatible with the free enterprise which has heretofore been the particular genius of our democracy," read one of its statements, released in February 1938,⁽²⁵⁵⁾ expressly drawing a line between the art policy of European dictatorships and the private art market allegedly akin to democratic government.

Thus, opposition against the federal arts projects was part and parcel of a conservative opposition against the WPA in general. In August 1938, the leftward ideological drift of the work commissioned by Federal art agencies even became the target of a congressional investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, under the chairmanship of democratic Representative Martin Dies Jr. The first step in the abolition of the Federal Arts Program was the congressional defeat in the summer of 1938 of House Joint Resolution 671 recommending the setup of a permanent fine arts bureau attached to the federal government. The second and final step was the House Appropriations Committee's motion in the summer of 1939 to abolish New Deal art projects altogether. This political demise of the Federal arts programs drew the line between state patronage, which was successfully enacted in the monumental rebuilding of the government center in Washington DC, and state support for the arts as a free enterprise, which was rated as an ideological overextension and an undue politicization of the arts, because it exposed them to the perils of political control.

When Congress rejected the creation of a permanent Federal office for the arts, the United States parted company not only with the totalitarian states of Europe, where various state or party agencies supervised the arts or even managed art production, but also with democratic France, whose powerful Fine Arts administration was largely exempt from political interference. Compared to both European alternatives, the Federal arts program, because of its more democratic ambition, was both more sweeping and more vulnerable. That it was neither drawn upon for the long-term capital reconstruction nor for the short-term New York World Fair, goes to show that it was never meant to foster an official art of the United States. The demise of the

program coincided in time with the ideological ascendancy of modern art as a paragon of democracy, which began after modern artists started to embark on an anti-leftist course that happened to jibe with the anti-leftist stance of the program's opponents in the name of private enterprise. And it was the private market that provided modern artists with their living.

/1.3 **THE DEMOCRATIC INVESTITURE OF MODERN ART**

/1.3.1 **TRADITIONAL AND MODERN ART AT THE NEW YORK WORLD FAIR**

The makeshift construction of most buildings at the New York World Fair prevented its architectural surface from matching the classical appearance of its numerous sculptures. Still, even its plainest functional buildings would not qualify as specimens of a 'modern' architectural style, as Henry Russell Hitchcock had defined it in 1932 on behalf of the Museum of Modern Art. A case in point was the intricate General Motors Corporation building, designed by Albert Kahn to resemble a factory. It served as a backdrop for Joseph Reiner's sculpture *Speed*, a large statue of the mythical hero Bellerophon riding Pegasus, his captured winged horse, described on its base as a "Modern Equestrian Group—Symbol of the Breath-taking Speed of Today's Methods of Communications." The Fair's most prominent sculptor, Paulanship, was a Rome-Prize-winning erstwhile resident of the American Academy in Rome. Upon his return to the United States, he had earned success for his moderate modernization of the classical tradition by cloaking it in an Art Deco style. In his sculpture groups at the center of the Fair, however, he kept this kind of stylization to a minimum.

It may have been because the Fair, no matter how emphatic its pictorial emphasis on democracy, was no government venture but a civic corporation of Big Industry, that 'Democracy,' its ideological centerpiece, happened to be devoid of government buildings, merely visualizing democracy as an ideal lifestyle enabled by technical modernization. For all the aesthetic impact of its dazzling vistas, which so impressed its millions of visitors, this model panorama was also devoid of any artistic embellishment. Its creator, industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss, chose not to draw on the tradition of 'machine art' developed in the United States since the early twenties, and embracing architecture and the decorative arts, which he had long practiced himself. 'Democracy' was at odds with the ornate reconstruction of the capital center being pursued in Washington DC since 1928, which adhered to the age-old representation of democracy by the classical tradition, and was not only every bit as ambitious as its counterparts in the three totalitarian states of Europe, but, unlike those, was actually completed, a de-facto triumph of democracy in architecture.

In several of the Fair's big corporation buildings, 'machine art,' which had been publicized as early as 1934 in a special show at the Museum of Modern Art, was

confined to a quasi-illustrative application. In the building of the Ford Motor Company, Henry Billing's giant assemblage of moving colored reliefs transfigured the image of a Ford V-8 engine. However, most other industry-specific sculptures still adhered to the classical imagery which dominated the official sections of the Fair, translating technological processes into mythological equivalents, such as Chester Beech's four *Riders of the Elements* before the Firestone Pavilion and Joseph E. Renier's rebounding horseman in the Communication Court. The Fair's art exhibition called *Contemporary Art of 79 Countries*, in preparation since 1937 with the participation of national juries, and installed in the pavilion of the IBM Corporation, was entirely confined to traditional art as the surest common denominator of an international show. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had endorsed the German section.

/1.3.2 **MOMA'S EXHIBITION 'ART IN OUR TIME'**

Modern art had to wait until the last year of the Depression to be expressly reclaimed for democracy—not by the state but by a private institution, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The occasion was the opening of MOMA's new building in May 1939 with an exhibition titled 'Art in Our Time,' timed to coincide with both its 10th anniversary and the opening of the New York World Fair. By contrast to the Federal Art Project, which has been called anti-modernist and anti-capitalist at once,⁽²⁶⁶⁾ the rising appreciation of modern art particularly of European origin, in the United States, was animated by the private initiative of wealthy collectors, led by the Rockefeller family, who had founded the Museum of Modern Art in 1929, the first year of the Depression, and enlarged it ever since. As Trustee Paul Sachs announced at the celebration of the new building's completion on May 8, 1939: "In serving the elite, [the museum] will reach, better than in any other way, the great general public."⁽²⁵⁷⁾ Sachs thus defined the Museum's attempt at a newly-fashioned national artistic culture as having a trickle-down effect, meant to mitigate the class division that had haunted modern art from the start.

Not long after its foundation, MOMA strove to make good on this expansive ambition by means of a national membership drive animated through citizens' support committees all over the country, and by a scheme of traveling exhibitions, which during 1938 and 1939 staged no less than 38 shows in 148 sites. This initiative was expressly aimed at making modern art overcome its upper-class cachet and reach the common people. Comparable but more tentative initiatives had been part of the art policies pursued by the national and regional governments of the Weimar Republic during the decade preceding the Depression. Since 1929, their limited success was stopped by a rightist backlash, in sync with the National Socialist ascendancy. After 1933, under Hitler's government, they were denounced and undone. The promotion of the show 'Art in Our Time' explicitly reacted to the National Socialist persecution of modern art,

which had forced modern German artists to immigrate to the United States and bolstered the appreciation of their work. Max Beckmann's 1933 triptych *Departure* was prominently featured, wrongly described in the catalog as referring to his exile in 1937, "caused by official disapproval of his art."⁽²⁵⁸⁾

In the show's opening speech, MOMA Director Alfred A. Barr hailed modern art as a paragon of liberty, the democratic answer to the traditional art championed by the oppressive regimes of both Germany and the Soviet Union. No less than President Roosevelt endorsed him on May 19, 1939, in a radio address for the occasion: "The conditions for democracy and for art are one and the same. What we call liberty in politics results in freedom in the arts." In his speech, the President did not limit himself to extolling modern art as a paragon of freedom, but expressly dwelt on the Museum's nationwide programs of popularizing modern art, architecture, industrial design, painting, and film. These he linked to the legacy of the Federal Art Project, in disregard of the latter's populist preference for traditional art with a social content. When the President claimed that, as a result of MOMA's efforts, "a nation-wide public" would be enlightened about the arts in all its forms,⁽²⁵⁹⁾ he replaced visual education in the social life of its citizens, an essential goal of the Federal Art Project, with mere appreciation "of the best and the noblest in the fine arts," as determined by the country's moneyed elite.

/1.3.3 **RECOIL FROM POLITICS**

However, the commercial art world, where modern art started to flourish again in the waning Depression, would have none of its implied politicization by way of ideological alignment with democracy. In his influential essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" of August 1939, art critic Clement Greenberg kept modern art aloof from any political responsibility for the sake of artists' creative freedom. Abrogating the connection between art and "the masses" which had informed the Federal Art Project, Greenberg invoked "our ruling class" as the fitting patron of "the avant-garde."⁽²⁶⁰⁾ Already in 1937, French critic Christian Zervos, writing in the *Cahiers d'Art*, had done the same (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.3). Greenberg's "ruling class" was a blunt but uncritical term for the Rockefellers' sponsorship of the Museum of Modern Art. On this explicit class basis, Greenberg disavowed fascism, communism, and "capitalist mass culture" in equal measure, shirking the word "democracy." When he hailed abstract art as the "avant-garde" of an unspecified progressive force beyond all politics, he unwittingly rehearsed the position of the Manifesto of Coyoacán, yet dispensed with its "revolutionary" epithet.

At first, U.S. artists of modern persuasion such as Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and Arshile Gorky had worked for the Federal Art Project despite its traditionalist bent. When they founded the 'American Abstract Artists Group' in 1936, their leftist

posture merely veered from the Stalinist orthodoxy of the 'American Artists Congress' towards Lev Trotsky's anti-Soviet Communism. In the same year, abstract painter Stuart Davis published his essay "Abstract Painting Today," where he contrasted the intrinsic internationalism of modern art with the "domestic naturalism" dominating U.S. painting. He called modern art "a direct progressive social force" for being un beholden to control, and for that reason bestowed on it the epithet "democratic."⁽²⁶¹⁾ Two years later, Greenberg exempted his "avant-garde" from any political involvement, be it democratic or totalitarian, because the mass appeal required for art to be politically effective would make it into what he labeled "kitsch." This was a head-on contradiction to President Roosevelt's confidence in MOMA's contribution to a democratic culture of the American people.

Greenberg underpinned his wholesale condemnation of traditional art with the derogatory term "kitsch," which he applied to academic art per se. Hence his sweeping verdict did not stop at the art supported by what he called "totalitarian" regimes, "because kitsch is the culture of the masses in these countries, as it is everywhere else," democratic states included. In three lengthy passages about the arts in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union, Greenberg refused to ascribe the cultivation of "kitsch" to any imposition by their regimes, but recognized its mass support. Pimenev's and Efanov's panorama murals in the Soviet Pavilion of the New York World Fair would have confirmed his judgment, had he believed in their intended significance. More problematical was his avoidance of the term democracy when assessing the situation in the USA. The abundant films and photographs showing masses of visitors perambulating the academic imagery of democracy at the Fair would have confirmed his generic ascription. Yet, to detach the "avant-garde" from society at large was to confine it to a political void.

/ 2 **POLITICAL ASCENDANCY OF TRADITIONAL ART**

/ 2.1 **THE ARROGANCE OF TRADITION**

/ 2.1.1 **THE TOTALITARIAN ACHIEVEMENT**

By the end of the Depression, the political confrontation of the arts, when measured by the long-term conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, seemed, in the eyes of many beholders, to have been decided in favor of the former, if not in terms of artistic quality, then certainly in terms of restoring a productive artistic culture with a wide mass acceptance and a political mission to fulfill. Highlighted by their capital reconstruction schemes, the art of all three totalitarian regimes appeared to stand triumphant, each one with a stylistic profile that looked all the more distinctive since it could be compared within a shared international trend. Those schemes appeared

to herald, postulate, or threaten trenchant historic changes, while democratic France appeared to cling to the status quo. All three regimes explicitly promoted the ascendancy of traditional over modern art as an aesthetic guideline for the enforced national organization of artists that would safeguard the viability of their profession, and, at the same time, devise a monumental or populist art for their political self-representation. The governments of the Third Republics saw no need to match those two intentions.

No matter how retrospective those regimes rated their return to traditional art, it could not be denied that because of their resolve to change the future, they had mustered the economic strength and the political will to plan and launch, if not complete, vast programs of monumental art and architecture, more or less classical in form, which unmistakably visualized their political systems. Domestically, the totalitarian regimes reinvested traditional art with its age-old function of promoting social stability and political order as ideological covers for political oppression. In its classical form, it was to shape buildings and images to canvas political authority. In its realistic form, it was to redeem its populist potential for fostering an art with the widest propaganda appeal. This cultural arrogance remained unmatched by any state art programs conceived by short-term democratic governments in France, let alone in war-wracked Spain. Their competitive coexistence at the Paris Expo allowed the totalitarian states to boast their self-claimed superiority over democracy. How the inherent conflict was going to turn into war remained unclear.

Traditional architecture, particularly of a classical pedigree, proved to be flexible enough to be stripped of its decorous academic codification. It lent itself to be 'modernized,' either through geometrical simplification, as in Italy and Germany, or through a decorative enhancement derived from other styles, as in the USSR. None of their buildings could have been mistaken for one of the past. At least initially, Fascist art in Italy tended to be anti-academic in its stress on 'revolutionary' innovation in sync with technological modernization. It was not until the proclamation of the Fascist 'Empire' in 1936 that the classical tradition was invested with an ideology of restoration. But even then, it remained inflected by an emphatic quest for geometric plainness. In the USSR and Germany, such a surface modernization of traditional art did not go as far and went into different directions. 'Socialist Realism,' focused on enrichment and enjoyment, excluding any connotations of austerity. In Germany, the classical tradition remained restricted to architecture and sculpture, where it was inflated to impress a sense of overwhelming power.

/ 2.1.2 **DEMOCRATIC DIFFIDENCE**

With its origins in the artistic culture of the French Revolution, the official or officious art of the Third Republic, both in its representative architecture and its symbolic imagery, had been largely framed in terms of the classical tradition. It had been

cultivated in academic institutions of teaching and art management, which developed it beyond a merely retrospective classicism. Upholding this tradition, which had by now been shared by alternating republican and imperial governments, implied no political choice, all the less so since successive short-lived governments of changing parties—with the two-year-long exception of the Popular Front—did not draw on any conflictive ideologies to stimulate popular support. Thus, unlike the three totalitarian regimes, French governments saw no need to fashion a new kind of art to flank fundamental political change, and to make such an art look traditional to herald such a change. On the contrary, they pursued traditional art in the name of political continuity, merely updating its appearance.

The design of a traditionalist architectural setting to fit the World Exposition of 1937 into the Paris cityscape was meant to anchor it in this long-term neoclassical environment. Its centerpiece, the Palais de Chaillot, could be envisaged as a distinctly contemporary addition to public buildings from the past that exalted the state in whatever constitutional form it took. Its sculptures, and those in the courtyard of the National Museum of Modern Art nearby, were commissioned from established academic artists, and so were the two outstanding national war memorials at Chalmont and Mondement, completed at that time. The public art of democratic France could therefore be perceived as the most traditional of all four states. Still, neither the Palais de Chaillot nor any other building at the Expo exalted democracy in the way of Jules Dalou's *Triumph of the Republic* (see Chapter 1.1/3.1.3). But in an international setting of ideological contest, taking democracy for granted was not enough. In the eyes of some French observers it paled before the self-assertive art of totalitarian regimes as a show of social cohesion and political will.

The modest ascendancy of modern art fostered by the Popular Front in the name of the Left hardened the nationalist intransigence of traditional artists and their supportive critics. Such critics looked with admiration at what they took to be an ideologically consistent art patronage in Germany and Italy, oblivious of the democratic credentials the classical tradition was meant to boast at home. Already at the international Congress about art and the state held in Venice in 1935, French critic Waldemar George, a prominent proponent of traditional and fierce opponent of modern art, made the former's resurgence dependent on a strong state with an "authentic hierarchy of values" and "the faith in a leader," conditions he saw "accomplished in fascist Italy" and wanted France to follow.⁽²⁶²⁾ One year later, debates sponsored by the short-lived Popular Front governments of France and Spain, aimed at reasserting modern against traditional art, remained largely inconclusive, since they were not tied to the framing, let alone the implementation, of state art programs. No matter how strongly it was associated with the ideology of progress, modern art remained a free market affair, put at risk by the Depression.

/ 2.1.3 **THE INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS OF TOTALITARIAN ART**

The Paris World Exposition of 1937 appeared to seal the international ascendancy of a monumental style that combined advanced building technologies with a classical appearance. This was a supra-political style, conservative and dynamic all at once, regardless of the economic and social conditions under which it was achieved, a style to override, or mask, the conflict between political systems. The shower of gold medals all three totalitarian regimes collected at the Paris Expo confirmed the international ascendancy of a traditional art developed beyond academic conventions, and capable of conveying a dazzling determination. Perhaps the jury was guided by the peace propaganda on which the Expo had eventually been focused under the government of the Popular Front. Among the recipients, Albert Speer's pavilion, the models of three Moscow subway stations, and Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film *Triumph of the Will* found themselves in the company of Jacques Lipchitz' *Prometheus* as the only modern exception. Such an international recognition of totalitarian art contradicted current critiques to the effect that art could never flourish under oppression.

The international success totalitarian art enjoyed at the Paris Expo was due to the semblance of a cohesive culture whose traditional makeup seemed to embody the ideal of a non-conflictive social order as a condition for the success of technical modernization and economic productivity, masking the domestic political oppression and the foreign political confrontations it entailed. Classical architecture and traditional imagery were conceived to fashion a decorous monumental scenery for any working society, designed to bolster popular enthusiasm for strong government. In France by contrast, the labor conflicts and financial shortfalls that delayed the timely completion of its Expo buildings left such an ideal unfulfilled for all to see. French architects must have cooperated at an early stage with their German and Soviet counterparts on the unified topographical configuration according to a monumental concept of classical observance. It took the foreigners little adjustment to harmonize the appearance of their buildings with that of the French without foregoing the specifics of their long-elaborated styles.

The French ideal of modernized monumentality appeared compatible with the art of National Socialist Germany, of Fascist Italy, and, to a lesser extent, of the Soviet Union, no matter how unequivocally the political ideologies of the three totalitarian states rejected the democratic system of the Third Republic. Classical monumentality proved flexible enough to suit any ideological connotation. Faced with the ascendancy of modern art and architecture during the first decade after World War I, which had been based on an alignment with technological modernization, traditional art now changed in ideological significance. As an answer to the aesthetic acclamation of labor-saving technology in modern architecture, it furnished decorous backdrops for

the celebration of a corporative working society without strife. Foreign observers were so impressed by the deliberate art policies of the three totalitarian regimes apparent at the Expo because they ascribed them to the state-supervised corporative organization of their artists, which seemed to make them more self-confident than their unregulated counterparts in democratic France. What they overlooked was that their most conspicuous accomplishments were owed to artist elites.

/ 2.2 **ACCELERATED MASTERWORKS**

/ 2.2.1 **THE MOSCOW SUBWAY**

The debates about the reorientation of Soviet architectural policy since 1932 frequently invoked the working people's supposed demand for beautiful and decorous buildings beyond mere practicality. This tenet was programmatically implemented in the station buildings of the Moscow Metro, which were to embellish the daily commute of millions between home and work. "Every station a palace, every palace a building shaped apart!"⁽²⁶³⁾ Thus did Politburo member Lazar Kaganovich, who oversaw the project from the start, characterize this artistic transfiguration of the work schedule. 'Palace'—a key ideological term denoting the revolutionary abolishment of class privilege—became the catchword of the project to justify its material and aesthetic splendor. The construction campaign was itself staged and publicized as a propaganda spectacle, complete with mass rallies and delegation visits, films and plays, books and journals documenting its progress. Huge mockups of single stations were installed on public squares, smaller models of three of them earned gold medals at the Paris Expo of 1937, and at least one was shown at the New York World Fair of 1939.

In 1932, the Politburo and the Soviet government jointly launched the subway project as a short-term enterprise, independent of the capital reconstruction plan still under development. Both gave it union-wide priority for obtaining funds and materials, and eventually assumed its organizational supervision. Despite recurring temporary setbacks, the first segment opened in 1935, the second in 1938. In order to stick to the breakneck schedule despite organizational shortfalls and laggard labor discipline, starting in the spring of 1933, the Party permeated the labor force with a mass of Komsomols, members of its youth organization recruited from other workplaces. They staged the construction process as a political campaign with the attendant procedures and ceremonies of Party activity. Eventually, the enterprise was so thoroughly politicized that the two Moscow Party committees under Lazar Kaganovich and Nikita Khrushchev, sidelining its technical and administrative leadership, micro-managed it on the spot. Both politicians oversaw not just the technical construction, station by station, but exercised their aesthetic judgment on all details of embellishment.

