occasional papers

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Introduction

cover: **UMBO** *Selbst (Self-portrait)* c 1930, printed 1980
gelatin silver photograph
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1983

above: **Lev Levitsky**
Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and Tsarina Alexandra with children, Peter Hof, 16th August 1901
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2006

The National Gallery of Australia began acquiring photographic art in 1972, and in 2012 current holdings are over 25000 works, of which over half are Australian. This significant print collection is complemented by the National Gallery of Australia Research Library's excellent and extensive catalogue of photographic literature.

The story of the development of the Gallery's photography collection has been told in the Gallery's publication *Building the collection*, released in 2003. Significant new directions began in 2006 with a new focus on the representation of the history of photography in the Asia-Pacific region, announced in October 2005 by Director Ron Radford in his *A vision for the National Gallery of Australia.* (That document and further information can be found on the Gallery's website: nga.gov.au, see tabs for 'information' and 'collections'.)

Over the years many substantial talks have been given by staff and guest speakers, and those papers that were not published are now planned to be progressively placed on the Gallery's website.

A number of specific strengths exist in the Gallery's collection, including holdings of modernist photography of the 1920s to 1930s. This paper addresses background material to the modern photography collection and has been contributed by Robert Deane, former Assistant Director (Administration), currently a volunteer and Honorary Researcher.

Gael Newton
Senior Curator, Photography
June 2012

The New Photography 1920s–1940s

‘Photography is the art of the revolution’[1]

The Great War saw the annihilation of an entire generation among its major protagonists and changed, both directly and indirectly, the political geography of Europe and the British Empire. In consequence, the centuries-long evolution of nearly all aspects of European culture was abruptly terminated. By the end of the war most of hitherto-existing social structures, their manners, customs and cultures, had been destroyed. Significantly, the old class structures had been effectively destroyed and a new social class, the veteran soldier, had emerged. New societies emerged with, among other things, radically new canons in music, literature, architecture, fashion and art.

European photography was not immune to these changes. In an immediate sense the New Photography was the product of new Soviet theories on the nature and role of art and film in society; the interaction between the introduction of public broadcasting and the newspaper industry; the invention of miniature cameras, in particular the Leica and its imitator, the Russian Fed; and improvements in the technology of 35 mm film and photographic reproduction. Finally, the over-whelming thrust of this new idiom in photography was directed not to salon exhibitions for elite audiences but to the widest dissemination through publication in books, posters and periodicals. While its influence in artistic circles is undeniable, the New Photography had far greater impact on every stratum of western societies through the fields of advertising, photojournalism and fashion.

Unlike the situation in western Europe, England or America, Russia had already established public institutions devoted to the scientific, technical and artistic development of photography in the late nineteenth century. Russia seemed immune to the controversy over photography as art with the principal Russian artistic institution of the time, The Academy of Fine Arts, recognising photography as an art form of the same stature as other figurative art forms and including photography in its exhibitions.

This trend was continued after the Revolution with the establishment, firstly, of the Higher Institute of Photography and Photographic Techniques and later, the State Institute for Optics and the Moscow Committee for Photography and Photographic Techniques. Soviet government policy recognised that the development of a documentary style of both photography and film was essential to the dissemination of Soviet information at home and propaganda abroad. Anatoly Lunacharsky, commissar for education in 1920 remarked that ‘besides his pocket watch, every progressive Soviet citizen must also own a camera’. Lunacharsky also expressed the view that every citizen in Soviet Russia should have training in photography.[2]

left: Cover of *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* 1927. Copy bought in 1928 by Australian librarian and amateur photographer JW Metcalfe, a member of the Sydney Camera Circle

centre: **Margaret Michaelis** *In La Cucina* (*in the Kitchen*) 1934 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of Margaret Michaels-Sachs 1986

right: **Felix H Man** *Entrance to Luna Park Berlin 1929* gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1987

