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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"—crisscrossed 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 clienteles, 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 ascendany 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. Unbeholden 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.