Numerous prominent Soviet architects, sculptors and painters were enlisted to collaborate on the art work of the Metro stations. Costly, colorful materials were gathered from all over the USSR, along with special machines and artisans capable of handling them. First, an independent central planning workshop coordinated all these efforts until, in late 1934, the Moscow Party Committee took over. Despite the haste, customary procedures of competitions and revisions were followed through, and the Mossoviet's Planning and Architecture Authority still revised the winners' submissions. Project workshops for each station further adjusted the designs. Eventually, Kaganovich and Khrushchev had the last word. In this way, the Moscow Metro turned out to be the confirming accomplishment of the art policy inaugurated by the April Decree of 1932. It was a complex masterwork of splendor and diversity, pooling the designs and styles of numerous architects and artists under Party guidance, and the perfect fulfillment of the ideology of an art for the people.

/ 2.2.2 THE NEW REICH CHANCELLERY IN BERLIN

The stunningly speedy construction of the New Reich Chancellery in Berlin from January 11, 1938, to January 10, 1939 betrays a similar connection of political planning and artistic accomplishment. It became part of Hitler's enactment of his expansionist plans, which started with the annexation of Austria in 1938 and Czechoslovakia in early 1939, "the first building of the new, grand German Reich."⁽²⁶⁴⁾ Active preparations had already started in November 1937. However, by contrast to other representative building ventures, the planning of the Chancellery was never publicized. Not even the laying of the cornerstone was celebrated. Any conspicuous announcement would have disturbed the peace delusions whereby Hitler cloaked his annexation strategy. All the more boldly was the building's significance hailed in the sumptuous book officially published soon after the opening, as an instant monument, or even instrument, of Germany's expansion. Hitler's earlier speech at the non-public topping-out ceremony served as its introduction. It spelled out the correlation with brutal clarity, confirming the warlike character of the overall design.

Like the Moscow Metro, the Chancellery did not form part of the master plan for the capital reconstruction, which foresaw a 'Führer's Palace' at the feet of the Great Hall. Eventually, it was to be handed down to Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess. Even now, it was only used on rare ceremonial occasions, while Hitler continued to conduct his daily government business from the old chancellery building. The one-sided ceremonial purpose of serving for diplomatic receptions shaped the symmetrical layout, which plotted a pathway from the main portal facing the 'court of honor' through three gathering rooms inside, on to a lengthy 'marble gallery' leading to the doorway of Hitler's office, and ending before the giant writing desk behind which Hitler was to receive his visitors. The pathway was marked by recurrent images of a half-drawn sword, from

Arno Breker's bronze figure of the Wehrmacht to the left of the portal, on to a flat repetition of the figure, now attacking, in a marble relief of the 'round room,' and then on to a wooden inlay at Hitler's desk, next to the face of Mars, the Roman god of war. The sequence illustrated the conduct of Hitler's diplomacy with its mix of menace and restraint.

In his opening speech of January 9, 1939, Hitler credited the Chancellery's timely accomplishment to Speer's artistic and organizational talents, and the dedication of 8,000 construction workers to the job. Just as a collective Party organization had achieved the timely completion of the Moscow Metro, here it had been the 'leadership principle' of National Socialist governance. Authors of the official publication strove to make the building of the Chancellery appear as part of the supposedly labor-friendly national economy. Only a small part of labor and materials were diverted from ongoing overall building activity, stressed one of them. The lavish use of marble gathered from all over Germany, including the newly-annexed 'Ostmark,' had revived the languishing regional quarry trades. Thus, by contrast to the obvious public utility of the Moscow subway, the hidden ceremonial splendor of the Chancellery, the foremost artistic monument of the turn from populism to autocracy in Germany during the final years of the decade, was dressed up in a populist veneer. Not he as a person, said Hitler in his speech, would receive foreign dignitaries here, but the German people—"through me."

/ 2.2.3 THE SITE OF THE E42

Unlike the other two totalitarian regimes, at the end of the decade Fascist Italy was unable to boast an outstanding building drawing on all the arts and fully representing the regime. Its main architectural project, the city-like site for the 1942 World Exhibition, actively pursued since 1936, stood unfinished, ideologically mired between its peaceful cachet and Italy's growing readiness for war. On the one hand, the projected subordination of foreign pavilions to a Roman city plan—stacked with permanent monumental buildings that touted the accomplishments of Roman-Fascist cultural continuity and designed in an all-but uniform 'modernized' classicism—testified to the regime's promotion of 'universal Fascism' as a world-wide paradigm, in its foreign cultural policy throughout the Depression. On the other hand, the celebration of the Ethiopian conquest, with a 'Piazza Axum' in the center of the site, made no bones about Italy's policy of conquest, no matter how assiduously Mussolini kept repeating his country's peaceful posture as late as April 1939. Even after Italy declared war on June 10, 1940, work on the site was kept going, now for a future world peace after victory.

These two contradictory components of the underlying ideology made the E42 project into an ever more self-centered celebration of Italian art and politics which left

no room for international diversity, although the future exhibition came to be cast as an 'Olympics' of competing cultures. The arrogance of 'Empire' enhanced the turn to the classical art of Roman pedigree in a modernized appearance. In early 1937, Mussolini appointed five architects to a 'Commission of Urbanists' charged with working out the site plan. The commission included Marcello Piacentini and Giuseppe Pagano, who were jointly designing the Italian pavilion at the Paris Expo at the time, demonstrating the corporative coexistence of traditional and modern trends in their profession. However, as the commission proceeded on its task, Piacentini prevailed over Pagano, who eventually resigned in protest. With Mussolini's backing, he used his increased authority to redesign the original site plan and to impose his more traditionalist views on the competitions for individual buildings. His was to be what exhibition commissioner Vittorio Cini called "the definitive style of our age."⁽²⁶⁵⁾

The 'Palace of Italian Civilization' has been called "the final chapter in the regime's quest for the superlative Fascist signature building in Rome. The register of failures or near-misses in the domain was long—the recurring ideas for a Mole Littoria, the shelved plans for the Danteum, the thwarted expansion of the Foro Mussolini, and especially the scaled-down (and relocated) Palazzo del Littorio."⁽²⁶⁶⁾ Designed by a team of architects headed by Ernesto La Padula, it was one of the three buildings of the E42 that stood all but finished by the start of the war. A tall square block with rows of hollow arches piercing all four sides, it was meant to recall the exterior of the Colosseum. Piacentini's committee further simplified the design, topping it with an additional floor just to display a Mussolini quote in large capitals. Sculptor Publio Morbiducci created a huge, free-standing relief slab titled *History of Rome through its Public Works* to be erected near the 'Palace.' By means of an interlocking sequence of scenes adapted from the Column of Trajan, it depicted the making of key monuments from various epochs, culminating in Mussolini on horseback before the Axum obelisk—not a public work but a spoil of war.

/ 2.3 **THE END OF POLITICAL CONFRONTATION**

/ 2.3.1 **BALANCE SHEET**

When on September 1, 1939, the Depression gave way to the Second World War, the political confrontation of the arts, in so far as it related to the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, appeared to have been decided in favor of the former, if not in terms of artistic quality, then certainly in terms of art policies intended to restore the artistic profession by making it a part of political culture. This process had unfolded differently in totalitarian and democratic states. In the three totalitarian states, traditional had triumphed over modern art, which was adapted beyond recognition in Italy, excluded from the public in the Soviet Union, and vindictively suppressed

in Germany, while in democratic France, it received some lukewarm support but no political recognition. Modern art stood divested of its allure of social dissent, its allegiance to the politics of the Left, and—with the partial exception of Fascist Italy—its aesthetic equivalency to modernization. It was no longer consistently positioned in its relationship to the government or as part of a political counterculture. It fell to individual artists to endow it with erratic, uneasy ideological connotations.

In the democratic political culture of the United States, a similar process had unfolded which was ideologically no less articulate than under the totalitarian regimes. The government center had been monumentally re-built in the classical tradition, and the emergency faced by artists on account of the Depression had been met by state art programs promoting a variety of traditional styles. Here, too, modern art was excluded from the process, but so forcefully supported by private patronage that it styled its distance from public policy as a posture of social independence. Eventually, under the impact of its National Socialist suppression, it adopted an anti-totalitarian cachet of liberty which, by the end of the decade, earned it an explicit democratic validation from the President on down. The New York World Fair of 1939, while advertising technological modernization for the world-at-large, extolled the democratic political system of the host country in a makeshift monumental environment, entirely shaped by traditional art in 'modernized' styles. If art of modern observance made a sporadic appearance, it was due to its sponsorship by private enterprise.

The Third Republic was constitutionally prevented from mustering a similar political resolve to state-manage the arts, until the two short-term Popular Front governments attempted to launch some passing programs of commission and support. State ventures of art and architecture all took traditional forms, while modern art was left to flourish or perish on the free market. The cultural complacency of successive French governments in an intractable situation of art policy matched their political vacillations in the face of the mounting war threat looming behind the deceptive German diplomacy of rapprochement, and their inability to clarify their cultural relations with Italy and the USSR in tune with their antagonistic or friendly political relations. It is telling that when it came to place a figure of France in front of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, the authorities, unable to enlist Charles Despiau, a purely classicizing sculptor, fell back on a plaster cast of Antoine Bourdelle's spear-wielding bronze *La France* from the war memorial at Montauban (see Chapter 4.3/2.3.1), which could be taken to personify the country's readiness for defense.

/ 2.3.2 THE WORLD EXPOSITION OF TRUCE

The Paris World Exposition of 1937 was designed on the premise of a competitive and comparative analogy of all four political systems, based on their adherence to 'modernized' versions of traditional art, a common denominator for them to

underscore their ideological diversity. It conjured up a geopolitical truce for the sake of peace, the mission it belatedly received on the watch of the Popular Front. The aerial view of the Palais de Chaillot and the German and Soviet pavilions bordering the central plaza suggested a harmonious monumental ensemble, five years before the states they represented were at war with one another. But while two wings of the Palais de Chaillot flanked the Peace Column atop the hill behind it, the two pavilions unabashedly visualized their political antagonism. The significance of these three versions of traditional art stood out all the more strikingly since most of the other pavilions, both French and foreign, featured a wide variety of styles, from the most radically modern to the most conventional *architecture parlante*. Only Le Corbusier's makeshift *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, with its protest message against rearmament, called the bluff on the inherent peace delusion.

No doubt the topographical scenario of the central plaza was meant to align the two totalitarian states of Germany and the Soviet Union with one another by analogy. But it prompted the officials and architects of both states to cast the antithetical configuration as a propaganda contest which could not but evoke their mutual hostility, the premise of the Franco-Soviet pact of 1935. That it should have remained hard to decide between competitive symmetry and potential conflict, intended or perceived, is due to the common adherence of both pavilions to traditional art, no matter how differently articulated. No commentary dwelt on the military imagery of the Soviet pavilion's façade, an illustration of the defensive resolve spelled out by a Stalin quote inside. That the two pavilions were never scrutinized for clues about their governments' intentions regarding war and peace, characterizes the ideological obfuscation which had befallen traditional art. Its age-old function to articulate an *architecture parlante* with clear ideological messages was compromised.

The uncompromisingly modern Spanish Pavilion redeemed to some extent the subversive potential attached to modern art since its inception, as it disturbed the architectural peace panorama of the Paris Expo. With its contributions from three leading Spanish modern artists residing in France, it provided an attractive setting for the traditional war imagery pervading the exhibits sent from Spain. This coexistence of traditional and modern art, due to Popular Front coalition policies, made the diminutive building, ducked below the German pavilion, into one of the earliest examples of modern art as a testimony to democracy anywhere in Europe—marginalized, to be sure, because it found itself on the losing side, while its German neighbor stood triumphant. A people's war in defense of democracy as a theme of modern art, albeit only for propaganda abroad, corresponded to the worldwide popular support for the Spanish Republic to which the pavilion was intended to appeal. But while the Republic's defeat unfolded simultaneously, its premonition that the Civil War heralded a European war to come, fell short of any resonance.

/ 2.3.3 THE WORLD EXPOSITION OF FASCISM

Already one year before the Paris Expo, Italy had been awarded the World Exhibition projected for 1941, despite having been sanctioned for its annexation of Ethiopia a few months earlier. With brazen defiance, the Fascist regime postponed the date to 1942 to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of its 'Revolution,' as well as with the fifth anniversary of its 'Empire.' Although the president of the organizing committee, Cipriano Oppo, superintendent of the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, travelled to both the Paris Expo of 1937 and the New York World Fair of 1939 for comparison, he did not emulate the aesthetic diversity resulting from the prominence of foreign pavilions, but single-mindedly aimed for a celebratory display of Italian history and culture. Accordingly, the urbanistic configuration of the site, first overseen by a five-man committee including Marcello Piacentini and Giuseppe Pagano, and since 1938 by Piacentini alone, was deployed on the symmetrical rectilinear grid of ancient Roman colonial cities. It made for a self-contained duplication in miniature of the city of Rome, which no foreign pavilion was to disturb.

So convinced were Oppo and Piacentini—and, by extension, Mussolini himself—of the universal validity of the rigorously 'modernized,' stripped-down classicism which was to regulate the appearance of all buildings, that they termed it a 'style for our epoch,' in accordance with the aspirations for a universal fascist culture, a persistent theme of Fascist foreign propaganda. To pursue such a goal with diplomatic discretion vis-à-vis foreign participants was the avowed policy of the exhibition planners. It would have done away with the diversity of national contributions which made the Paris Expo of 1937 such a telling site of the political confrontation of the arts. The term 'Olympics of Cultures,' devised for the E42 somewhat later, was altogether disingenuous. The conspicuous absence of the ubiquitous war symbolism and war imagery of Roman imperial art from the Roman imperial surface of the site betrayed the promise of peace as a passing pretext for the monumental celebration of Fascist power. This pretext was still being maintained after Italy had joined the war, now updated to signify a *pax romana* after victory.

No matter how contradictory the two political propositions underlying the E42—the conquest of a colonial empire and the promotion of a peaceful world economy—its accomplishment depended on peace, certainly for the short term, and possibly for the long term if the ambition of turning Rome into the center of a fascist-dominated European culture was to be taken seriously. However, Mussolini's inextricable political alliance with Germany not only drew him into the Second World War by June 1940, but, already in October 1940, lured him into yet another colonialist foray in the Balkans and in Greece. Work on the E42, centered on an 'Altar of Peace,' was kept going through 1942, but became a cynical deception. Its premise of was that after the

expected victorious outcome of the war, the postponed world exhibition, whenever it was staged, would inaugurate a new, peaceful cooperation of nations under the aegis of Fascism. At this future point in time, no alternative political system would have to be confronted or accommodated any more. Only when this premise became untenable was work on the site finally suspended.

/ 3 **THE POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION OF MODERN ART**

/ 3.1 **INTERNATIONAL SURVEY**

/ 3.1.1 **THE TOTALITARIAN CHALLENGE**

At the end of the decade, modern art appeared as the loser in the cultural policy of all three totalitarian states, albeit to different degrees and for different political reasons. It fell to democratic France to allocate it a place in cultural policy, not as an alternative to traditional art, to be sure, but in a complementary coexistence. Such efforts, however, never went as far as ideologically linking it with democracy. The suppression of modern art, under way since 1932 in the Soviet Union and since 1933 in Germany, was driven by different ideologies. While Soviet art policy delegitimized the communist claims of modern artists against their own professions of conformity, German art policy denounced modern artists as subversive despite their disavowal of politics and even their profession of conformity. This argumentative discrepancy in art policy between the two leading totalitarian regimes on their geopolitical collision course was never noticed in democratic France. Compared to the notoriety of the German public persecution of modern art, its milder Soviet counterpart of mere exclusion was overlooked until 1936, perhaps because it was being implemented with much less fanfare.

For a political vindication of modern art in any more substantial terms than those of freedom, its apologists would have had to reason out this argumentative discrepancy. However, until Lev Trotsky's anti-Stalinist campaign from exile, not even the similarity was pointed out. Through the end of the decade, modern art was solely billed as anti-fascist, never as anti-communist. The Soviet policy change of 1932 presented the habitual leftist ideological alignment of modern artists in Western Europe with an intractable ideological dilemma of political partisanship. While they were no longer able to maintain their adherence to the Soviet Union as a bulwark of their avant-garde aspirations, their conservative adversaries kept branding them as Bolsheviks. Faced with the mounting German threat of a war in which the Soviet Union would be needed as an ally, democratic governments in Western Europe—apart from the two short-lived Popular Front governments of France and Spain—failed to re-assert their political will with enough ideological self-assurance to endow modern art with democratic credentials.

Some contemporary observers often perceived the pro-active concern of totalitarian governments for a majoritarian art to promote their policies as a sign of political strength, compared to the merely patronizing concern of democratic governments for a market-driven artistic culture. France's one-time effort at setting a policy for the inclusion of modern art in the 1937 Paris World Exposition was never followed up. Conservative art critics such as Waldemar George, an influential figure in numerous art commissions, even hailed the art policy of Fascist Italy, which did not suppress modern art but subordinated it beyond recognition to an aesthetics of first Fascist and then imperial grandeur, as an antidote against the perceived Bolshevik degradation of French artistic culture. As it became clear within the year between the Munich Agreements and the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the cultural disorientation of successive French governments went in sync with their lack of nerve in the face of the German war threat, and with their inability to define their relations to the other two totalitarian states with anything but expediency.

/ 3.1.2 **IDEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS**

As a result of these ideological obfuscations, the Third Republic articulated no anti-totalitarian defense of modern art beyond honoring its 'independence,' which had originally meant its independence from public institutions, but now included sponsorship without political control, still without expressly founding it on the concept of political democracy. For modern art to work its way toward democratic validation required shedding its ideological association with the Left, which had been quickly waning during the Depression. Communist party organizations had to relent on their refusal of its subjective self-sufficiency as soon as they were ready to admit upper-middle-class culture to the anti-fascist coalition. However, both Popular Front governments of France and Spain were far from granting modern art an exclusive franchise on democracy on account of its autonomous aesthetics. They assigned it no more than a supporting role alongside traditional art in a political culture made up from diverse constituencies with shared political ambitions.

Thus, by the end of the decade, modern art in democratic France stood divested of any firm ideological connotation that might have made it suitable for taking a stand in the confrontation of political systems. In Breton's words of 1939, it was reduced to serving as "a carpet of flowers on a mined world,"⁽²⁶⁷⁾ because the surrealists' political ideology did not include democracy. Modern artists such as Le Corbusier, Léger, and Freundlich continued to be cornered into defensive self-justifications in public debates, where they faced Communist objections against the political viability of their work because of its non-topical themes and recondite forms. By the end of the decade, there was no longer any uncontested modern art on the Left. It was the Surrealists who most conscientiously faced up to this contradictory ideological

obfuscation, as they forged a three-way opposition against bolshevism, 'fascism' and democracy into a non-partisan, de-facto anarchist platform which still clamored for revolution but reduced their activism to provocative self-performances, with neither political adversary nor political cause.

The positions of modern art within the cultural policies of the three overtly anti-democratic regimes of Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, varying between adjustment to conformity and vituperative suppression, made it hard to claim it for democracy on any substantive grounds other than freedom of expression. Germany presented the only clear-cut target for straightforward confrontation. On the other hand, the ostensibly successful efforts of those three regimes to foster a state-directed art of traditional observance, unattainable for modern art, seemed to confirm a long-held belief in France itself. That modern art could not reach a mass public made its class-imitation stand in the way of democratic assent. The two Paris shows of modern art held in 1937 were largely filled by dealers and collectors. By that time, the long-term antagonism between traditional and modern art had fallen into lockstep with the political confrontation between totalitarianism and democracy. Whereas the totalitarian choice was clear despite all differences, a democratic choice was altogether lacking. It fell to the Popular Front to give modern art a passing political prominence.