Aleksandr Rodchenko
Cover for Pro eto (*about this*)
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1984

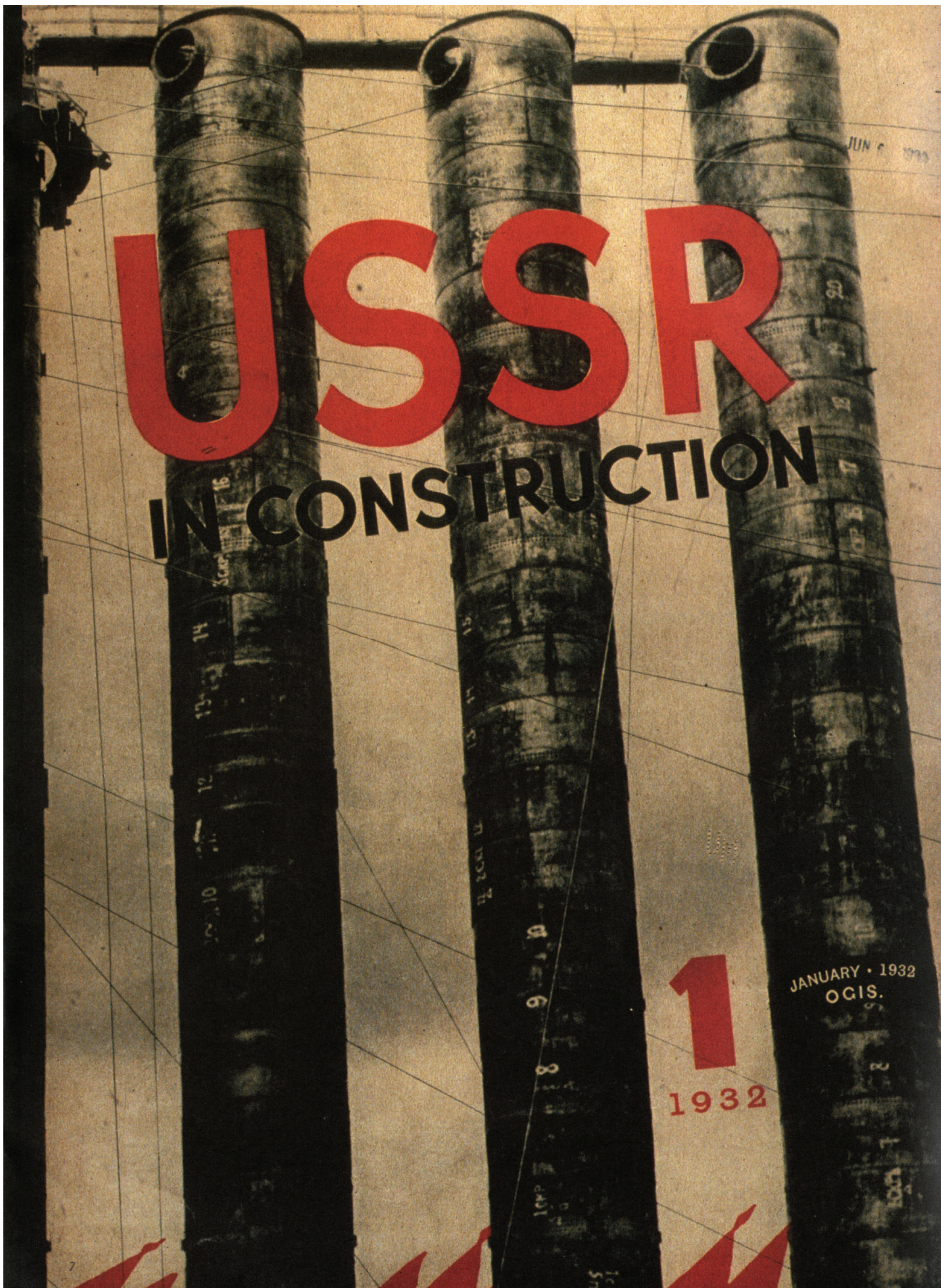
Photojournalism was already established in Russia by the turn of the century with the work of pioneers such as Karl Bulla and Pyotr Otsup appearing in illustrated publications such as *Solntse Rossii*, *Niva* and others. The introduction of the newly invented half-tone process greatly simplified the process of reproducing photographic images in newspapers. Yet at the time of the Revolution, there were only two illustrated publications produced in Russia, *Plamia* in Petrograd and *Khronika* in Moscow. The dislocation of industry and society occasioned firstly by the Revolution and then by the subsequent Civil War (1918–23) had a profound effect on the availability of photographic materials. Notwithstanding these limitations, the messages of the state were widely distributed in the new state through the medium of photographs displayed on billboards and window displays of individual images wherever citizens might gather.[3]