/ 3.1.3 **THE ANTI-FASCIST CACHET**

At the end of the decade, modern art had lost two of the ideological connotations that had accrued to it in the previous thirty years: its allure of social dissent and its resulting affinity with leftist politics. On the other hand, its ruthless oppression by the National-Socialist regime had invested it with an anti-fascist cachet that was magnified by the mounting fear of German aggression. This cachet was politically distorted, however. It ignored the accommodation of modern art in Fascist Italy as well as its ideological sidelining in the Soviet Union, and it stopped short of linking up a democratic ideology. Even when Lev Trotsky in 1936, denounced the similarity between the German and Soviet antimodern oppression, he did so merely in the name of a freedom. It was only in the United States that modern art from Europe was endowed with an express democratic significance on the foil of its National Socialist victimization. Here its public appreciation was enhanced because, by contrast to Europe, freedom of art was held to be germane to political democracy, regardless of its ideological message, even if it opted for the Left.

The anti-fascist investiture of modern art started in 1935 with the Comintern's deviation from the censure of modern art in the USSR in order to draw left-leaning modern artists in Western Europe into a class-transcending cultural front. Far from embracing modern art outright, it gave it a chance to prove its anti-fascist credentials in the attendant debates. Two years later, the German 'Degenerate Art' show of July

1937 gave the long-standing National Socialist hostility to modern art a boost of international notoriety. It endowed modern art with a martyr's role on behalf of democratic freedom, an anti-fascist designation it didn't take a leftist persuasion to adopt. Since most observers took the aesthetic inferiority of National Socialist art for granted as an inevitably negative effect of government control, the defense of modern art came to rest on the reverse assumption that artistic achievement quasi-naturally flowed from artistic freedom, a vindication of the free market principle on which modern art had thrived before the Depression.

The anti-fascist posture of modern art was a reaction to its persecution and rarely if ever turned the tables toward ideological activism. Herbert Read's invocation of the "principle [...] of the artists' freedom to expression," which was "ethical, not political,"⁽²⁶⁹⁾ in his response to Hitler's attack on the New Burlington Gallery's exhibition *Twentieth-Century German Art* (see Chapter 3.2 / 3.3.3) marked the limits of that posture, at least in the public sphere. It remained a matter of individual artists' conscience.

/ 3.2 THE POPULAR FRONT'S SUPPORT OF MODERN ART

/ 3.2.1 GOVERNMENT POLICY

In both France and Spain, the art of the Popular Front was driven by artists' scarcity of work, exacerbated by the adverse impact of the Depression on the art market. Just as totalitarian governments devised supportive policies in response to such demands, left-leaning artists' unions or other groups promoted the election of governments that promised to enlarge the social scope, and the political relevancy, of contemporary artistic culture. Unlike totalitarian regimes, however, the parties, and then governments, of the Popular Front were in no position to impose a clear-cut choice of one artistic tendency over another on grounds of political suitability or ideological preference. In the process, established divisions between traditional and modern artists were overridden by shared political agendas and convictions. This coalition strategy prompted those agencies to accept modern artists and their work on account of their radical convictions and anti-fascist resolve, provided their prestige was helpful for maximizing their supporting culture. It was not so much the ideological alignment of style and cultural policy which constituted grounds for their acceptance, but their espousal of a political mission.

Moreover, the inclusion of modern alongside traditional art within the artistic culture of the Popular Front was facilitated by the Comintern's own foreign art policy, which, several years after modern art had been dislodged in the Soviet Union, was still promoting it as an unspecified revolutionary agent, in line with its leftist ideological connotations in Western Europe. In France, however, the modern art works sponsored by the Popular Front government for the Paris Expo—most notably Delaunay's

interior of the Aviation Pavilion, in addition to the 'Palais de Découverte,'—still adhered to the pre-Depression association of modern art and technical modernization, that is, a constructive aesthetics of capitalist growth, diametrically opposed to the realistic propaganda art of the Soviet planned economy. Yet the demand for realism had its own tradition in socialist or socially-conscious art of Western Europe since the late 19th century, and hence was bound to clash with the insistence on artistic autonomy on the part of modern artists who were eager to join the Popular Front movement because of their political convictions rather than because they would have been prepared to submit to a functional application of their practice.

The infusion of modern art with democratic significance resulted from three developments. First, Soviet cultural policy since 1932 deprived it of its revolutionary credentials. Second, the German 'Degenerate Art' show of 1937 victimized it as a venue of free expression. Third, the French Popular Front governments of 1936-1938 enlisted it for the promotion of its social and cultural programs. It was the Left that went as far as it could in asserting a political culture of democracy, including an artistic culture receptive to the modern tradition, even though the term democracy was never advanced in its defense. Invested with its anti-fascist credentials by default, modern art became part of a cultural policy in defense of democratic freedom, shedding its disruptive connotations. Its promotion never recommended it as a feature of a democratic culture by contrast to its totalitarian oppression, only as a French accomplishment.

/ 3.2.2 **COMMUNIST RELUCTANCE**

The Popular Front government of France could count on a fully-developed modern art scene with leftist sympathies for political support. This was the message of Picasso's picture curtain for the festive performance in celebration of its accession on July 14, 1936, although Picasso had never before participated in any of its cultural manifestations. By contrast, the Popular Front government of Spain did not find a vigorous modern art scene upon taking office, and hence had no opportunity or reason to enlist modern artists in the country for their cultural objectives. With little need to compromise, they replaced conservative art institutions with tightly institutionalized art programs of their own. Communist parties in either country, taking their cue from the cultural policy of the Comintern, favored traditional art because of its class-transcending public appeal. While in France, where the Party was not in government, its critique of modern art remained in opposition, in Spain, where it was, it contributed to modern art's diminished acceptance.

The long-standing communist controversy between traditional and modern art regarding the popular resonance of an art which claimed political relevancy was resumed under the Popular Front in France and even more so in Spain, albeit due to

the democratic nature of both their constitutional governments, in a non-exclusive environment and with no final outcome either way. In the so-called 'realism debates,' competitive antagonisms between traditional and modern artists were blurred by steady professions of a common goal. In these debates, the issue was not so much the political purpose of an art to be newly conceived, but the ideological significance of its themes and styles, always on the assumption that the government had no say in such matters. Yet, the name of these debates already suggests that 'realist' art was the standard-setting majority against which modern artists had to make their case, against Communist objections in particular. Aragon, as secretary of the 'Maison de la Culture,' remained particularly hostile to such modern masters as Le Corbusier and Léger, and his silence about Picasso signals disapproval.

The Directorate of Fine Arts of the Spanish Popular Front Government under Josep Renau was more reluctant to include modern artists in any of its domestic programs, all of which were focused on Civil War propaganda with a topical appeal. This is why Spanish realism debates and the attendant resolutions, interventions, and manifestoes inevitably ended with a preference for realism as a populist strategy. The choice of Josep Sert's and Luis Lacasa's modern design for their Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition was a propagandistic initiative aimed at an international audience. So was the enlistment of three Spanish artists—Picasso, Miró, and González—who were already established masters of modern art, and who had preferred to work in Paris rather than in Spain in order to make their careers. But the net effect of combining the works of traditional artists from Spain, who provided the bulk of the art show, with these artists, placed in prominent spots of the pavilion, added up to a demonstration of Popular Front coalition politics. It suited the pavilion's message to the effect that the Republican war effort was a defense of pluralist democracy.

/ 3.2.3 FRENCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

That modern art in France was labelled 'independent' meant that it had no representation in the commissions and obligations system managed by the supra-political Fine Arts Administration of the Third Republic. It was this system that gave democratic legitimacy to the state's support of the arts, by which the Popular Front government abided, only making it more inclusive of modern art, now labelled 'art vivant.' The Ministers of Education with the greatest impact on artistic culture during the decade, Anatole de Monzie and Jean Zay, both members of the Radical Party, maintained a stable middle-class position after leftward changes of government in 1932 and 1936. Their tenure had a noticeable political impact on the independent Fine Arts Administration, providing modern artists with more opportunities than before. The acceptance of modern art in French state-sponsored public culture first emerged in 1937 with the opening of a National Museum of Modern Art, two concurrent exhibitions of modern

art at the Petit Palais and the Jeu de Paume, and the commission of modern artists for several French pavilions at the Paris World Exposition, newly added by the incoming Popular Front government.

The Musée National d'Art Moderne had been planned as early as 1934 under a conservative government. It was built in a streamlined classical style, including a profuse sculptural decor of the façade and the courtyard that featured classical mythology. The replica of the 1932 bronze statue *La France* by the late Emile-Antoine Bourdelle before the main entrance underscored the claim of French preeminence. The incongruous choice of a traditional design and imagery for a museum of modern art, after several modern architects' entries—including Le Corbusier's—had been rejected in the competition of 1934, provoked much controversy. When the Museum was opened concurrently with the Paris Expo, it did not even feature a modern art show. On the orders of Prime Minister Léon Blum himself, the inaugural exhibition featured a survey of French art since Gallo-Roman times. In the section belonging to the city of Paris, another show presented the capital's art and culture. In the part belonging to the state, an array of smaller shows featured the country house and the medieval theater. Modern art was nowhere to be seen.

The art-political scope of the Musée National d'Art Moderne had been restrained for two years by its planning before the tenure of the Popular Front. The Palais de la Découverte, on the other hand, installed in the west wing of the Grand Palais as an exhibit of the Paris Expo, was initiated by the Popular Front government under the authority of one of its members, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist Jean Perrin. On the long-standing premise of a convergence between modern art and scientific and technical modernization, Perrin enlisted a galaxy of modern artists—along with an equal number of traditional ones, to be sure—to illustrate a systematic display of scientific topics, and even added a separate show of modern art. Education Minister Zay made this show a permanent section. It was a fitting commission for modern sculptor Jacques Lipchitz to fashion the giant plaster sculpture over the entrance of the Grand Palais as a personification of human progress—and of the anti-fascist struggle, if his later recollection can be believed—, by contrast to the haphazard last-minute placing of Bourdelle's *La France* before the Musée National d'Art Moderne.

/ 3.3 **MODERN ARTISTS ON THEIR OWN**

/ 3.3.1 **RECOIL ONTO SELF-ORIENTATION**

The most salient official acceptance of modern art in democratic France—the two exhibitions in the Petit Palais and the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 1937—invested modern art with a non-political standing at the expense of ideological significance. It did not present modern art as a democratic response to its Fascist conformity, let alone its

Soviet and German denigration. This was political marginalization by default. In the dis-oriented public sphere of democratic politics during the last three years before the outbreak of the war, politically alert modern artists, disappointed by years of dealing with official institutions or professional associations and weary of inconclusive ideological debates, found themselves thrown back on conveying their own reflexive self-orientation vis-à-vis the mounting threat. The proliferation of an allusive imagery of conflict, danger and peril during these three years has often been summarily ascribed to this topical awareness. It has been foregrounded in recent exhibitions with suggestive titles such as *Le temps menaçant*⁽²⁷⁰⁾ and *Kassandra*.⁽²⁷¹⁾ However, it remains uncertain to what extent historic references of this imagery can be verified.

It was the Surrealists, increasingly diminished in their numbers, who most deliberately, and most inconclusively, faced up to the ideological dilemma resulting from their three-way opposition against bolshevism, 'fascism,' and democracy, encapsulated in Breton's slogan *Neither your War nor your Peace*. In their exposition at the Galérie des Beaux-Arts in January 1938, they recoiled onto a provocative self-performance. The French government's refusal to come to the aid of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War provoked an accusatory or elegiac art on the part of modern artists, who sided with the unsuccessful communist opposition to this policy of non-intervention. Whenever they took up the theme, they did so on their own conviction, with no political mandate or politically focused purpose. Prompted by the experiences of Péret and Masson in Spain, they were amongst the first to perceive the Spanish Civil War as a losing cause, due just as much to the unstoppable advance of General Franco's troops as to the internecine struggles of the Republican coalition. As a response, they wallowed in a defeatist imagery derived from bullfights or shrunk into a partly psychological, partly mythical introversion.

Now the revalidation of myth, the surrealist movement's long-term ambition, served as a visual mode of horrified detachment from an accelerating historic plight whose short-term direction remained obscure. Sympathetic critics were quick to exalt the deliberate incommensurability of the mythical imagination as an apt response to "menacing times." As a mode of imagination, the mythical turn corresponded, as if in mirror reverse, to the profusion of mythology in the modernized version of traditional art prevailing in the pictorial decoration of the newly-built Musée d'Art Moderne. It countered the joyfully optimistic appeal of this imagery with an invocation of conflictive or even mortal specters. This principled pictorial confrontation extended beyond France to the art of the Fascist and National Socialist, but not the Soviet regimes. Surrealist artists countered their political assertiveness—lacking in the official French adaptations of mythology—with blurred figurations that turned the dream aesthetics of their beginnings into nightmares.

/ 3.3.2 THE LAST ISSUE OF *MINOTAURE*

When in early 1933 Breton joined the editorial board of the lavishly produced and richly illustrated art journal titled *Minotaure*, devoted to a composite program of art, literature, ethnography and psychoanalysis, he thereby retreated from his earlier, ideologically extremist but short-lived editorial ambitions with *Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, *Documents* and *Clarté*. The new journal endowed the surrealist ambition to expand human self-understanding beyond social limits with a mythical icon of half-human, half-animal existence. A drawing by Picasso on the cover of the first issue, to appear on June 1, 1933, gave the sword-wielding figure a combative attitude. Picasso's collaboration lent the enterprise the prestige of the foremost modern artist of his time. Since the winter issue of 1937, however, a dramatic sequence of cover pictures by Magritte, Ernst, Masson and Rivera transfigured the victimized misfit among the Olympian half-gods into a tragic counter-hero vis-à-vis the mythological power figures of official art in France, Italy, and Germany. By contrast to their triumphalism, it rallied modern art around the myth of a loser.

Masson's cover of the last issue, which appeared in May 1939, marked the low point of this evolution. It featured the Minotaur's skull cracked open, his left horn broken off, exposing the brick walls of the labyrinth instead of the brain. This was a standard image of tormented introspection Masson had cultivated in that year, culminating in a ghastly large-scale painting of a full figure titled *Labyrinth*. In their editorial, the editors stressed their lack of any institutional affiliation, but acknowledged the freedom of the arts guaranteed in democratic France as a minimal precondition for foreigners and exiles to join French artists in their pursuit of free expression. However, Breton did not credit democracy with this opportunity because, in his view, most artists failed to face up to the historic predicament. "It is confounding," he wrote, "to observe that art in France, at the start of 1939, appears above all keen on throwing a carpet of flowers on a mined world. [...] At the instant when Barcelona grows weak of deprivation under a hellish sky, when elsewhere the days of liberty appear to be counted, their work reflects in nothing the tragic apprehensions of this epoch [...]."⁽²⁷²⁾

Inside the issue, a special insert conveyed the recollections and conclusions Breton had brought back from his meetings with Trotsky and Rivera at Coyoacán the year before. It was bound within an extra set of covers featuring a continuous two-page image by Rivera, which extolled the inviolate Minotaur safely at rest inside the impenetrable brick walls of his labyrinth, surrounded by his victims' skulls and bones (see Chapter 4.2/3.3.2). In his texts, Breton nostalgically waxed about the revolutionary culture of Mexico where Rivera's public muralism had thrived as a politically operative art, endowing him with the credentials of a revolutionary artist *par excellence*. Rivera's current retreat to easel paintings of plants and landscapes devoid of any topicality

signaled a political disaffection Breton shared. Although a photograph depicted the three participants of the Coyoacán encounter as a group in friendly conversation, their manifesto was nowhere mentioned. But it must have been due to Masson's lone membership in the FIARI that Breton extolled him, in his article inside, as "the authentic artist and the authentic revolutionary," no matter how gloomy his cover design.

/ 3.3.3 DALÍ, MASSON, PICASSO

In early 1936, Salvador Dalí painted a large canvas entitled *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans*. On October 15, 1936, the date a color reproduction was printed in the ninth issue of *Minotaure*, he added *Premonition of Civil War* to the title. The painting shows a disassembled, reconfigured androgynous body tearing at itself with a clenched fist—the communist salute—and trampling on its own severed waist. Dalí painted this picture of sexually charged self-torment and self-mutilation as a specimen of his self-styled 'paranoiac-critical' method intended to discern the psychic origins of sexual deviation. The added subtitle identified it as a non-partisan denunciation of the internecine self-destruction by the Spanish people in the incipient Civil War. Dalí's refusal of political judgment, entailing an unspecific historic pessimism, is consistent with the wide-spread recoil of modern artists onto fantasies of horror during the last three years before the outbreak of World War II. By contrast to traditional artists, they had no more ideology to lean on.

Also in the summer of 1936, André Masson adapted the headless nude with a skull for the sex, the emblem of an "orphic and nietzschean" secret society he had founded together with Georges Bataille and others, to the topicality of the Spanish Civil War. With hammer and sickle filling in for the missing head, brandishing a sword and a detonating bomb, the figure tramples on a solid swastika and a Christian cross. With this emblematic deviation from the politically neutral, unarmed standard version of the *Acéphale*, Masson expressed a passing allegiance to the embattled Republic, which for a time had even prompted him to enlist in a Catalan militia. Soon, however, disillusioned by its double jeopardy at the hands of the nationalist insurgents and the government's deadly infighting, he returned to Paris. It was an incongruous ploy to dress up the incarnation of a self-fashioned alternative to historical and political experience as a combat hero for the military turn of political confrontation. Two years later, Masson, in his disfigured personification of the *Labyrinth*, fashioned a more appropriate icon for the hopeless introspection to which modern art had been reduced.

The farthest this kind of introspective imagery offered by modern artists could advance toward political topicality was the auditorium wall of the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris Expo, where Pablo Picasso was given a license to reassemble the ingredients of his habitual imagery of sex, bullfights, and the Minotaur under the large-letter label 'GUERNICA' to make it represent a war crime. Picasso had first deployed the full range

of this imagery in his etching *Minotauromachie* of 1935 for a complex scene of sexual conflict. Merely by inserting the fragmented figure of a fallen warrior with a broken sword he re-focused this ensemble onto the war theme in the expressive mood of a defeatist lament.

It did not take long for Picasso to be called on the political contradictions inherent in his enterprise. In the British journal *The Spectator* of late summer and fall 1937, Anthony Blunt and Herbert Read waged an instant debate about *Guernica*, which they had seen on their visits to the Paris Expo. In the August 7 issue, Blunt wrote: "Fundamentally [*Guernica*] is the same as Picasso's bull-fight scenes. It is [...] the expression of a private brain-storm which gives no evidence that Picasso has realized the political significance of *Guernica*." He denounced the mural as an example of the subjective introspection detaching modern art from historical significance.

In the following issue of *The Spectator* of October 15, Herbert Read answered Blunt's diatribe with a principled rejoinder. "Here is the best kind of evidence of the close cooperation and mutual understanding which exists between the artist and the democratic government of his native country. [...] Hundreds of thousands of people have seen [*Guernica*] and, as I can testify from personal observation, accepted it with the respect and wonder which all great works of art inspire." Thus Read grafted the ideology of an art for the people, ascendant at this point in time, onto the emerging democratic validation of modern art. However, there is no record of any public resonance *Guernica* may have had at the Paris Expo. Its glamorization in a special issue of the *Cahiers d'Art* for the occasion was never matched by any comment in other art journals, let alone in the general press. It is not until 1939, when it was on display in a travelling exhibition in support of a relief effort for Spanish refugees, that it started to acquire its current celebrity as an anti-war fanal.



Plates

Monumental Sculptures at the
Paris World Exposition 1937 p. 426

Antonio Rodríguez Luna,
Revolutionary Artist p. 434

Hidden Pictures of Resistance
in Germany p. 446

Paul Landowski's
War Monument p. 458

Monumental Sculptures at the Paris World Exposition 1937

“Vera Mukhina’s steel figures atop the Soviet pavilion embodied the ‘Workers’ and Peasants’ State’ of the new Soviet constitution. [...] Thus, all three totalitarian pavilions used a statuary-laden ‘talking architecture’ for pictorial scenarios, each proclaiming their own versions of the convergence between state and society. They made their countries’ representations at the Expo into triumphant political self-descriptions, most blatantly in the Soviet pavilion’s textbook rehearsal of the Stalin Constitution for visitors to study.” (pp. 114f.)

“The two bronze statues before the wings of the Palais de Chaillot, which never came to be gilt as had been intended, were mythological personifications of *Arts et Techniques*, the Expo’s title terms. Henri Bouchard’s *Apollo* on the right, holding up the harp and accompanied by smaller muses, was the god of the arts. Albert Pommier’s *Hercules* on the left, subduing the bull with just one hand, was the hero of work. Since the Palais de Chaillot was no national pavilion, but the crowning building of the Expo as a whole, it would have been inappropriate for it to match the totalitarian pavilions in extolling the host country’s political system.” (p. 115).

“Louis Berthola’s metope relief *Metal* on the north-west wall of the Palais de Chaillot shows a nude, muscular giant in the midst of a composite industrial plant. His physical strength enables him to hold a steel-cooking kettle in full blast, balanced between his thighs, which form the anatomical equivalent of a pouring winch, subordinating mechanical equipment to manual labor.” (p. 133)



Louis Berthola, [Steel Cooking], 1937, Paris, Palais de Chaillot, full view and close-up.



Vera Mukhina, *Factory and Kolkhoz Workers*, 1937, Moscow, Russian Exhibition Center, back view, front view.



Vera Mukhina, *Factory and Kolkhoz Worker*, Moscow, Russian Exhibition Center, close-ups





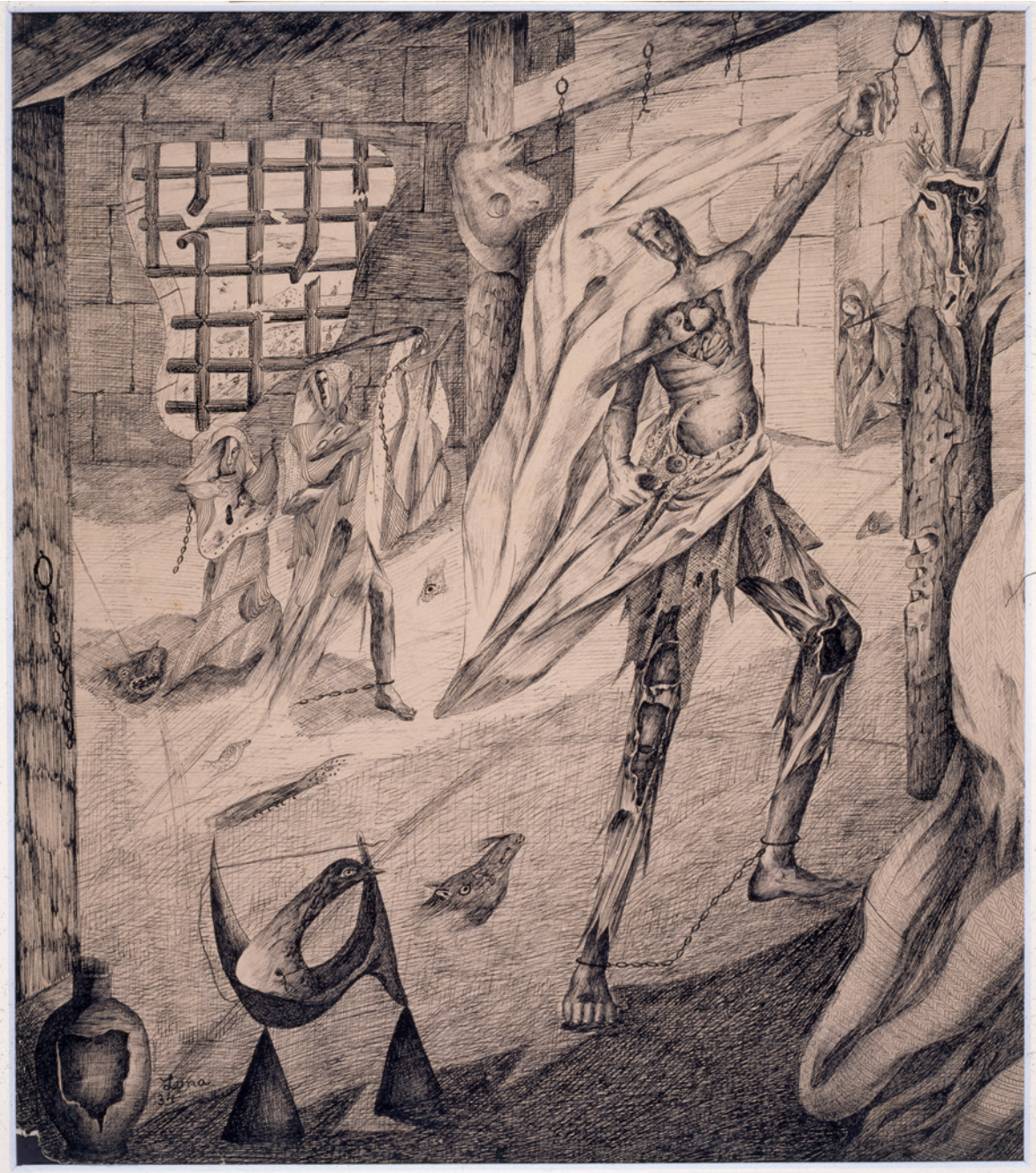
Albert Pommier, *Hercules*, 1937, Paris, Palais de Chaillot, full view and close-up.



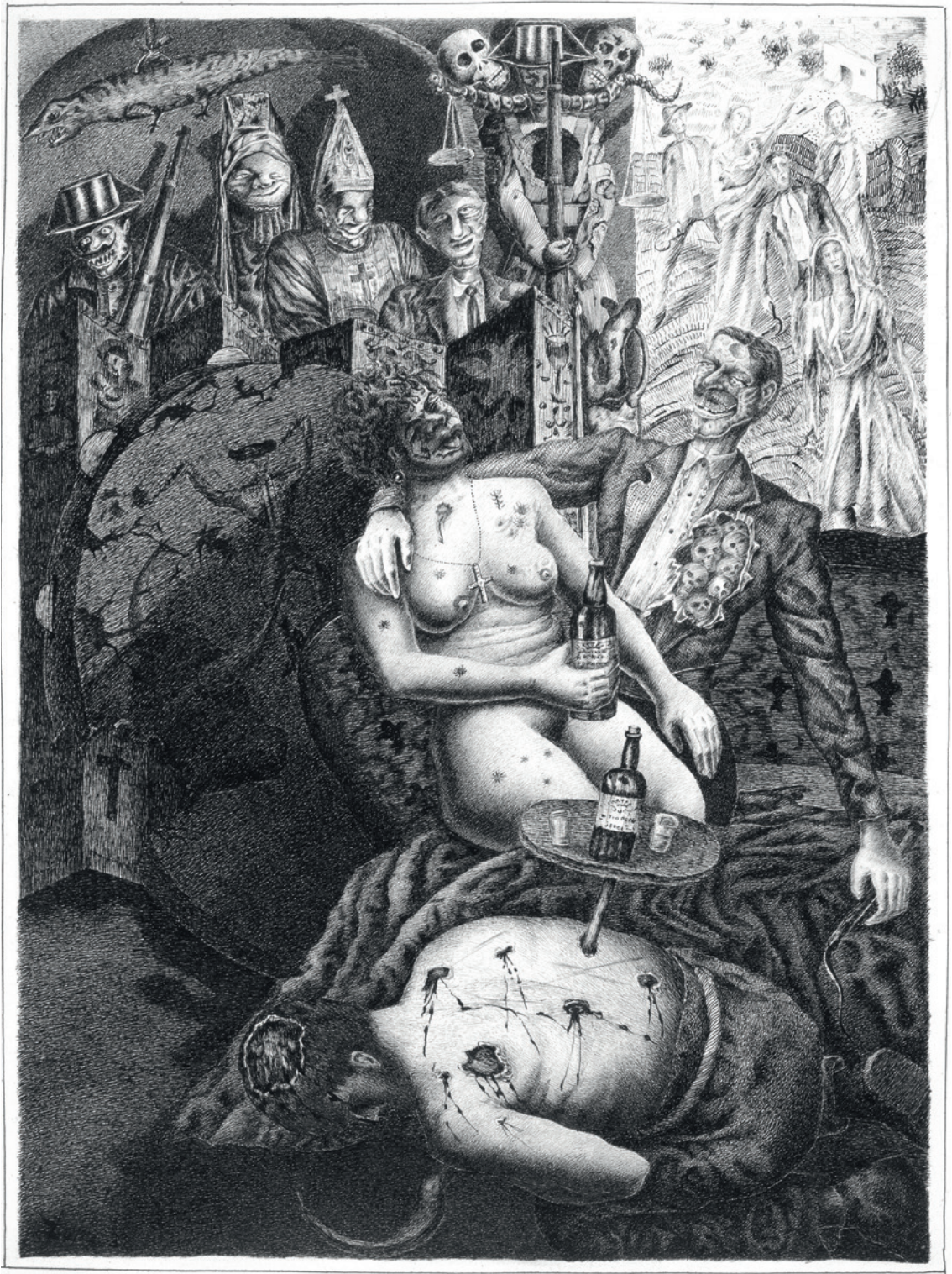
Henri Bouchard, *Apollon*, 1937, Paris, Palais de Chaillot, full view and close-up.

Antonio Rodríguez Luna, Revolutionary Artist

“In 1938, immediately after the Republic’s defeat, surrealist painter Antonio Rodríguez Luna recalled how the Asturian miners’ uprising of 1934 had induced him to move from what he termed ‘an artistic and anti-bourgeois revolutionarism’ to ‘a social and revolutionary painting, not in its outside form, but in its profound life’s content, which is the same as the struggle of the working-class.’ Rodríguez Luna pointed out that he had included several drawings about that earlier uprising in his album *Sixteen Drawings of War*, published in 1937, because he understood the Civil War as a continuation of the revolutionary struggle rather than a mere defense of the Republic. In his numerous published drawings, he deployed a panorama of gruesome caricatures depicting standard foe images of social revolution. Figures of landholders, priests, and Falangists in uniform appear in scenes of hollow triumph or abject debauchery. They trample on the tortured bodies of the common people, but their own physical decay spreads over the environment.” (pp. 172f.)



Cárcel de Oviedo (Oviedo Prison), 1934, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Terrateniente andaluz (Andalusian Landholder), 1937-1938, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Terrateniente (Landholder), 1938, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



El falangista (The Falangist), 1937, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



La Inquisición (de la Iglesia) (Inquisition [of the Church]), 1937, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.



Emisarios del pasado (Envoys from the Past), 1938, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.



El dictador (The Dictator), 1937, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Ellos también dan tierra al campesino (They also give Land to the Peasant), 1937, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Bombardeo de Barcelona (Bombing of Barcelona), 1938, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.



La guerra (The War), 1938, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

Hidden Pictures of Resistance in Germany

“Between 1935 and 1938, Hans Grundig summed up his condemnation of the regime in a large triptych with the apocalyptic title *The Millennium (Das tausendjährige Reich)*, a spoof on the Hitler State’s non-Biblical self-designation. It shows the destruction of a temporary reign of ostensible peace, but not by the righteous, as in Revelations 10, but by deranged idol-worshippers cavorting below anarchist black flags. Flying under glowing skies, airplane squads are bombing the city into craters and ruins, starting the all-out war that ends the apocalyptic interim. A block of men on the margin of the left-hand panel identify the Communist resistance as the steadfast believers of Revelations 20:4. In the right-hand panel Lea Grundig appears as a fearless witness. In the predella, literally underground, she reappears asleep next to her husband. *The Millennium* was Grundig’s magnum opus, a hidden picture only accessible to trusted friends.” (pp. 306f.)

“Two of Zeller’s four oppositional paintings date from before the outbreak of the war, both from 1938. They are quasi-apocalyptic condemnations of the Hitler State. One depicts its protagonists from Hitler on down, herded together by a huge devil on their way to hell, the other a colossal statue enthroned between red flags on a wheeled platform, which throngs of slaves are dragging forward under the whiplashes of black-uniformed guards. The first, a small watercolor titled *Entry into Hades*, does not show a migration of the dead into the netherworld as in Greek mythology, but a mass descent into the inferno as in Christian iconography. Hitler and his cohort appear before the ruins of a war as walking dead in various stages of decomposition, the leaders turning into skeletons. The original title of the second, a large oil painting, was *The Total State*, a polemical inversion of the fascist term denoting the concurrence of the ruled with their rulers into a brutal spectacle of ancient autocracy. After 1945 Zeller changed it to *The Hitler State (Der Hitlerstaat)* and painted swastikas into the flags.” (pp. 309f.)

“True to the ‘vision’ evoked in the prologue of [Henri Barbusse’s] *Under Fire, Flanders* depicts ‘a great livid plain unrolled, which to their seeing is made of mud and water, while figures appear and fast fix themselves to the surface of it, all blinded and borne down with filth [...]. And it seems to them that these are soldiers. The streaming plain, seamed and seared with long parallel canals and scooped into water-holes, is an immensity, and these castaways who strive to exhume themselves from it are legion.’ In the concluding chapter, titled ‘Dawn,’ the survivors draw a pacifist lesson from their experience: ‘Between two masses of gloomy clouds a tranquil gleam emerges; and that line of light, so black-edged and beset, brings even so its proof that the sun is there.’ The three soldiers in the foreground of the painting are variations of the mourning soldiers’ busts at the foot of the cross in Ernst Barlach’s wooden war memorial of 1929 at the Magdeburg Cathedral, which in March 1933 had been removed by a National Socialist-dominated church council. The double loop of barbed wire forming a crown of thorns confirms the reference to the crucifixion.” (pp. 311f.)



Hans Grundig, *Das Tausendjährige Reich* (The Millennium), 1938, Center Panel, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.



Hans Grundig, *Das Tausendjährige Reich* (The Millennium), 1938, left wing, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.



Hans Grundig, *Das Tausendjährige Reich* (The Millennium), 1938, right wing, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.



Hans Grundig, *Das Tausendjährige Reich* (The Millennium), 1938, Predella, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.



Magnus Zeller, *Einzug in den Hades* (Entry into Hades), 1938, Halle (Saale), Kunstmuseum Moritzburg.



Magnus Zeller, *Einzug in den Hades* (Entry into Hades), 1938, close-up: Hitler and his Cohort, Halle (Saale), Kunstmuseum Moritzburg.



Magnus Zeller, *Der totale Staat* (The Total State), 1938, Berlin, Stadtmuseum.



Ernst Barlach, Magdeburg War Memorial, 1929, Magdeburg, Cathedral.



Otto Dix, *Flandern* (Flanders), 1936, Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie.



Otto Dix, *Flandern (Flanders)*, 1936, close-up: rising soldiers, Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie.

Paul Landowski's War Monument

“Placed at a strategic site, as if it were an imaginary stronghold, the monument embodied the World War I experience as an inspiration for rearmament, anachronistically suggested by the state-of-the-art assault rifle in the only helmeted soldier’s hand. In a pictorial reversal of the visitors’ ascent up the stairs to the sculpture group atop the hill, it seemed as if the resurrecting soldiers were about to descend, after having dug their way out of a mass grave, with clods of earth still in their hands, some still in shrouds, others already in uniform, assembled in a closely-packed unit, ready to heed the call of duty by following the advance of the young woman at the bottom of the hill.” (pp. 348f.)



Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group, distant view.





Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group, front view.

Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group, rear view.

Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group.





Paul Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group, distant view.



Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, main group: earth clod from the grave.



Paul Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, personification of France.

Paul Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, personification of France, close up.

Paul Paul Landowski, *Les Fantômes* (The Phantoms), 1935, Butte Chalmont, Oulchy le Château, Département Aisne, France, personification of France: the shield.



NOTES

1. Quoted after Peter Paret, *Die Berliner Secession. Moderne Kunst und ihre Feinde im Kaiserlichen Deutschland*, Berlin, 1981, p. 196: "[...] die dem Talent die Möglichkeit sichert, ungefährdet seinem künstlerischen Gewissen zu folgen. Denn es steht fest, dass in der Kunst nur die Ausnahme Wert hat [...]."
2. Ibid.: "Der Grundsatz, dem der Künstlerbund entstammt: die Eigenart in der Kunst zu schützen und zu fördern [...]. So wird denn dieses Prinzip auch im Staatsleben zur Geltung gebracht werden müssen."
3. Stephen F. Eisenman, "The Intransigent Artist, or How the Impressionists got their Name," in: Charles S. Moffett, ed., *The New Painting. Impressionism 1874–1886*, San Francisco, 1986, pp. 51–59.
4. *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, Paul N. Siegel, ed., New York, 1970, p. 104f.
5. Werckmeister 1993, p. 555.
6. Breton 1969, p. 212.
7. André Breton, "Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui," in: *Œuvres*, II, p. 416: "Ces bannières qui se sont mises brusquement à claquer sur l'Europe, opposant à un front national, dernière formation de combat du capitalisme, un front commun ou social, un front unique ou un front rouge [...]."
8. Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvre-Vie*, Édition du centenaire établie par Alain Borer, Paris, 1991, p. 452: "Il faut être absolument moderne."
9. Quoted after Bown 1998, p. 50.
10. André Breton, "Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui," in: *Œuvres*, II, p. 442: "Notre tâche critique principale, dans la période actuelle doit être de démêler, dans l'art d'avant-garde, ce qui est *authentique* de ce qui ne l'est pas."
11. Adolf Hitler, "Die deutsche Kunst als stolzeste Verteidigung des deutschen Volkes," speech at Nuremberg Rally, September 1, 1933, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 52: "Die Kunst ist eine erhabene und zum Fanatismus verpflichtende Mission."
12. Hildegard Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus*, Reinbek, 1963, p. 275: "Politik, die sich auf Kunst richtet," "Politik, die mit Kunst gemacht wird."
13. *Hitler, Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, II, part 2, pp. 651–656, cf. p. 653. My translation reproduces Hitler's faulty grammar.
14. *The Aesthetic Arsenal* 1993, p. 8.
15. Zervos 1937, p. 51: "Il n'est pas d'erreur plus grave que de confondre l'artiste avec la communauté."
16. Adolf Hitler, speech at the opening of the *Autobahn* construction Frankfurt–Heidelberg, September 23, 1933, quoted after Berthold Hinz, *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus. Kunst und Konterrevolution*, Munich, 1974, p. 122: "Den zweckmäßigen Weg, das Deutsche Volk wieder in den Prozeß der Arbeit zurückzuführen, sehe ich darin, durch große monumentale Arbeiten irgendwo zunächst die deutsche Wirtschaft wieder in Gang zu setzen."
17. Quoted after Kopp 1978, p. 291.
18. Jean Cocteau, *Le Rappel à l'ordre*, Paris, 1926.
19. Bown 1998, pp. 132–33.
20. Adolf Hitler, "Die deutsche Kunst als stolzeste Verteidigung des deutschen Volkes," speech at Nuremberg Rally, September 1, 1933, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, pp. 43, 53.
21. Robert R. Taylor, *The Word in Stone. The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1974, p. 181.
22. Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin*, Oxford, 1992, p. 118.
23. Adolf Hitler, "Programmatische Kulturrede des Führers," speech at the opening of the "House of German Art," July 18, 1937, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 141: "Wir werden von jetzt ab [sic] einen unerbittlichen Säuberungskrieg führen gegen die letzten Elemente unserer Kulturzersetzung."
24. "Ein erfrischender Erlass Görings," *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, August 4, 1937: "Nachdem der Führer und Reichskanzler am Tage der Deutschen Kunst in München die Richtlinien für die Kunstauffassung des Nationalsozialismus festgelegt hat, beauftrage und bevollmächtige ich den Reichs- und preußischen Minister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, die Bestände aller im Lande Preußen vorhandenen öffentlichen Kunstsammlungen *ohne Rücksicht auf Rechtsform und Eigentumsverhältnisse* im Sinne der Richtlinien des Führers und Reichskanzlers zu *überprüfen* und die erforderlichen Anordnungen zu treffen."
25. The following paragraph is based on a seminar paper by Sheila Crane and Sarah Miller.
26. Bulletin issued by the Construction Administration for the Soviet Palace, September 1931, quoted after Helen Adkins, et al., ed., *Naum Gabo and the Competition for the Palace of Soviets, Moscow 1931–1933*, Catalog, Berlin, 1993, pp. 202f. Ibid., p. 204.
27. Ibid., p. 204.
28. Adolf Hitler, March 3, 1942, quoted after Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942*, Percy Ernst Schramm, ed., Stuttgart, 1963, p. 195: "Berlin wird als Welthauptstadt nur mit dem alten Ägypten, Babylon oder Rom vergleichbar sein; was ist London, was ist Paris dagegen?"
29. Benito Mussolini, quoted after Dino Formaggio, et al., *Mostra del Novecento Italiano (1923–1933)*, Milan, 1983, p. 24: "[...] è lungi da me l'idea di incoraggiare qualche cosa che possa assomigliare all'arte di Stato."
30. Armellini 1980, p. 85: "[...] un vero e proprio ministero dell'arte fascista presieduto dal Duce."
31. Benito Mussolini, speech at the Perugia Academy, after *Critica fascista*, no. 2 (1926): "Noi dobbiamo creare un nuovo patrimonio da porre accanto a quello antico, dobbiamo crearci un'arte nuova, un arte dei nostri tempi, un arte fascista."