The seed of a new form of photography in Russia was laid in the years immediately prior to and for several years after the Russian Revolution. This new radical formalist photography denied vehemently any aesthetic intent or indeed qualities, rather declaring itself to be the vehicle for disseminating the achievements of the new Soviet society and fostering the new collective consciousness of the Soviet people. Alexandr Rodchenko, one of the principal practitioners of the new photography, wrote 'art has no place in modern life'. The radical nature of the new Soviet formalist photography was founded on its anti-individualism and anti-subjectivity. Yet the ideological divisions that emerged in the early 1930s divided the leading photojournalists, with Rodchenko being attacked for plagiarism and copying corrupt bourgeois themes. Many of his contemporaries were condemned for 'counter-revolutionary' practice facing death or exile at best.[4]

During the early 1920s Rodchenko, a constructivist painter, graphic designer and theatre producer, had used photographic images as integral parts of his designs for posters and photomontages, particularly those used for the quarterly periodical *Lef*, founded and edited by the poet Mayakovsky. Perhaps the most famous of these were the photomontages used in the design for Mayakovsky's poem *Pro Eto* published in 1923. The following year Rodchenko became more involved with photography for its own sake, building a photographic laboratory and buying a 9 x 12 plate camera, this soon being superseded by a French Sept 35 mm camera and, in 1928, a Leica.

Rodchenko argued that 'we do not always see what we look at' and that photography should not be subservient to the viewpoints and perspectives of painting, rather 'we must take photographs from every angle but the navel, until all those points of view are recognised'.[5] Rodchenko believed that it was necessary to educate people to see rather than simply to look, and proposed that ordinary familiar things be photographed in new ways, from new angles and perspectives, 'defamiliarised'.[6] His attention to the frame is manifest not only in his own work but also in the way in which he used the images of other photographers in his designs for publication.

Writing in *Novyi Lef* in 1928, Rodchenko argued: 'We must seek and find a new aesthetic, and a new enthusiasm and pathos, which will express our new socialist reality through the medium of photography. For us, the photograph of a new factory is not just a picture of a building, not just a factual record, but an expression of pride and joy in the industrialisation of the land of the Soviets.'[7] Contemporary Soviet film makers expressed similar ideas and ideals in their work. The documentary cinematographer, Dzigo Vertov, demonstrated the impact of a social or political theory of revolution on visual



expression, through his insistence on the primacy of the documentary approach.[8] Both Vertov and Rodchenko stressed the importance of producing images based in facts whose documentary values supported the goals of the revolution and the interest of educating the people in the spirit of socialism.[9]

The origins of Soviet photojournalism lie in the founding in 1923 of three illustrated magazines, *Ogonëk*, *Krasnaia niva* and *Prozhektor,* with *Ogonëk* rapidly becoming the most influential.[10] By 1929, *Ogonëk*, with the motto 'No material without a photo or drawing', had a weekly circulation of half a million copies and had established a network of photo-correspondents, as well as

Nikolai Troshin (graphic designer) 'The giant and the builder' Cover of *SSSR Na Stroike*, 1932, no.1 English edition National Library of Australia, Canberra

El Lissitisky (graphic designer) 'Bearded peasants' *SSSR Na Stroike* 1932 no. 10 English edition National Library of Australia, Canberra

establishing domestic and international facilities for production and distribution. Under the leadership of its chief editor and publisher, Mikhail Koltsov, *Ogonëk* established the framework of modern photojournalism in the Soviet Union and established many of the techniques of the illustrated magazine, such as the use of large visually striking cover images, now considered commonplace.