32. Quoted after Schuster, ed., 1998, p. 48: "Die großen weltanschaulichen Ideen, die durch die NS-Revolution zum Zuge gebracht worden sind, [wirken] vorläufig so spontan und eruptiv, dass sie für die künstlerische Gestaltung noch nicht reif sind. Die Probleme sind zu frisch und zu neu, um künstlerisch geformt zu werden. Der Nachwuchs, der diese Aufgabe einmal zu lösen hat, ist noch im Kommen."
33. Ibid., p. 44: "[...] den neu erreichten Kanon ins Paradigma zu erheben, und nicht nur vor München und seinen Gästen, sondern vor dem ganzen Reich, ja der Welt."
34. Quoted after Oliver Rathkolb, "Ganz groß und monumental. Die Bildhauer des Führers: Arno Breker und Josef Thorak," in: Jan Tabor, ed., *Kunst und Diktatur: Architektur, Bildhauerei und Malerei in Österreich, Deutschland, Italien und der Sowjetunion 1922–1956*, Catalog, vol. II, Baden, 1994, pp. 586–591, cf. p. 591: "[...] daß die politische Beurteilung von Professor Thorak mit der Tatsache, daß er einer der bedeutendsten Künstler der Jetztzeit ist, als erledigt betrachtet werden kann."
35. Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin*, Oxford, 1992, p. 129.
36. Oliver Rathkolb, "Ganz groß und monumental. Die Bildhauer des Führers: Arno Breker und Josef Thorak," in: Jan Tabor, ed., *Kunst und Diktatur: Architektur, Bildhauerei und Malerei in Österreich, Deutschland, Italien und der Sowjetunion 1922–1956*, Catalog, vol. II, Baden, 1994, pp. 586–591, cf. p. 591.
37. "Nous sommes dans la lumière," *Monde*, 8, no. 344, July 14, 1935, one of a series of declarations by scientists, writers, and artists.
38. Man Ray, André Breton, Paul Éluard, et al., *Du temps que les surréalistes avaient raison*, Paris, 1935.
39. Jacques Gréber, quoted after Jean-François Pinchon, "La conception et l'organisation de l'exposition," in: *Cinquantenaire* 1987, pp. 36–43, cf. p. 41: "Nous semblons être débarrassés de la surcharge décorative superflue, mais, par contre, l'excès de nudisme absolu (que cette décadence avait justifié) paraît également abandonné. Les points essentiels des façades sont marqués d'un décor sculptural ou pictural, souvent riche, mais toujours limité à la place qui lui convient."
40. Ibid.: "Les grands volumes simples et classiques, revêtus de pierre dure, du Trocadéro et des Musées d'Art moderne [...]."
41. *Le Journal*, July 26, 1935, quoted after Isabelle Gournay, *Le Nouveau Trocadéro*, Liège and Brussels, 1985, p. 30: "Les travaux nécessiteront 850,000 journées d'ouvriers et 150,000 journées d'architectes, ingénieurs, dessinateurs, artistes, peintres ou sculpteurs car ceux-ci ont autant et peut-être plus besoin de vivre que d'autres. Il me semble possible de dire que ce que nous allons faire rentre dans le plan de réorganisation, de reprise économique du pays. Nous continuons l'œuvre de Normandie."
42. Rimaud 1937, p. 88.
43. *Cinquantenaire* 1987, p. 206: "[...] un grand vaisseau de l'air, aux formes aérodynamiques [...]."
44. Paul Klee, Lecture at the Jena Art Society, January 26, 1924, in: Thomas Kain, et al., ed., *Paul Klee in Jena 1924. Der Vortrag*, Gera, 1999, p. 69: "Wir haben noch nicht diese letzte Kraft, denn: uns trägt kein Volk. Aber wir suchen ein Volk, wir begannen damit, drüben am staatlichen Bauhaus."
45. Adolf Hitler, "Programmatische Kulturrede des Führers," speech at the opening of the "House of German Art," July 18, 1937, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 141: "Und das ist entscheidend: denn eine Kunst, die nicht auf die freudigste und innigste Zustimmung der gesunden breiten Massen des Volkes rechnen kann, sondern sich nur auf kleine—teils interessierte, teils blasierte—Cliquen stützt, ist unerträglich. Sie versucht das gesunde, instinktsichere Gefühl eines Volkes zu verwirren, statt es freudig zu unterstützen."
46. Adolf Hitler, "Programmatische Kulturrede des Führers," speech at the opening of the "House of German Art," July 18, 1937, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 139: "Und wir werden Sorge tragen, daß gerade das Volk von jetzt ab [sic] wieder zum Richter über seine Kunst aufgerufen wird."
47. Quoted in Cohen 1992, p. 193.
48. Adolf Hitler, "Programmatische Kulturrede des Führers," speech at the opening of the "House of German Art," July 18, 1937, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 140: "Ich weiß daher auch, daß, wenn das deutsche Volk nun durch diese Räume gehen wird, es mich auch hier als seinen Sprecher und Ratgeber anerkennen wird."
49. Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism. Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s*, Oxford, 1996, p. 31.
50. Jean Cassou, in: Fauchereau, ed., 1987, pp. 153–163, cf. p. 161: "Soyez tranquilles : pas plus qu'aucun commissaire du peuple ne peut me faire dire ce que je pense des turbines, aucun commissaire du peuple ne peut vous imposer aucune obligation ni attenter à votre liberté."
51. Bown 1998, pp. 144–145.
52. Egbert 1970, p. 318.
53. Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Der Preußische Stil*, Munich, 1916, quoted after Arndt, et al., 1978, p. 150: "Durch Monumentalität bekommt Stil erst seine große Sichtbarkeit: in einem weithin erkennbaren und alsbald bekannten Plasma baut sich die Einheit von Künstler und Volk auf, die sich in der Geschichte durchsetzen will, und eine Herrschaft seiner Formen breitet sich aus, die vor allem eine Selbstherrschaft ist und die zu einer Weltbeherrschung werden kann."
54. Khan-Magomedov 1987, p. 199.
55. Quoted after Kopp 1978, p. 198: "Nous pensons qu'aucun architecte ne peut concevoir le Palais des Soviets autrement que sous les formes les plus parfaites et par conséquent les plus classiques."

56. Richard Hüttel, "Neo-Klassizismus oder Aneignung der nationalen Baugeschichte—Zur Architektur im Jahre 1937," in: Harten, et al., ed., 1987, pp. 75–81, cf. p. 75.
57. Cohen 1992, p. 192.
58. Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, II, part 2, pp. 779f.: "Alles Internationale in Kunst und Wissenschaft ist daher gleichbedeutend mit Kitsch: man [...] braucht nur diese sogenannten Kunstschöpfungen der Kubisten, Futuristen u[nd] dgl. zu betrachten, um sofort zu erkennen, daß es sich hier um Zersetzung der Kunst durch jüdischen, fremden Geist handelt."
59. Adolf Hitler, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ehre 1936*, Munich, 1936, pp. 31f.: "Es ergibt sich aber aus einer solchen Betrachtung noch folgendes: wenn schon das Geschwätz von einer 'Internationalität' der Kunst ebenso dumm wie gefährlich ist, so ist es nicht minder schädlich, zu glauben, daß Politik und Kultur zwei an sich nichts miteinander zu tun habende Angelegenheiten seien."
60. Ibid., p. 29: "Wir alle wissen, dass es das Ziel des Bolschewismus ist, die vorhandenen blutgemäßen organischen Volksführungen auszurotten und durch das den arischen Völkern fremde jüdische Element zu ersetzen. Darin liegt auch die Internationalität dieses Problems begründet."
61. The following account is based on Hudson, Jr., 1994, pp. 151ff.
62. "Echos et Nouvelles: Histoires de l'Art," in: *Bulletin de l'Art Ancien et Moderne (supplément de la Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne)*, vol. 58 (June 1930), no. 769, p. 237: "Elle tend, notamment, à protéger la tradition française, en matière d'art, contre les influences internationales." Quoted after Toby Norris, *Modern Artists and the State in France between the two World Wars*, unpublished dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, 2005.
63. *Le Matin*, May 2, 1938, quoted after Pascal Ory, *La Belle Illusion. Culture et Politique sous le signe du Front populaire 1935–1938*, Paris, 1994, p. 283: "échantillon de l'art, tel que le conçoit le Front populaire."
64. Speech to the Congress of Writers, 1935, in: Breton, *Œuvres*, II, p. 455: "C'est de ce point de vue que nous contresignons sans réserves le manifeste du 25 mars 1935 du Comité de vigilance des intellectuels contre tout retour à l'union sacrée."
65. The Surrealist Group, "Ni de votre Guerre ni de votre Paix!," September 27, 1938, Pierre, ed., 1980, pp. 339f.: "Trahie de toutes parts, oublieuse de la fonction subversive, la classe ouvrière s'apprête à participer au sauvetage du butin de Versailles. En réponse à cette attitude suicidaire, nous déclarons que la seule question intéressant l'avenir social de l'homme [...] est celle de la liquidation d'un régime capitaliste qui n'arrive à se survivre, à surmonter ses propres paradoxes et ses propres faillites, que grâce aux scandaleuses complicités de la II^e et de la III^e Internationales."
66. Egbert 1970, p. 515.
67. Rimaud 1937.
68. Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art under Stalin*, Oxford, 1992, p. 90.
69. Zervos 1936, pp. 209–212; Zervos 1937, pp. 51–61.
70. Bown 1998, p. 114.
71. Quoted after Kopp 1978, p. 291.
72. Quoted in Schuster, ed., 1987, p. 48: "Das Volk besucht aus anderen Motiven die Theater, Konzerte, Museen und Galerien, es will das Schöne und Erhabene sehen und genießen. Das, was ihm das Leben so oft und hartnäckig vorenthält [...]. Man macht sich meistens kaum eine Vorstellung davon, wie freudelos im allgemeinen das Leben des Volkes verläuft [...], eine Welt des Wunders und des holden Scheins soll sich hier vor seinen staunenden Augen auftun."
73. "The Introduction Text to the Soviet Pavilion at the World's Fair 1939," in: *The Aesthetic Arsenal* 1993, pp. 8–11, cf. p. 11.
74. Larissa A. Zhadova, ed., *Tatlin*, New York, 1988, p. 239.
75. Werckmeister 1993.
76. Quoted after Bown 1998, p. 315.
77. Quoted after Hubertus Gassner, "The Constructivists: Modernism on the Way to Modernization," in: *The Great Utopia. The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932*, Catalog, New York, 1992, pp. 298–319, cf. p. 315.
78. Trotsky 2005, pp. 246f.
79. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Al di là del Comunismo*, 1920, quoted after Armellini 1980, p. 19: "Arte e gli Artisti rivoluzionari al potere [...]. Il vasto proletariato dei geniali governerà."
80. *Commune*, 1 (1933), p. 6: "COMMUNE dénonce les éléments mortels de la culture et de toutes les propagandes bourgeoises [...] COMMUNE fait connaître les éléments vivants d'une culture révolutionnaire qui se développe sur tous les plans et dont les efforts et les résultats ne sauraient être isolés de l'action du prolétariat."
81. Jean Cassou, in: Fauchereau, ed., 1987, pp. 153–163, cf. p. 163.
82. Zervos 1937, p. 61: "Et nous posons la question: ne vaut-il pas mieux relancer constamment les masses, leur intégrer l'idée de la révolution, sans répit, idée qui désapprend la crainte, renforce les assises spirituelles et sociales, ouvre les yeux, aiguille les esprits sur la voie de l'inconnu [...]? C'est ainsi que nous entendons la révolution et que nous y trouvons matière d'intérêt."
83. Herbert Read, "What is Revolutionary Art?," in: Betty Rea, ed., *Five on Revolutionary Art*, London, 1935, pp. 9–22.
84. Josep Renau, "Llamamiento de la Unión de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios," *El Pueblo*, May 7, 1933.
85. André Breton, *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, Franklin Rosemont, ed., New York, etc., 1978, p. 73.
86. Quoted after Franz Meyer, *Marc Chagall*, Cologne, 1972, p. 271: "Die proletarische Kunst ist nicht eine Kunst für Proletarier, noch eine Kunst von Proletariern [...]. Es ist die Kunst *des proletarischen Malers*. Bei ihm sind 'die schöpferischen Gaben' mit dem proletarischen Gewissen vereinigt, und er weiß genau, daß er wie auch sein Talent der Kollektivität gehört."

87. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, Christian Hartmann, et al., ed., vol. I, Munich, 2016, p. 677: "In ihnen begann sich der später freilich besser sichtbar werdende politische Zusammenbruch schon kulturell anzuzeigen."
88. Adolf Hitler, "Kein Volk lebt länger als die Dokumente seiner Kultur," speech at Nuremberg Rally, September 11, 1935, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 81: "Es wird dereinst mit Erstaunen bemerkt werden, daß in dieser selben Zeit, da der Nationalsozialismus und seine Führung einen heroischen Kampf um Sein oder Nichtsein auf Leben und Tod ausgefochten haben, der deutschen Kunst die ersten Impulse zu einer Neubelebung und Wiederauferstehung gegeben worden waren."
89. Adolf Hitler, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ehre 1936*, Munich, 1936, Munich, 1936, p. 32; Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, pp. 107; "Daher geht mit dem politischen Bolschewismus Hand in Hand der kulturelle."
90. Quoted after Pascal Ory, *La Belle Illusion. Culture et Politique sous le signe du Front populaire 1935–1938*, Paris, 1994, p. 249: "les pleurs et le sang d'Espagne [...] mettent la réalité à l'ordre du jour."
91. "Ponencia colectiva. Presentada ante el II Congreso Internacional de Escritores," *Hora de España*, no. 8, Valencia, reprinted in Torres and Ángel 1987, p. 232: "Porque al decir antes que tenemos algo en común—la Revolución—, no aludimos solamente a la lucha actual del pueblo español a la lucha armada que comienza el 18 de julio de 1936, sino a la totalidad histórica del fenómeno, que alcanza sus máximas dimensiones, su dramática plenitud, en la lucha actual del pueblo español contra el fascismo internacional."
92. Torres and Ángel 1987, p. 286: "Esta posición me situaba fácilmente, alejado de toda ingratitud social, contentándome con un 'revolucionarismo' artístico y antiburgués. [...] Aquel acontecimiento revolucionario me llevó a un cambio total en mi caminar por el arte, decidiéndome a pasar toda mi fe en una pintura social y revolucionaria, no en su forma exterior, sino en un contenido profundo de la vida de nuestro tiempo, o lo que es igual, las luchas de la clase trabajadora [...]."
93. Ibid., p. 287: "Históricamente, el horror de la guerra, si me permite la paradoja, es un horror positivo en tanto que conduce al triunfo, a la afirmación del pueblo triunfante sobre la negación, sobre el fascismo."
94. Adolf Hitler, *Reden des Führers am Parteitag der Ehre 1936*, Munich, 1936, p. 28: "Die geistige Voraussetzung zur Herbeiführung der *Anarchie*, ja die geistige Grundlage jeder *Anarchie* ist die *Demokratie*."
95. Ibid., p. 37: "Daher ist die Periode der bolschewistischen Kunstvernarrung in Deutschland nunmehr abgeschlossen, denn diese bolschewistische und futuristische Kunst ist eine anarchistische Zurückentwicklung."
96. Georges Duthuit, "Où allez-vous, Miró?," in: *Cahiers d'Art*, 11 (1936), pp. 261–264, cf. p. 264: "Les meneurs actuels, produits bâtards de la politique et des arts qui prétendent régénérer le monde, vont empoisonner nos dernières sources de rafraîchissement. Pendant qu'ils parlent noble et tradition, ou, au contraire, révolution et paradis prolétarien [...]."
97. George Sebbag, "Breton, Bataille y la guerra de España," in: Emmanuel Guigon, ed., *El Surrealismo y la guerra civil española*, Teruel, 1998, pp. 53–74, cf. p. 64.
98. Jean Cassou, "L'art cruel," preface in: *Paris – Paris, 1937–1957*, Catalog, Munich, 1981, p. 48: "L'autre style qui apparaît ici se forme au point où certaines aspirations cachées sous le nom du surréalisme, ou sous d'autres noms, ont rencontré une chose qui s'appelle l'Espagne, et au moment même où cette Espagne entrait en agonie, c'est-à-dire en acte."
99. Franco Borsi, *L'ordine monumentale in Europa 1929–1939*, Milan, 1986. The English translation of 1987 is titled *The Monumental Era. European Architecture and Design 1929–1939*.
100. E. P. Frank, *Die Weltausstellung Paris 1937, 100 Raumbild-Aufnahmen von Heinrich Hoffmann*, Diessen am Ammersee, 1937, p. 16, reprinted in: Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, ed., *Picasso und der spanische Bürgerkrieg*, Berlin, 1980, p. 114: "Innen ist eine Sammlung von Bildern zu sehen, die bei aller inhaltlichen und umfänglichen Verschiedenheit zweierlei gemeinsam haben: Sehr hohen künstlerischen Wert und eine deutlich ausgeprägte propagandistische Tendenz."
101. Ibid.: "Vom rein ästhetischen Gesichtspunkt aus könnte man wohl hier den tiefsten Eindruck erhalten. Die großartigen Flachreliefs beim Eingang, vor allem jedoch die Riesengruppe 'Arbeiter und Kolchosbauerin' darüber,—das sind Kunstwerke im besten Sinne des Wortes. Ob man es nun mit Bolschewiken zu tun hat oder nicht,—künstlerischen Sinn kann man den Russen nicht absprechen."
102. Quoted after Fiss 2009, p. 182.
103. Ibid., p. 183.
104. Ibid., p. 188.
105. Ibid., pp. 162f.
106. Ibid., p. 181.
107. Oskar Schlemmer, "Schreiben an das Kunstdezernat der Stadt Essen," June 21, 1933, quoted after Karin von Maur, *Oskar Schlemmer. Der Folkwang-Zyklus, Malerei um 1930*, Catalog, vol. I, Stuttgart, 1993, p. 25: "Die Bilder halten sich in farbiger Beziehung in einer Weise zurück und die dargestellten Typen von Jünglingsfiguren sind so eindeutig deutsch in Haltung und Ausdruck, daß ich nie verstehen werde, aus welchen Vorstellungen oder Begriffen heraus diese Bilder verfertigt werden sollen."
108. Quoted after Maur 1979, p. 250: "Ich habe als einziger die Volksgemeinschaft darzustellen versucht, die sonst in keinem Entwurf, wiewohl so naheliegend, als Thema vertreten war."

109. Oskar Schlemmer, letter to Gunta Stözl, June 16, 1933, quoted after Winfried Nerdinger, "Modernisierung, Bauhaus, Nationalsozialismus," in: idem, ed., *Bauhaus-Moderne im Nationalsozialismus. Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung*, Munich, 1993, pp. 9–23, cf. p. 19: "Ich fühle mich rein und meine Kunst streng den nat. soz. Grundsätzen entsprechen, nämlich 'heroisch, stählern-romantisch, unsentimental, hart, scharf, klar, typenschaffend' usw.—aber wer sieht es?"
110. Maur 1979, pp. 242, 250.
111. Pavel Filonov, "Letter to the Beginning Artist Vaskanich About Analytical Art," February 1940, quoted after Misler and Bowlt 1984, p. 291: "Learn from nature, as have learned from her the great natural scientists—Darwin, Mendelew, Pavlov, Michurin and Pasteur and the great men—Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Copernicus, Galilei."
112. Oskar Schlemmer, letter to Moritz Heitmann, July 23, 1939, quoted after Maur 1979, p. 261: "Wäre ich Emigrant und im Ausland lebend und wäre mir geschehen, was M. [probably Thomas Mann] geschah, so wären wahrscheinlich alle Zweifel behoben [...]. So aber, im Lande lebend, tagtäglich mit oder ohne Willen paktierend mit den Zuständlichkeiten, fühlt man sich zumindest zwiespältig, wo nicht zerrissen und in Sorge, welche psychischen Folgen solcher Zustand auf die Dauer mit sich bringt."
113. Oskar Schlemmer, diary, December 15, 1940, quoted after Maur 1979, p. 284: "[It might have been better] 1933 ins Ausland zu verschwinden, anstatt eben doch vor einem Forum des künstlerischen Gewissens das unwürdige Schauspiel der Fahnenflucht und des Verkaufs seiner Seele um ein paar Silberlinge zu geben."
114. Quoted in Cohen 1992, p. 95.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
116. Fiss 2009, p. 188.
117. *Ibid.*, pp. 180ff.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
119. Ragot and Dion 1997, p. 233.
120. The following paragraph is based on Antoine Baudin, *Le réalisme socialiste soviétique de la période jdanovienne (1947–1953). Les arts plastiques et leurs institutions*, Berne, etc., 1997, p. 31.
121. *Ibid.*: "courants proches du réalisme socialiste."
122. "Misère de la poésie: 'L'Affaire Aragon' devant l'opinion publique," Pierre 1980, p. 464: "L'éclair de vos fusils fait reculer l'ordure/France en tête."
123. Quoted after Egbert 1970, p. 318: "As for us Communists, we conceive the development of culture only within the most complete freedom—Freedom for the scientist [...], the thinker, the writer [...], the artist [...], the intellectual."
124. George Grosz, *Briefe 1913–1959*, Herbert Knust, ed., Reinbek, 1979, p. 167: "Was jetzt in Deutschland vor sich geht ist, mit Verlaub zu sagen, bitter. Bitter ist, und für manche Interessierte hier unbegreiflich, warum diese Millionen Kommunisten einfach glatt versagten??? [...] Ich glaube mit Trotzki (ohne sein bedingungsloser Anhänger zu sein), daß für viele Jahre der Elan der revolutionären Bewegung gelähmt ist [...]."
125. M. Kay Flavell, *George Grosz. A Biography*, New Haven and London, 1988, p. 125.
126. Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher*, Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz, ed., Berlin, 1989, p. 542, December 4, 1922: "Ich will wirken in dieser Zeit [...]."
127. G. G. L., "Dada. Ausstellung am Lützowufer 13, Kunstsalon Burchard," *Die Rote Fahne*, July 25, 1920, quoted after Manfred Brauneck, ed., *Die Rote Fahne. Kritik, Theorie, Feuilleton, 1918–1933*, Munich, 1973, p. 77: "Das Proletariat wird diesen Kampf führen und gewinnen auch ohne den Exترفeldzug gegen Kunst und Kultur, den eine bürgerliche Literatenklüke [sic] unternimmt."
128. Quoted after Armellini 1980, p. 30: "[...] questo stravagante buffone che vuole fare della politica e che nessuno, nemmeno io, prende sul serio in Italia [...]."
129. *Ibid.*, p. 30: "Avremo la soluzione artistica del problema sociale."
130. *Ibid.*, p. 66: "realizzazione del programma minimo futurista."
131. *Ibid.*, p. 66: "La rivoluzione politica deve sostenere la rivoluzione artistica, cioè il Futurismo."
132. Bown 1998, p. 50.
133. "Ein neues künstlerisches Programm," reprinted in: *Arbeitsrat für Kunst 1918–1921*, Catalog, Berlin, 1980, p. 87: "Kunst und Volk müssen eine Einheit bilden. Die Kunst soll nicht mehr Genuß weniger, sondern Glück und Leben der Massen sein. [...] Fortan ist der Künstler allein als Gestalter des Volksempfindens verantwortlich für das sichtbare Gewand des neuen Staates. Er muß die Formgebung bestimmen vom Stadtbild bis hinunter zur Münze und Briefmarke."
134. The following account is based on Hudson, Jr., 1994, pp. 143ff., 160ff.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
136. Adolf Ziegler, letter to Walter Darré, November 11, 1936, quoted after Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, "Die Frau in ihrem Element. Adolf Zieglers Triptychon der 'Naturgesetzlichkeit,'" in: *Kritische Berichte*, 17 (1989), no. 2, pp. 5–30, cf. p. 5: "Nachdem der Führer in meinen Münchner Atelierräumen meine Arbeit, deren Entstehen Sie ja damals in der Reichskanzlei miterlebten, nunmehr gesehen hat und er mir versicherte, dass mein Vorhaben, ihm ein Vorbild für seine Bauten herzustellen, gelungen sei [...]."
137. Adolf Hitler, "Kein Volk lebt länger als die Dokumente seiner Kultur," speech at Nuremberg Rally, September 11, 1935, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 81: "[...] die Fundamente zu legen für den neuen Tempel der Götter der Kunst."

138. Quoted after Werner Haftmann, *Verfemte Kunst. Bildende Künstler der inneren und äußeren Emigration in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Cologne, 1986, p. 29: "Ich werde in Zukunft mit den mir zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln nunmehr unerbittlich gegen jeden vorgehen, der Werke der Verfallskunst erzeugt oder solche als Künstler oder Händler verbreitet. Ferner bestimme ich, daß Werke der Verfallskunst [...] der Reichskammer der bildenden Künste bis zum 10. Juni 1941 angezeigt werden [...]."
139. The following account is based on Ragot and Dion 1997, *passim*.
140. André Breton, "Second manifeste du surréalisme," *Œuvres*, I, p. 795.
141. Speech to the Congress of Writers, 1935, in: Breton 1969, p. 238.
142. "[Télégramme envoyé à Moscou]," Pierre, ed., 1980, pp. 153f.
143. The Surrealist Group, "Ni de votre Guerre ni de votre Paix!," September 27, 1938, Pierre, ed., 1980, pp. 339f.
144. André Breton, "Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme," in: *Œuvres*, p. 229: "N'était le rôle historique évident du fascisme: rétablir momentanément la suprématie chancelante du capital financier [...]."
145. *Contre-attaque, union de lutte des intellectuels révolutionnaires* was the title of their journal.
146. *Sovetskoë Foto*, 5-6 (1936), reprinted in: Alexander Rodchenko, *Écrits complets sur l'art, l'architecture et la révolution*, Paris, 1988, pp. 154ff.
147. Rainer Grübel, "Gabe, Aufgabe, Selbstaufgabe. Dichter-Tod als Opferhabitus. Zur Genese des sowjetischen Personenkultes aus Dichtertod, Lenin- und Puškingedenken," in: Klaus Städtke, ed., *Welt hinter dem Spiegel. Zum Status des Autors in der russischen Literatur der 1920er bis 1950er Jahre*, Berlin, 1998, pp. 139-204, cf., p. 170.
148. Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*, London and New York, 1990, p. 112.
149. Bown 1998, pp. 132f.
150. Kopp 1978, p. 99.
151. Mislér and Bowlt 1984, pp. 39ff.
152. Khan-Magomedov 1987, p. 557.
153. Holz 2004, p. 100.
154. Otto Freundlich, *Schriften*, Uli Bohnen, ed., Cologne, 1982, pp. 197ff.
155. Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler, "Avantgarde-Kunst und Volksfront," in: *Die neue Weltbühne*, 32 (1937), December 9, pp. 1568-1573.
156. Vasily Kandinsky to Paul Klee, January 9, 1938, Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne: "T.[ériade] sagte mir auch, dass man sich augenblicklich immer mehr für die deutschen 'Entarteten' interessiert [...]. In Amerika nämlich. Und daß die Zeit der deutschen Künstler in Amerika in bester Entwicklung ist."
157. "Die französische Presse über die Ausstellung des FKB (Zusammenstellung der Presseberichte)," in: *Freie Kunst und Literatur*, 3 (1938), s.p., quoted after Heidrun Schröder-Kehler, "Deutsche Künstler im französischen Exil," in: Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, ed., *Widerstand statt Anpassung. Deutsche Kunst im Widerstand gegen den Faschismus 1933-1945*, Catalog, Berlin, 1980, pp. 127-153, cf. p. 140: "[...] daß die Ausstellung [...] der *Sache der deutschen Kultur* gedient hat, schon dadurch, daß sie Publikum und Presse veranlasst hat, sich mit der Kunstdiktatur im Dritten Reich auseinanderzusetzen und aufs neue, aufs entschiedenste in ihrer Kulturfeindlichkeit zu erkennen."
158. Quoted after Holz 2004, p. 326, note 143: "[...] que nous artistes nous nous tenons à l'écart de toutes tendances et opinions politiques et que nous n'avons qu'un seul et ardent désir: la liberté individuelle dans l'art."
159. Undated letter from the Freier Künstlerbund to the Committee of the Exhibition Modern German Art, signed by Spiro and Wollheim; copy in Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne.
160. Letter of Hans Wollheim to Paul Klee, Paris, May 25, 1938, Zentrum Paul Klee, Berne.
161. Max Beckmann, "Über meine Malerei," speech at New Burlington Galleries, London, 1938, reprinted in: Klaus Gallwitz, ed., *Max Beckmann: Die Triptychen im Stadel*, Catalog, Frankfurt, 1981, pp. 3-6, cf. pp. 3, 5: "[...] möchte ich als erstes betonen, niemals in irgendeiner Form mich politisch betätigt zu haben. [...] So bin ich vielleicht blind an vielen Dingen des realen und politischen Lebens vorbeigegangen. Allerdings nehme ich an, dass es zwei Welten gibt: die Welt des Geistes und die der politischen Realität." "Die größte Gefahr, die uns Menschen allen droht, ist der Kollektivismus. Überall wird versucht, das Glück oder die Lebensmöglichkeiten der Menschen auf das Niveau eines Termitenstaates herabzuschrauben. Dem widersetze ich mich mit der ganzen Kraft meiner Seele."
162. Christian Derouet, in: *Kandinsky in Paris: 1934-1944*, New York, 1985, p. 20, without source given. 163. *Ibid.*
164. Harvard no. 13805, Breton to Macdonald, September 17, 1938, carbon copy.
165. As reported by the *Daily Telegraph*, quoted after Holz 2004, p. 211.
166. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
167. *Zwischen Widerstand und Anpassung. Kunst in Deutschland 1933-1945*, Catalog, Berlin, 1978, and Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, ed., *Widerstand statt Anpassung. Deutsche Kunst im Widerstand gegen den Faschismus 1933-1945*, Catalog, Berlin, 1980.
168. Pavel Filonov, "I Shall Speak. A Lecture (1922-1924?)," in: Mislér und Bowlt 1984, pp. 225-245, cf. p. 239.
169. Stanislas Zadora, "La filonovchtchina," in: Evgueni Kovtouné, Stanislas Zadora and Nicole Ouvrard, ed., *Filonov*, Catalog, Paris, 1990, pp. 167-174, cf. p. 174.

170. Helmut Schumacher and Klaus J. Dorsch, *A. Paul Weber. Leben und Werk in Texten und Bildern*, Hamburg, 2003, p. 103.
171. Walter Benjamin, "Pariser Brief <2>: Malerei und Photographie" (1936), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Hella Tiedemann-Bartels, ed., vol. III, Frankfurt, 1972, pp. 495–507, cf. p. 507: "Sie gehen nachts ans Werk, bei verhängten Fenstern. Für sie ist die Versuchung 'nach der Natur zu malen' gering. Auch sind die fahlen Landstriche ihrer Bilder, die von Schemen oder Monstren bevölkert werden, nicht der Natur abgelauscht, sondern dem Klassenstaat."
172. Gerd Brüne, ed., *Lea Grundig. Jüdin, Kommunistin, Graphikerin*, Catalog, Berlin, 1996, pp. 252ff.
173. Henri Barbusse, *Le feu*, Paris, 1917, p. 5: "Voilà que dans les leurs sinistres de l'orage, au-dessous des nuages noirs échevelés, étirés et déployés sur la terre comme de mauvais anges, il leur semble voir s'étendre une grande plaine livide. Dans leur vision, des formes sortent de la plaine, qui est faite de boue et d'eau, et se cramponnent à la surface du sol, aveuglées et écrasées de fange, comme des naufrages monstrueux. Et il leur semble que ce sont des soldats."
174. *Ibid.*, p. 458: "[...] le ciel noir, bouché d'orage, s'ouvre doucement au-dessus de nos têtes. Entre deux masses de nuées ténébreuses, un éclair tranquille en sort, et cette ligne de lumière, si resserée, si endeuillée, si pauvre, [...] apporte tout de même la preuve que le soleil existe."
175. The following account is based on Olaf Peters, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Nationalsozialismus. Affirmation und Kritik 1931–1947*, Berlin, 1998, pp. 229ff., and Günter Metken, *Rudolf Schlichter, Blinde Macht. Eine Allegorie der Zerstörung*, Frankfurt, 1990.
176. "Es fraß / ein böses Gezücht / asiatisch / infizierter / infernalisch / böser / Kreaturen / am männlich keuschen Herz. Dem Verhängnis [...] / fremder / unbekannter Lüste / preisgegeben." Quoted in Götz Adriani, ed., *Rudolf Schlichter. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*, Munich and Berlin, 1997, p. 256.
177. *Ibid.*: "Ein anderes großes Bild stellt 'Mars' dar, allerdings nicht in der beliebten optimistisch-herrischen schau [sic], die heute so beliebt ist."
178. *Ibid.*: "Ich erinnere Sie an Ihren geblendeten Mars, der auch nicht von Pappe ist. Ich vermute, daß es eine Art zu malen und zu zeichnen gibt, auf die der Tyrannenmord unmittelbar folgen muß."
179. The following paragraph is based on Michael Krejsa, "NS-Reaktionen auf Heartfields Arbeit 1933–1939," in: Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, et al., ed., *John Heartfield*, Catalog, Cologne, 1991, pp. 368–378.
180. Quoted after Heinz Spielmann, "Oskar Kokoschka in Prag und England," in: Jutta Hülsewig-Johnen, ed., *Oskar Kokoschka—Emigrantenleben, Prag und London 1934–1993*, Bielefeld 1994, pp. 177–189, cf. p. 178: "Mir scheint, ich bin gegen die neue Zeit, gegen Demokratie, gegen Lib. –'Soci'-Kommunismus, und für die Steinzeit."
181. Kokoschka 1976.
182. Sultano and Werkner 2003, p. 137: "[...] einer echten deutschen humanistischen fortschrittlichen Kunst."
183. Kokoschka 1976, p. 57: "Bankrott der Demokratie, Mythos des Staates, Restauration der Hierarchie."
184. *Ibid.*, p. 107: "Ein Krieg aller gegen alle droht."
185. *Ibid.*, p. 176: "Daß die ökonomische Krise, die von manchen als die primäre Ursache der gegenwärtigen Epoche der Gewalt angesehen wird, nur ein Symptom des allgemeinen ethischen Versagens ist, drückt sich in der Weltwirtschaft aus."
186. *Ibid.*, p. 139: "Die daraus gefolgerten Argumente für Faschismus und Vulgärmarxismus sind lediglich Denkfehler, die das Wesen des Volkstums verkennen [...]"
187. *Ibid.*, p. 116: "Besonders den rein totalitären Staat, der den Begriff Mensch nicht kennt, nur den des Untertan, ihn muss seine Zwecksetzung, Lebensraum, zum totalen Krieg führen."
188. Otto Karl Werckmeister, "Hitler the Artist," in: *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997), no. 2, pp. 270–297, cf. pp. 272, 286.
189. Kokoschka 1975, p. 265: "Ein parlamentarischer Volksentscheid oder ein militärischer Putsch [...] wirft unserem schlichten Mann aus dem Volke, unvorbereitet wie er ist, die höchste Macht in den Schoß."
190. *Ibid.*, p. 267: "In seinem schlichten Deutsch streift unser Mann aus dem Volk mit dieser Schlußfolgerung an der Wahrheit an und sie wirft den Mythos um. Oder berührt ihn die Wirklichkeit und erwacht er aus einem bösen Traum?"
191. Sultano and Werkner 2003, p. 12: "Zerstört von der Wiener Polizei, Gestapo, Abteilung II H, am 5. Mai 1938."
192. Hans Stephan, *Wilhelm Kreis*, Oldenburg, 1944, p. 70: "Der Block liegt da wie ein riesenhafter Altar."
193. Quoted in Arndt, et al. 1978, p. 128: "Gut, gut [...]. Wenn das die Diplomaten sehen, die vor mir an diesem Tisch sitzen, werden sie das Fürchten lernen."
194. Albert Speer, "Vorwort," in: Arndt, et al., 1978, p. 7: "Er müsse als Nationalsozialist den Sinn und damit den inneren Gehalt seiner Bauwerke bestimmen."
195. Jochen Thies, *Architekt der Weltherrschaft. Die 'Endziele' Hitlers*, Düsseldorf, 1976.
196. *Ibid.*, p. 95: "[...] daß sich Hitler seit 1924/26 in einer Art Vorplanungsphase befand, die er schlagartig nach Antritt seiner Kanzlerschaft steigerte und in Entscheidungen umsetzte."
197. Quoted after Christoph Zuschlag, *'Entartete Kunst'. Ausstellungsstrategien im Nazi-Deutschland*, Worms, 1995, p. 171.
198. Quoted in Jost Dülffer, Jochen Thies, and Josef Henke, *Hitlers Städte. Baupolitik im Dritten Reich*, Cologne, 1978, p. 297: "Man wird mir nun sagen: Ja, sie rüsten doch auf.—Meine Herren, das sieht ja leider das Volk nicht, weil ich darüber ja nicht ganz offen sprechen kann. Das ist das Verborgene."
199. Arndt, et al., 1978, p. 129.