Koltsov also played an important role in the development of Soviet photographic practice and education through *Sovetskoe foto,* a specialised monthly photographic magazine published by *Ogonëk* from 1926. Declaring its mission to be the establishment of a distinct style Soviet photography, *Sovetskoe foto* editorialised the essential role of photography in the construction of socialism.[11]

Outside of the Soviet Union, the most widely known of Soviet illustrated publications was *SSSR na stroike* (*USSR in Construction*). Published first in 1930 in Russian, English, German and French editions, *USSR in Construction* sought to illustrate in images not only the vast program of industrial innovation and modernisation being wrought by socialism but also the social and cultural benefits that socialism brought to the people of the Soviet Union.

Originally conceived as an illustrated supplement to the popular literary magazine *Nashi dostizheniia* published by the State Publishing House of the Soviet Union,[12] *USSR in Construction* was conceived as an illustrated magazine 'intended chiefly for abroad: there it is needed no less than here, because there are readers who sympathise with us there'.[13] Yet as Wolf points out, it was not foreign workers that were the initial target audience for this publication, but foreign bankers, businessmen and the intelligentsia who were sympathetic to the socialist cause.[14] To this end photography was seen as the most objective method of portraying the scope and magnitude of Soviet achievements.[15]

By 1933, *USSR in Construction* had changed its orientation, becoming increasingly focused on representing the internal Soviet political objectives of the time. The major design teams now working on the magazine were that of El Lissitzky and Sofia Kuppers-Lissitzky, and Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. Individual issues were now devoted to themes of internal importance. Thus issue 2 of 1933, designed by the El Lissitzky, team was devoted to

the fifteenth anniversary of the Soviet Army while, issue 12 of that year, designed by the Rodchenko team, covered the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal (the Stalin canal).[16]

The early canons of Soviet photography were now well established in these publications. The use of montage, of overlaying of images, of elaborate paper folds and the isolation of the 'heroic' figure are to be seen in their final development in the issues of *USSR in Construction* of this period.

While modern critics have come to regard the work of Rodchenko or El Lissitzky as art and their authors as major Soviet artists, this was certainly not the view of Rodchenko, nor that of many of his contemporaries. As Solomon-Godeau points out, 'the ability to perceive a Rodchenko photograph or a Lissitzky photomontage as their contemporaries did is lost to us as though it were centuries separating us from their images'.[17] In particular, treating the individual works simply as art and removing the works from their contemporary context, ignores the social rationale that was the driving force for the creation of the work.[18]

In an era that takes literacy almost for granted, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend that in many of the countries that comprised the new Soviet Union and even parts of western Europe, the bulk of the population was agrarian and illiterate. For them the photograph and photomontage simply continued the centuries-old tradition of the historiated tympanum and grand mosaics of the church.

In Germany, the end of the war saw an increase in the unrestricted flow of ideas from abroad, in particular from Russia and America. In the period up to the installation of the National Socialist government in 1933, there was an increasing liberalism in German thought and expression, both in the arts and in popular culture. Rodchenko had already made a profound impact in the art worlds of both France and Germany with his 1925 installation of a typical Soviet Workers' Club in the Soviet Pavilion at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels in Paris. Three years later, El Lissitzky's vast montage environment exemplifying the role of design in Soviet publishing, shown at the International Press Exhibition *(Pressa)* in Cologne in 1928, was to have a lasting influence in both artistic and commercial design fields.

The political climate in both Germany and the Soviet Union after 1918 saw a major expansion in the field of mass communication. In part this was driven by governments seeking to consolidate their power, and in part by a demand by the general public for information. Hardt argues that it was a time of major cultural shift from a tradition of the printed word to image or image with text.[19] However, this does not take adequate account of the impact of the newly arrived public broadcasting in driving the pace of this shift.[20] In Germany, the public demand for timely news, now encouraged by radio, forced German newspapers to illustrate their daily news.[21] Radio seized the imagination of the general public and popular magazines provided directions for the enthusiast to build their own 'radio detector' sets. Stepanova, writing in 1927, recalled that Rodchenko had four wireless sets in his studio, all hand built, and that 'we listened to wireless broadcasts all the time, from 12 through 2am'.[22]

The period from 1920 to October 1929, referred to by many as Germany's Golden Twenties, saw the emergence of a new mass consumerism that transcended the old social classes. Centred in and effectively led from Berlin, the most important vehicles for this new culture were illustrated magazines, films, records and, from 1923, radio.[23] At a popular level, the thirst for American culture in Berlin was manifest in the craze for jazz and African-American music. In the field of publishing it was the American use of illustration in daily newspapers. As Weise notes, it is important to clarify German terminology regarding newspapers. While most weekly publications included the word *Zeitung* (newspapers), they were, in fact, *Zeitschriften* (periodicals or magazines).[24] Unlike other countries, especially America, topical photographic reporting in Germany in the early twenties was confined to the *Zeitschriften*.

German newspapers of the period suffered from major technical constraints. Few, if any, German daily newspapers were illustrated; indeed it was not until 1930 that German newspapers began producing their own photographic printing blocks. Moreover, German newspapers lacked a timely source of illustrations, most obtaining their illustrations from external block engravers or picture agencies, while few editorial offices had pictorial archives that could provide a source of illustrative material for their stories.[25] The dependence on picture agencies also removed a degree of journalistic control over the images from the editors, unlike the situation in either America or Britain.

Among the leading innovative German newspapers was the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung (BIZ)*, the flagship

of the Ullstein group, edited in this period by Kurt Korff. Korff established a reputation for high-quality reproduction of photographs, outstanding photo-reportages and serials by successful writers.[26] Korff had also gained a reputation for encouraging new talent both literary and photographic, though few of the latter, apart from Erich Salomon, were discovered by him and few, including Salomon, came from the ranks of professional photographers.[27] Among the significant articles featured in *BIZ* was Thomas Mann's essay on photography, *The world is beautiful*, which became an appendix to Renger-Patzch's book of photographs of the same title.

The great competitor for the *BIZ* was the *Münchner Illustrierte Presse* **(***MIP***).** In 1927 the young Hungarian, Stefan Lorant, became the new editor in Berlin for *MIP*. Originally a stills photographer for the movie industry in Hungary, Lorant went first to Vienna, later moving to Berlin as second cameraman before becoming a journalist and photographer.[28] His skill with layout of text and illustration and his rapport with photographers rapidly saw the editorial centre of *MIP* move from Munich to Berlin and *Münchner Illustrierte* challenge *BIZ* for leadership among German newspapers. Both Korff and Lorant fostered and encouraged the growing body of non-professionally trained photographers whose concern was the recording of every day events as a coherent story and who established the basis of modern photojournalism.