200. Arno Breker, "Zum Bau der Neuen Reichskanzlei," in: *Die Neue Reichskanzlei*, Berlin, 1939, p. 59: "Keine Diskussion, keine Versuche sind der gemeinsamen Arbeit vorausgegangen. Speer gab auf preußische Art die Marschroute an, wir trafen uns wieder, als unsere Resultate in den fast fertiggestellten Organismus eingefügt wurden."
201. Boberach, ed., 1984, pp. 114f.
202. Werner Rittich, "Maler des Weltkrieges 1914–1918," in: *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich*, 3 (1939), no. 11, November, pp. 348–357, cf. p. 348: "Oft wurde betont, dass die nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung und das neue Deutschland an den Fronten des Weltkrieges geboren wurden."
203. *Ibid.*, p. 349: "Opferbereitschaft ohne Unterschied des Standes und der Herkunft."
204. Quoted after Armellini 1980, p. 165: "[...] fornire idee a dei combattenti: idee chiare anche se limitate, e, se necessario, limitate per essere chiare; idee, che eccitano la volontà di imporsi, di dominare. [...] l'iconografia della romanità e la monumentalità imperiale dilagarono, deludendo le ultime speranze di razionalizzazione e modernizzazione [...]."
205. *Ibid.*: "Il popolo italiano ha creato col suo sangue l'impero. Lo feconderà col suo lavoro e lo difenderà contro chiunque con le sue armi."
206. Quoted in Enrico Crispolti, ed., *Nuovi Archivi del Futurismo: Cataloghi di esposizioni*, Catalog, Rome, 2010, p. 655: "Il movimento futurista italiano che fu creato 27 anni fa al grido 'Guerra sola igiene del mondo' lanciato da me solo contro teatri colmi di folle che il social comunismo e il quietismo invelenivano fino all'assassinio respirò a pieni polmoni il giorno in cui Benito Mussolini armato del suo genio politico e militare sò la grande guerra africana oggi coronata da una veloce vittoria imperiale."
207. *Ibid.*, p. 695: "Con sicurezza queste opere i cui abozzi furono fatti dal loro autore sotto il fuoco delle mitragliatrici abissini stabiliscono un primato italiano facendo di Menin il più grande pittore di battaglie moderne."
208. Quoted in *The Observer*, May 1936.
209. Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship. The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930*, Ithaca and London, 1990, p. 341.
210. Eckhart Gillen, "Künstlerische Publizisten gegen Romantiker der roten Farbe," in: *"Kunst in die Produktion!" Sowjetische Kunst während der Phase der Kollektivierung und Industrialisierung 1927–1933, Materialien*, Catalog, Berlin, 1977, pp. 102–156, cf. p. 115.
211. Quoted after Marina Christina Zopf, "Ein Rundgang im Sowjetischen Pavillon der Weltausstellung 1937 in Paris – Architektur, Bauplastik, Wandmalerei in ihrer Aussage und Bedeutung," in: Harten, et al., 1987, pp. 426–429, cf. p. 428: "Wir sind entschlossen, nach allen Kräften und mit unseren gesamten Mitteln eine Politik des Friedens zu verfolgen. Wir begehren kein fremdes Stückchen Erde. Aber wir gestatten niemand einen Fußbreit der Unsrigen."
212. Bown 1998, p. 152.
213. Klaus-Jürgen Müller, "Frankreichs Niederlage 1940 war ein systemimmanenter Vorgang," review of Jacques Engeli, *Frankreich 1940. Wege in die Niederlage*, Baden (Switzerland), 2006, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 26, 2007.
214. "Le Concours pour un monument à la gloire de l'infanterie française," *L'Illustration*, 95 (1937), December 11, p. 443: "C'est l'évocation du Réveil des morts. En frises successives s'inscrivent les souffrances, les misères, les sacrifices de tous ces martyrs: le départ, la corvée, les gaz, le barrage, les blessés [...]."
215. *Vue*, September 23, 1936, quoted in: *Heart of Spain. Robert Capa's Photographs of the Spanish Civil War*, Catalog, New York and Madrid, 1999, p. 28: "Comme ils sont tombés. / Le jarret vif, la poitrine au vent, fusil au poing, ils dévalaient la pointe couverte d'un chaume raide. Soudain l'essor est brisé, une balle a sifflé—une balle fratricide—et leur sang est bu par la terre natale."
216. Werner Spies, *Kontinent Picasso. Ausgewählte Aufsätze aus zwei Jahrzehnten*, Munich, 1988, p. 87: "[...] eine Art Numancia-Syndrom der Geschlagenen."
217. André Breton and Louis Aragon, "Démon du foyer," *Œuvres*, I, pp. 407f.
218. André Breton and Diego Rivera, "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," in: *Partisan Review*, Fall 1938, pp. 49–53.
219. "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art," in: *The Modern Quarterly*, 6 (1932), no. 3, pp. 51–57, cf. p. 57: "I want to be a propagandist and I want to be nothing else. I want to be a propagandist of Communism and I want to be it in all I can think, in all that I can write, and in all that I can paint. I want to use my art as a weapon."
220. *Ibid.*, p. 56: "I took them [sc. my munitions] and will continue to take them, as the guerilla fighter must, from the enemy. Therefore, I take the munitions from the hands of the bourgeoisie. My munitions are the walls, the colors, and the money necessary to feed myself so that I may continue to work."
221. Trotsky 2005, p. 33.
222. Trotsky 2005, pp. 220: "If the Revolution has the right to destroy bridges and art monuments whenever necessary, it will stop still less from laying its hand on any tendency in art which, no matter how great its achievement in form, threatens to disintegrate the revolutionary environment [...]."
223. Leon Trotsky, "Art and Politics in Our Epoch" (1938), in: Trotsky 2016, p. 126.
224. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–129. Written on June 18, 1938, under the title "Art and Politics," it was published in: *Partisan Review*, August 1938, pp. 3–10, and in: *Bulletin of the Opposition*, May–June 1939, pp. 77–78.
225. *Ibid.*, pp. 112f.
226. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

227. "[Télégramme envoyé à Moscou]," Pierre, ed., 1980, pp. 153f., cf. p. 154: "Dans situation actuelle de conflit non armé croyons inutile attendre pour mettre au service de la révolution les moyens qui sont plus particulièrement les nôtres."
228. André Breton, "Second manifeste du surréalisme," *Œuvres*, I, p. 795: "'Si vous êtes marxiste, braillait vers cette époque Michel Marty à l'adresse de l'un de nous, vous n'avez pas besoin d'être surréaliste.'"
229. Patrick Kilian, *Georges Bataille, André Breton und die Gruppe Contre-Attaque. Über das 'wilde Denken' revolutionärer Intellektueller in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, St. Ingbert, 2013, p. 108: "une intraitable dictature du peuple armé."
230. André Breton, "Second manifeste du surréalisme," *Œuvres*, I, p. 804.
231. "La Planète sans Visa," April 24, 1934, Pierre, ed., 1980, pp. 268f., cf. p. 269: "Le socialisme signifiera un saut du règne de la nécessité dans le règne de la liberté [...]."
232. "Limites non frontalières du surréalisme" (1937), *Œuvres*, III, pp. 659–671, cf. p. 660: "La révolution française a commencé."
233. Quoted after Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *A History of the Soviet Union 1917–1953*, vol. II, *Stalin: Order through Terror*, London and New York, 1982, p. 59.
234. Trotsky 2005, p. 15.
235. André Breton, "Visite à Léon Trotsky," text of a talk on November 11, 1938, *Œuvres*, III, pp. 694–704, cf. pp. 702f.; "C'est en effet le camarade Trotsky qui, mis en présence du projet où j'avais formulé: 'Toute licence en art, sauf contre la révolution prolétarienne,' nous a mis en garde contre les nouveaux abus qu'on pourrait faire de ce dernier membre de phrase et l'a biffé sans hésitations."
236. Harvard, 13807, 3.3, "Lettre à nos amis de Londres," October 21, 1938, mimeograph: "Aveugle est celui qui ne comprend pas que lutter pour la démocratie antifasciste signifie lutter pour l'opposition impérialiste. [...] Inutile de vous dire, chers camarades, que c'est dans la voie révolutionnaire que nous espérons vous voir engagés."
237. Harvard, T2:369, Breton to Trotsky, on board of the Hamburg-America line, August 9, 1938: "Bien souvent, ainsi, je me suis demandé ce qu'il adviendrait si, par impossible, je me trouvais en face d'un de ces hommes sur lesquels j'ai été amené à modeler ma pensée et ma sensibilité: disons par exemple Rimbaud ou Lautréamont. [...] C'est ce que j'appelle pour moi-même, en souvenir du Roi Lear, mon 'complex de Cordelia' [...]. Vous êtes précisément un de ces hommes, peut-être aussi—je ne suis pas sur à cause de Freud—le seul vivant."
238. Harvard, T2:371, Breton to Trotsky, June 2, 1939: "Autre chose est évidemment la question d'un déviation de Rivera dans le domaine politique ou vous êtes juge et ou ne doit être attendue de vous aucune tolérance amicale [...]."
239. Trotsky 2016, p. 140: "The Independence of the Artist: A Letter to André Breton," in: *Bulletin of the Opposition*, February 1939.
240. Harvard, 370, Breton to Trotsky, Paris, September 24, 1938.
241. Harvard, 13807, 3.3, "Lettre à nos amis de Londres," October 21, 1938, mimeograph.
242. Harvard, 7428, Trotsky to Breton, Coyoacán, August 31, 1938.
243. Harvard, 13805, Breton to Macdonald, September 17, 1938.
244. Ibid.
245. Harvard, 11026, Jean van Heijenoort to Breton, December 6, 1938.
246. Harvard, T 2:369, Breton to Trotsky, August 9, 1938: "Durant des années, particulièrement de 1926 à 1931, je sais beaucoup d'écrivains et d'artistes qui n'ont cessé d'être en quête d'indications venant de vous."
247. Harvard, T 2:369, Breton to Trotsky, August 9, 1938: "C'est pourquoi j'insiste pour que vous me fassiez transmettre, en toutes circonstances, l'indication de ce que vous désirez me voir faire dans le domaine ou vous pouvez me tenir pour qualifié."
248. Harvard, 371, Breton to Trotsky, June 2, 1939: "Peut-être ne suis-je pas, moi non plus, un organisateur très qualifié mais il me semble pourtant que je me suis heurté à des difficultés de très grande taille. J'ai absolument besoin de votre aide pour tenter à nouveau de les surmonter."
249. David Craven, *Diego Rivera As Epic Modernist*, New York, 1997, p. 147, with no source given.
250. André Breton, "Prestige d'André Masson," in: *Minotaure*, 12–13 (1939), p. 13: "En sa personne nous réconcilions pleinement l'artiste et le révolutionnaire authentiques [...]."
251. André Breton, "Interview d'Indice," *Œuvres*, II, p. 447: "Picasso me faisait part dernièrement de l'idée qui lui était venue que, précisément, la figuration courante de la faucille et du marteau manquait d'une partie de la force emblématique qu'elle pourrait avoir si les manches de deux outils n'en faisaient qu'un, qu'une seule main pût saisir."
252. Robert H. Kargon, et al., *World's Fairs on the Eve of War. Science, Technology, and Modernity, 1937–1942*, Pittsburgh, 2015, p. 62.
253. Speech of Edward B. Bruce, administrator of the Treasury Department's art support program, quoted after Hemingway 2002, p. 83.
254. Quoted after Sharon Ann Musher, *Democratic Art: The New Deal's Influence on American Culture*, Chicago and London, 2015, p. 17.
255. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 185.
256. Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture. The Politics of Identity in New Deal America*, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, pp. 5f.
257. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, May–June 1939, pp. 6–7, quoted after Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern*, Chicago, 1989, p. 171.

258. Quoted after Olaf Peters, *Vom schwarzen Seiltänzer. Max Beckmann zwischen Weimarer Republik und Exil*, Berlin, 2005, p. 169: "One of the most powerful German Expressionists. Departure refers symbolically to his exile, caused by official disapproval of his art."
259. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "The mission of this museum is plain," Monroe Wheeler Papers, Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, quoted in Harriet S. Bee and Michelle Elligott, ed., *Art in Our Time. A Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 2004, p. 61: "Thus, a nation-wide public will receive a demonstration of the force and scope of all these branches of the visual arts [...]."
260. Clement Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (=The Collected Essays and Criticism, John O'Brian, ed., vol. I), Chicago and London, 1986, pp. 10f.: "The masses have always remained more or less indifferent to culture in the process of development. But today such culture is being abandoned by those to whom it actually belongs—our ruling class. For it is to the latter that the avant-garde belongs. No culture can develop without a social basis, without a source of stable income. And in the case of the avant-garde this was provided by an elite among the ruling class of that society from which it assumed itself to be cut off, but to which it has always remained attached by an umbilical cord of gold."
261. Stuart Davis, "Abstract Painting Today," in: Francis V. O'Connor, ed., *Art for the Millions. Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project*, Boston, 1973, pp. 121–127, cf. p. 126.
262. Waldemar George, in: *Entretiens. L'art et la réalité. L'art et l'état*, Paris, 1935, pp. 70f: "[...] une société [...] qui oppose à la machine-État, à l'obscur tyrannie de la majorité, au despotisme de la masse anonyme, l'authentique hiérarchie des valeurs, la foi dans un chef et la confiance dans l'homme. Les conditions morales et politiques d'une nouvelle renaissance artistique ont été réalisées par l'Italie fasciste. La France ne peut tarder à les réaliser."
263. Quoted after Olga Kostina, "Die Moskauer Metro," in: Peter Noever, ed., *Tyrannie des Schönen. Architektur der Stalin-Zeit*, Munich and New York, 1994, pp. 170–174, cf. p. 172: "Jede Station ein Palast, jeder Palast ein besonders gestaltetes Bauwerk!" The following account is based on Dietmar Neutatz, *Die Moskauer Metro. Von den ersten Plänen bis zur Großbaustelle des Stalinismus (1897–1935)*, Cologne, 2001.
264. Adolf Hitler, speech at the dedication, quoted after Arndt, et al., 1978, p. 143: "Das erste Bauwerk des neuen großen deutschen Reiches!"
265. Quoted after Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890–1940*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1991, p. 490.
266. Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922–1943. The Making of the Fascist Capital*, Basingstoke, 2014, p. 253.
267. André Breton, "Prestige d'André Masson," in: *Minotaure*, no. 12–13 (1939), p. 13: "Il est confondant d'observer que l'art en France, au début de 1939, paraît surtout soucieux de jeter un tapis de fleurs sur un monde miné."
268. Adolf Hitler, "Das Bekenntnis des Führers zu Kunst und Künstler," speech at the opening of the Great German Exhibition in Munich, July 10, 1938, Eikmeyer, ed., 2004, p. 179.
269. Quoted after Holz 2004, p. 213.
270. *Années 30 en Europe. Le Temps Menaçant, 1929–1939*, Catalog, Paris, 1997.
271. Stefanie Heckmann and Hans Ottomeyer, ed., *Kassandra. Visionen des Unheils 1914–1945*, Dresden, 2008.
272. André Breton, "Prestige d'André Masson," in: *Minotaure*, no. 12–13 (1939), p. 13: "Il est confondant d'observer que l'art en France, au début de 1939, paraît surtout soucieux de jeter un tapis de fleurs sur un monde miné. [...] À l'heure où Barcelone défile de privations sous un ciel d'enfer, où ailleurs les jours de la liberté semblent comptés, leur œuvre ne reflète en rien la tragique appréhension de cette époque [...]."

REPEATEDLY CITED WORKS

- Armellini, Guido, *Le immagini del fascismo nelle arti figurative*, Milan, 1980.
- Arndt, Karl, Koch, Georg Friedrich, and Larsson, Lars Olof, *Albert Speer. Architektur*, Frankfurt, Berlin and Vienna, 1978.
- Boberach, Heinz, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938–1945*, Herrsching, 1984.
- Bown, Matthew Cullerne, *Socialist Realist Painting*, New Haven and London, 1998.
- Breton, André, *Œuvres complètes*, Marguerite Bonnet, ed., vol. I, Paris, 1988; vol. II, Paris, 1992; vol. III, Paris, 1999.
- Breton, André, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor, 1969.
- Cinquantenaire de l'Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, Catalog, Paris, 1987.
- Cohen, Jean-Louis, *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of the USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow, 1928–1936*, Princeton, 1992.
- Egbert, Donald Drew, *Social Radicalism and the Arts. Western Europe*, New York, 1970.
- Fauchereau, Serge, ed., *La Querelle du Réalisme*, Paris, 1987.
- Fiss, Karen, *Grand Illusion. The Third Reich, the Paris Exposition, and the Cultural Seduction of France*, Chicago and London, 2009.
- Gamonal Torres, and Miguel Ángel, *Arte y política en la Guerra Civil española: El caso republicano*, Granada, 1987.
- Harten, Jürgen, Schmidt, Hans Werner, and Syring, Marie Luise, ed., *“Die Axt hat geblüht.” Europäische Konflikte der 30er Jahre in Erinnerung an die frühe Avantgarde*, Catalog, Düsseldorf, 1987.
- Harvard University, Houghton Library, Leon Trotsky Papers.
- Hemingway, Andrew, *Artists of the Left. American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956*, New Haven and London, 2002.
- Hitler, Adolf, *Reden zur Kunst und Kulturpolitik 1933–1939*, Robert Eikmeyer, ed., Frankfurt, 2004.
- Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed., Munich, 1991–2000.
- Holz, Keith, *Modern German Art for Thirties Paris, Prague, and London. Resistance and Acquiescence in a Democratic Public Sphere*, Ann Arbor, 2004.
- Hudson, Jr., Hugh D., *Blueprints and Blood. The Stalinization of Soviet Architecture, 1917–1937*, Princeton, 1994.
- Khan-Magomedov, Selim O., *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture. The Search for New Solutions in the 1920s and 1930s*, Catherine Cooke, ed., London, 1987.
- Kokoschka, Oskar, *Aufsätze, Vorträge, Essays zur Kunst (=Das schriftliche Werk, vol. III)*, Heinz Spielmann, ed., Hamburg, 1975.
- Kokoschka, Oskar, *Politische Äusserungen (=Das schriftliche Werk, vol. IV)*, Heinz Spielmann, ed., Hamburg, 1976.
- Kopp, Anatole, *L'architecture de la période stalinienne*, Grenoble, 1978.
- Maur, Karin von, *Oskar Schlemmer*, vol. I, *Monographie*, Munich, 1979.
- Misler, Nicoletta, and Bowlt, John E., ed., *Pavel Filonov. A Hero and his Fate. Collected Writings on Art and Revolution, 1914–1940*, Austin, Texas, 1984.
- Pierre, José, ed., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922–1969*, vol. I, 1922–1939, Paris, 1980.
- Ragot, Gilles, and Dion, Mathilde, *Le Corbusier en France. Projets et réalisations*, 2nd edition, Paris, 1997.
- Rimaud, Jean, “Image des civilisations totalitaires. Mais que prouvent les images?,” in: *Etudes*, July 5, 1937, pp. 83–89.
- Schuster, Klaus-Peter, ed., *Die “Kunststadt” München 1937. Nationalsozialismus und “Entartete Kunst”*, 5th edition, revised, Munich, 1998.
- Sultano, Gloria, and Werkner, Patrick, *Oskar Kokoschka. Kunst und Politik 1937–1950*, Vienna, 2003.
- The Aesthetic Arsenal. Socialist Realism Under Stalin*, Catalog, New York, 1993.
- Trotsky, Leon, *Art and Revolution. Writings on Literature, Politics, and Culture*, Paul N. Siegel, ed., New York, 2016.

Trotsky, Leon, *Literature and Revolution*, William Keach, ed., translated by Rose Strunsky, Chicago, 2005.

Werckmeister, Otto Karl, "The International of Modern Art. From Moscow to Berlin," in: Thomas W. Gaehtgens, ed., *Künstlerischer Austausch—Artistic Exchange: Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin, 1993, pp. 553–574.

Zervos, Christian, "Réflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du III^e Reich," in: *Cahiers d'Art*, 11 (1936), pp. 209–212; 12 (1937), pp. 51–61, on the occasion of E. Wernert, *L'art dans le III^e Reich*, Paris, 1936.

INDEX OF NAMES

- Alabian, Karo 139, 235, 239, 240, 242, 243, 345
Alexander, Gertrud 394
Andreyev, Nikolai 198
Aragon, Louis 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 131, 132, 147, 161, 162, 165, 171, 182, 195, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 318, 353, 355, 367, 369, 379, 418
Araquistain, Luis 105
Arntz, Gert 185, 204, 205, 206, 207, 314
Archila Hita, Víctor José 180
Aubert, André 96
Azaña, Manuel 116
Azéma, Léon 111
- Bach, Fritz 387
Barbusse, Henri 310, 311, 368, 447
Bardasano, José Luis 180
Bardet, Gaston 199
Barlach, Ernst 277, 278, 309, 311, 447, **455**
Baroni, Eugenio 340
Barr, Alfred A. 288, 401
Barrès, Maurice 348
Bartning, Otto 93
Bataille, Georges 181, 182, 368, 422
Baudelaire, Charles 355
Beaudin, Eugène 199
Beck, Ludwig 334
Beckmann, Max 280, 281, 286, 287, 288, 401
Beech, Chester 400
Beneš, Eduard 322
Benjamin, Walter 129, 147, 181, 304
Bérard, Léon 139
Berthola, Louis 133, 427, **428**
Beskin, Ossip 62, 63, 137, 271
Bigot, Paul 349
Billing, Henry 400
Billotey, Louis 48
Bloch, Ernst 284
Blomberg, Werner von 184
Blum, Léon 108, 115, 117, 118, 131, 139, 171, 313, 419
Blunt, Anthony 142, 423
Boix, Ricardo 356
Bollaert, Emile 90
Bottai, Giuseppe 55, 60, 76, 77, 80, 228, 341
Bouchard, Henri 115, 347, 349, 350, 427, **433**
Bourdelle, Antoine-Émile 115, 349, 410, 419
Braque, Georges 31, 48, 141, 174
Brecht, Bertolt 314, 320
Breker, Arno 80, 82, 83, 84, 131, 134, 184, 326, 332, 333, 336, 408
Breton, André 26, 30, 92, 94, 98, 99, 101, 141, 142, 161, 162, 165, 166, 167, 173, 175, 176, 181, 182, 183, 185, 195, 214, 216, 217, 218, 234, 249, 253, 254, 255, 269, 283, 288, 292, 319, 355, 360, 361, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 414, 420, 421, 422
- Brodsky, Isaac 83, 84, 214
Broquet, Gaston 347
Bubnov, Andrei 60
Bulganin, Nikolai 243
- Capa, Robert 352, 353, 355
Cárdenas, Lázaro 360
Carlu, Jacques 95, 111, 200
Carlu, Natacha 95
Cassou, Jean 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 128, 141, 163, 182, 246, 251
Chagall, Marc 167, 185, 279
Chaikov, Iosif 114, 167, 184, 344
Chamberlain, Neville 286, 331
Chaplin, Charlie 369
Chappey, N. 347
Charlemagne 132
Chastel, Roger 95
Chim 353
Cini, Vittorio 409
Claudel, Paul 108
Clemenceau, Georges 22
Cocteau, Jean 49
Condorcet, Nicolas 365
Copernicus, Nicolaus 353
- Dalou, Jules 43, 404
Dastugue, Marcel 96
Daumier, Honoré 97, 132
David, Jacques-Louis 30, 245
Davis, Stuart 402
Deineka, Aleksandr 178, 214, 343, 345
Del Debbio, Enrico 135
Delacroix, Eugène 171, 318
Delaunay, Robert 118, 416
Despiau, Charles 115, 410
Dies, Martin 398
Dix, Otto 224, 232, 272, 302, 303, 305, 309, 310, 311, **456, 457**
Dollfuß, Engelbert 320
Dondel, Jean-Claude 96
Doumergue, Gaston 109
Dreyfuss, Henry 399
Duclos, Jacques 132
Dugrand, Alain 375
Durand, Julien 109
- Efanov, Vasilii 152, 402
Eichhorst, Franz 335
Eisler, Hanns 284
Éluard, Paul 98, 161, 162, 167
Erler, Fritz 331
Ernst, Max 183, 216, 281, 282, 283, 305, 355, 395, 421

- Fabry, Jean 347
 Farinacci, Roberto 60, 75, 138
 Feuerbach, Ludwig 369
 Filonov, Pavel 63, 81, 201, 202, 203, 272, 276, 277, 295, 296, 297, 298
 Flavell, Kay 221
 Foch, Ferdinand 356
 Fomin, Ivan 134
 Ford, Edsel 362
 Fontana, Lucio 341
 Franco, Francisco 179, 311, 316, 420
 François-Poncet, André 331, 340
 Frank, E. P. 199
 Franke, Günter 280
 Frederick the Great 131
 Freud, Sigmund 369
 Freundlich, Otto 163, 169, 174, 251, 252, 281, 282, 283, 395, 414
 Frick, Wilhelm 91, 93
 Fridman, Daniil 243
 Friedlander, Leo 392
 Fritsch, Werner von 184
 Frunze, Mikhail 344, 345, 346
- Galilei, Galileo 203
 Gauguin, Paul 34
 Gelfreikh, Vladimir 71
 George, Waldemar 140, 200, 404, 414
 Gerasimov, Aleksandr 84, 214, 235, 236, 239, 240, 243, 274
 Gerasimov, Sergei 152
 Gessler, Otto 226
 Ghelfreikh, Vladimir 77
 Gies, Ludwig 169
 Goebbels, Joseph 55, 60, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 126, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 152, 160, 196, 233, 240, 242, 262, 265, 266, 270, 273, 302, 303, 332, 400
 Goerg, Edouard 104, 214
 Gogh, Vincent van 25, 34
 González, Juli 105, 118, 418
 Gori, George 115
 Göring, Hermann 63, 236, 270, 238
 Gorki, Maksim 77
 Gorky, Arshile 401
 Goya, Francisco 101, 105, 106
 Gréber, Jacques 111, 114
 Greenberg, Clement 401, 402
 Gris, Juan 31
 Gromaine, Marcel 107, 214, 215
 Gropius, Walter 29, 230
 Grosz, George 97, 162, 218, 219, 220, 221, 226, 231, 280, 282, 319
 Grundig, Hans 302, 303, 306, 307, 310, 446, **448, 449, 450, 451**
 Grundig, Lea 306, 307, 308, 446
 Guttuso, Renato 294
- Hansen, Walter 244, 245
 Hausenstein, Wilhelm 32
 Haussmann, Georges Eugène 65, 111, 252
 Heartfield, John 97, 162, 171, 215, 217, 226, 231, 280, 282, 283, 298, 299, 301, 313, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 322
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 369
 Heiden, Konrad 315
 Heijenoort, Jan van 375
 Henrich, Albert 334
 Hernández, Jesús 102
 Herriot, Edouard 109
 Herviaux, André 117, 132
 Herzfelde, Wieland 219, 226, 230, 317, 319
 Hess, Rudolf 407
 Hitchcock, Henry Russell 399
 Hitler, Adolf 31, 42, 45, 47, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 93, 94, 113, 114, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 131, 133, 134, 135, 137, 145, 146, 148, 149, 151, 152, 164, 167, 168, 169, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 184, 186, 191, 193, 195, 196, 198, 199, 202, 204, 206, 212, 219, 220, 221, 227, 232, 233, 235, 237, 238, 240, 241, 244, 259, 260, 262, 265, 267, 268, 269, 270, 273, 274, 280, 284, 285, 287, 288, 294, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 315, 316, 319, 321, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342, 344, 346, 370, 372, 376, 383, 394, 400, 407, 408, 416, 446, 447
 Hodler, Ferdinand 178, 335
 Hoetger, Bernhard 266, 267
 Hoffmann, Heinrich 199, 238
 Hoffmann, Johannes 230
 Hönig, Eugen 236, 242, 266
 Hossbach, Friedrich 198, 276, 330, 331, 338
 Huisman, Georges 44, 95, 102, 106, 111, 140, 251
- Indalecio Prieto 352
 Iofan, Boris 71, 77, 83, 84, 209
 Ioganson, Boris 343
- Jarry, Alfred 369
 Jasson, A. 347
 Joffre, Joseph 349
 Jünger, Ernst 311, 312
- Kaganovich, Lazar 46, 150, 237, 240, 242, 243, 406, 407
 Kahlo, Frida 387
 Kahn, Albert 399
 Kandinsky, Vasily 28, 32, 242, 281, 285, 287
 Kessler, Harry 21
 Khrushchev, Nikita 243, 406, 407
 Klee, Paul 32, 122, 185, 285, 288, 302
 Klucis, Gustav 301
 Koch, Walter 317, 318
 Kokoschka, Oskar 284, 286, 294, 319, 320, 321, 322

- Kolbe, Georg 134
Kollwitz, Käthe 224, 308, 309
Korin, Pavel 283
Kralik, Hanns 282, 283, 314
Kreis, Wilhelm 72, 326
Kriukov, Mikhail 243
- La Padula, Ernesto 409
Labas, Aleksandr 214
Labbé, Edmond 109, 110, 111, 118
Lacasa, Luis 418
Lackner, Stephan 280
Lagrange, Léo 211
LaGuardia, Fiorello 394
Laktionov, Aleksandr 80, 346
Landowski, Paul 347, 348, 349, 356, 458, **460, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467**
Laprade, Albert 350, 352
Largo Caballero, Francisco 108, 115, 351
Lautréamont 165, 369,
Le Corbusier 44, 47, 65, 70, 96, 100, 108, 118, 127, 128, 207, 208, 209, 210, 215, 252, 253, 353, 393, 411, 414, 418, 419
Le Nain Brothers 105
Lebrun, Albert 349
Léger, Fernand 92, 96, 97, 100, 107, 108, 118, 129, 215, 414, 418
Leibl, Wilhelm 131
Leiris, Michel 181
Lenin, Vladimir Ilyitch 28, 29, 30, 32, 71, 77, 113, 127, 158, 162, 165, 177, 185, 203, 204, 215, 229, 240, 363, 385
Léon, Paul 90, 109, 110
Leonidov, Ivan 71, 138, 202, 243, 276, 277, 295, 297
Ley, Robert 302
Libera, Adalberto 327, 343
Lingner, Max 117, 179
Lipchitz, Jacques 118, 141, 405, 419
Lissitsky, El 144, 158, 162, 174, 194, 212, 213, 272, 296, 301
Lohmar, Heinz 395
Loucheur, Louis 210
Louis XVI 245
Lunacharsky, Anatoly 22, 76, 127, 209, 229, 271, 365
Luxemburg, Rosa 158
- Maginot, André 347
Malevich, Kazimir 63, 81, 138, 270, 273, 296, 297, 298
Mallet-Stevens, Robert 96
Manet, Edouard 132
Mann, Heinrich 308, 314
Mann, Thomas 203, 286, 314
Manship, Paul 392, 399
Maraini, Antonio 238
Marc, Franz 32, 63
March, Werner 135
- Marinetti, Felipe Tommaso 29, 82, 157, 159, 180, 181, 182, 200, 227, 228, 236, 266, 338, 340, 341, 342
Martini, Arturo 84, 340, 341, 342
Marty, Michel 253, 367
Marx, Karl 27, 28, 32, 158, 203, 362, 369, 375, 376, 377
Masereel, Frans 97, 104, 117, 179, 182, 215
Masson, André 96, 104, 175, 182, 216, 217, 385, 388, 420, 421, 422
Matisse, Henri 91, 96, 107, 108, 111, 141, 163, 215, 218, 234, 251
Matveyev, Aleksandr 135
Mauclair, Camille 140
Mayakovsky, Vladimir 82, 101, 122, 123, 158, 200, 229, 236, 271, 273, 295
McAneny, George 392
Menin, Mario 342
Menzel, Adolph von 131
Meyer, Hannes 47, 70
Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig 36, 47
Miró, Joan 105, 118, 175, 418
Moeller van den Bruck, Arthur 134
Molotov, Vyacheslav 161, 254
Monet, Claude 22
Monzie, Anatole de 90, 109, 140, 418
Morbiducci, Publio 409
Mordvinov, Arkadi 236, 276
Moreau, Clément 313, 314, 315
Moretti, Luigi 83
Morgenthau Jr., Henry 396
Moussignac, Léon 318
Mukhina, Vera 84, 85, 114, 185, 427, **429, 430**
Munch, Edvard 25
Münzenberg, Willi 299, 301, 313, 316, 317, 320
Murger, Henry 34
Mussolini, Benito 29, 57, 65, 77, 79, 84, 157, 159, 160, 178, 183, 184, 186, 196, 204, 208, 228, 239, 327, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342, 343, 394, 408, 409, 412
- Napoléon Bonaparte 245
Negrin, Juan 104, 115, 248, 351, 352
Neuberg 165
Neurath, Otto 205, 206, 207, 314
Niekisch, Ernst 299, 300
Nietzsche, Friedrich 24, 182
Nizzoli, Marcello 341
Nolde, Emil 272, 277, 278, 309
Novitsky, Pavel 148
- Okhitovich, Mikhail 138, 139, 243, 297, 298
Olden, Rudolf 315
Oppo, Cipriano 238, 412
Ossorio y Gallardo, Angel 116
- Pagano, Giuseppe 196, 237, 409, 412
Palanti, Giancarlo 341

Peiner, Werner 82, 131, 336
 Péret, Benjamin 181, 420
 Péricard, Jacques 348
 Perrin, Jean 419
 Petrov-Vodkin, Kusma 178
 Piacentini, Marcello 72, 73, 79, 178, 196, 235, 237, 238, 241, 342, 409, 412
 Picasso, Pablo 31, 34, 92, 104, 105, 108, 111, 118, 119, 163, 172, 180, 182, 183, 200, 215, 217, 232, 251, 305, 352, 353, 355, 388, 417, 418, 421, 422, 423
 Pimenev, Yury 214, 393, 402
 Pollock, Jackson 401
 Pommier, Albert 115, 427, **432**
 Punin, Nikolai 29, 229

 Querner, Curt 303

 Radziwill, Franz 227, 272, 335, 336
 Read, Herbert 164, 181, 287, 288, 416, 423
 Redslob, Edwin 218
 Reiner, Joseph 399
 Rembrandt van Rijn 131
 Renau, Josep 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 116, 164, 165, 174, 175, 247, 248, 350, 351, 374, 418
 Renier, Joseph E. 400
 Repin, Ilya 130
 Ribera, Jusepe de 101
 Riefenstahl, Leni 135, 405
 Rimbaud, Arthur 27, 30, 34, 165, 369
 Rittich, Werner 334
 Rivera, Diego 142, 217, 218, 360, 361, 362, 363, 366, 367, 373, 375, 376, 382, 383, 384, 386, 387, 388, 421
 Roche, Gérard 375
 Rockefeller, John D. 362, 400, 401
 Rodchenko, Aleksandr 144, 202, 266, 275, 296
 Rodin, Auguste 43
 Rodríguez Luna, Antonio 164, 172, 173, 175, 434, 435, **436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445**
 Röhm, Ernst 179, 184
 Rolland, Romain 171, 172
 Roosevelt, Franklin D. 395, 397, 398, 401, 402
 Roselius, Ludwig 267
 Rosenberg, Alfred 39, 63, 75, 91, 135, 145, 148, 149, 233, 240, 242, 262, 266, 273, 277, 278, 302, 303, 309, 329, 332, 334
 Rothko, Mark 401
 Rude, François 183, 184
 Rudnev, Lev 344
 Rust, Bernhard 240, 266, 308

 Sachs, Paul 400
 Sadoul, Georges 369
 Saint-Simon, Henri 27, 28, 365
 Sant'Elia, Antonio 341
 Sarfatti, Margharita 77, 84, 239
 Sauerlandt, Max 277
 Sauter, Wilhelm 179, 335
 Schacht, Hjalmar 198, 333
 Schlemmer, Oskar 200, 201, 202, 203, 473, 474
 Schlichter, Rudolf 311, 312
 Schmidhagen, Reinhard 313, 314
 Schmidt-Ehmen, Kurt 115
 Schmidt-Rottluff, Karl 272
 Scholz, Robert 266
 Schultze-Naumburg, Paul 93, 148, 149
 Schwesig, Karl 314
 Seghers, Anna 314
 Sert, Josep Luis 118, 418
 Severini, Gino 82
 Shchusev, Alexei 243
 Shterenberg, David 242
 Siemsen, August 315
 Signac, Paul 249
 Simbirtzev, Vasily 345
 Sironi, Mario 77, 79, 83, 84, 134, 183, 185, 235, 237, 238, 239, 241, 341
 Slavinsky, Yuvenali 240
 Souverbie, Jean 95
 Speer, Albert 46, 66, 71, 72, 73, 74, 83, 84, 113, 114, 131, 134, 184, 299, 235, 238, 240, 241, 252, 327, 329, 330, 332, 343, 405, 408
 Spiro, Eugen 285,
 Stalin, Joseph 45, 57, 71, 74, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 113, 115, 127, 152, 160, 195, 198, 203, 204, 206, 209, 212, 219, 220, 237, 239, 243, 268, 273, 295, 336, 344, 346, 363, 364, 383, 394, 411, 427
 Starace, Achille 68
 Stepanova, Warwara 158

 Taro, Gerda 353
 Tatlin, Vladimir 22, 29, 81, 157, 158, 159, 168, 229, 242, 272, 273, 337, 364
 Tato 180
 Taut, Bruno 230
 Taylor, Robert 328
 Terragni, Giuseppe 160, 340, 341
 Thälmann, Ernst 285
 Thies, Jochen 328, 329, 330
 Thorak, Josef 80, 82, 83, 84, 114, 134
 Todt, Fritz 332
 Toller, Ernst 220
 Troost, Paul Ludwig 83, 114, 244
 Trotsky, Lev 22, 74, 142, 158, 159, 166, 170, 175, 176, 177, 181, 183, 185, 192, 195, 198, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 234, 254, 268, 269, 298, 360, 361, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 369, 370, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 402, 413, 415, 421
 Tzara, Tristan 318
 Tikhachevsky, Mikhail 337, 346

Valéry, Paul 44, 128, 129
Velázquez, Diego 105
Viard, Paul 96
Viénot, Jacques 199
Vierthaler, Robert 174
Vorms, Pierre 214
Voroshilov, Kliment 83, 152, 240, 344, 346

Wagner, Adolf 83
Washington, George 392
Weber, A. Paul 298, 299, 300
Weil, Felix 221
Weiss, Peter 293
Westheim, Paul 285, 286, 321
Whalen, Grover 394
Willrich, Wolfgang 63, 244, 245, 271, 335
Witwer, Hans 47

Zay, Jean 102, 106, 140, 141, 182, 418, 419
Zeller, Magnus 302, 303, 309, 310, 447, **452, 453, 454**
Zernova, Ekaterina 345
Zervos, Christian 44, 146, 163, 401
Zhdanov, Andrei 68, 76, 144, 150, 163, 193, 194, 211, 274, 297
Zholtovsky, Ivan 134, 135
Ziegler, Adolf 127, 169, 227, 235, 236, 240, 241, 242, 244, 274, 275,
302, 336

Between 1929 and 1939, during the decade of the Great Depression, the arts in Europe were politicized more than ever before. Government oversight, party agitation, and public pressure sought to make them serve domestic policies of social stabilization and foreign policies of antagonistic self-assertion. All of this jeopardized the freedom the arts had gained after the First World War. They were drawn into the struggles between the economic, social, and political systems which came to a head in the Second World War. As a result, they were entangled in a three-way ideological conflict between communism, fascism, and democracy. In a fast-moving course of less than ten years, art policies were enacted, and art ideologies were proclaimed, with doctrinaire assurance. This is what I call a political confrontation of the arts.



CIRKUS EUROPA

The Political Confrontation of the Arts in Europe from the Great Depression to the Second World War

Otto Karl Werckmeister

Between 1929 and 1939, during the decade of the Great Depression, the arts in Europe were politicized more than ever before. Government oversight, party agitation, and public pressure sought to make them serve domestic policies of social stabilization and foreign policies of antagonistic self-assertion. All of this jeopardized the freedom the arts had gained after the First World War. They were drawn into the struggles between the economic, social, and political systems which came to a head in the Second World War. As a result, they were entangled in a three-way ideological conflict between communism, fascism, and democracy. In a fast-moving course of less than ten years, art policies were enacted, and art ideologies were proclaimed, with doctrinaire assurance. This is what I call a political confrontation of the arts.

The Political Confrontation of the Arts in Europe
from the Great Depression to the Second World War
Otto Karl Werckmeister

Zurich Studies in the History of Art
Georges Bloch Annual
University of Zurich, Institute of Art History
2019/20
Vol. 24/25

CIRKUS EUROPA