The concept of defamiliarisation was rapidly adopted by many leading German photographers.[29] By 1930, the attention to the frame, diagonal composition, vertical view-point, and extreme close-up in portraiture and object photography had become commonplace in the German press, advertising, and photographic literature. Yet these forms had become radically changed from their Soviet origins. While Rodchenko and Moholy-Nagy both used images shot from radio towers, for Rodchenko the tower was 'a symbol of collective effort', for Moholy and other German photographs such images were symbols of urbanism, 'a demonstrative enthusiasm for lifts, jazz and
radio towers.'[30]

The rapid spread of Soviet films, firstly to Germany, and then German films to England had a profound effect of contemporary British artists. The Soviets and the Germans had enthusiastic supporters among British artistic circles. Bernard Shaw opened the 1930 exhibition of *Ogonëk* photographs in London in 1930 and is shown admiring a copy of the English edition of *USSR in Construction* in the November 1933 edition.[31] Mellor notes the impact of films such as *Turksib* and Kauffmann's *Spring* on English artists and poets such as Isherwood and Stephen Spender. In perhaps the most direct reference to the influence of Soviet films on contemporary photography in Britain, Humphrey Spender viewed *Spring* as a compendium of images that could serve as models for photographs.[32] Mellor quotes the view of EO Hoppé, who frequently worked in Germany during this period that 'the movies have saved photography from itself.'[33]

At both an artistic and a political level, the influence of France in British affairs had waned following the French occupation of the Ruhr, while there was growing admiration for the Weimar government and all things German. Indeed there was significant photographic interchange between Germany and Britain at this time. For example the German photographer, Erich Salomon undertook extensive work for the British journal *The Graphic*, which was significant for the development of photojournalism in that country, influencing the work of English photographers such as Humphrey Spender. Similarly, Hoppé became favoured by the German left, being praised by the radical left critic Peter Panter for his acuteness.[34]

Yet there was significant initial opposition to this new style of photography by the English photographic establishment which still revered the Pictorialist idiom. Editorials in both *Photography* and *The British Journal* of *Photography* were openly hostile to the exhibition of German Advertising Photographs which was shown at the Camera Club in London in early 1930.[35] Yet even this opposition was to be short lived and by 1932 the Royal Photographic Society had acknowledged the new directions in advertising and their debt to Soviet film.

The major vehicle for the dissemination of the new German style of photography in Britain, apart from exhibition, was in the increasing availability of photo-books and international photographic journals such as *Photographie* at least until 1933.[36] By 1932 images by nearly all of the leading German photographers had been reproduced in British journals ranging from *Architectural Review* to *Commercial Art* and *The Times*.[37] Despite the impact of German photographic styles on British artists, it was the influence of these styles on British

advertising practice, documentary film techniques, epitomised by *The Night Mail*,[38] and photo-journalism that had the greatest cultural impact.

With the rise of the National Socialists in Germany in 1930, the dissemination of the new style of German photography to France, Britain and America became even more direct with the emigration of many of its leading exponents. Stefan Lorant emigrated to Britain in 1934, becoming editor of *Weekly Illustrated,* the first popular illustrated magazine in England. Felix Mann, Kurt Hutton and Bill Brandt were among photographers who fled to England, while Ilse Bing, Gyula Halász (Brassaï), André Kertész and Germaine Krull went firstly to Paris before emigrating to America.

The end of the First World War saw a surge in number of artists settling in Paris, then seen as a principal focus of avant-garde art. On the one hand, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire marked a surge in the number of artists from Eastern and Central Europe while on the other there was a resurgence of artists from America settling in Paris. As Kennel points out, the emerging wave of anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiment aroused by these migrations seems not to have extended to foreign photographers living and working in Paris.[39]

Many of these photographers, both expatriate and émigré, came well versed in the latest techniques and styles of photography, while others embraced photography upon their arrival in Paris often as a means of survival that required no language skills or formal education.[40] Foreign photographers soon made their mark in all forms of photography in Paris,[41] but it was in specialist photo-books and the illustrated press that saw the greatest contributions by foreign photographers.[42] Journals such as *Vu*,[43] *Minotaur, Art et Médecine*, and *Regards*, with imaginative and innovative French editors and designers emerged providing further outlets for the images of both French and foreign photographers.

Unlike northern Europe, the response to the new form of photography was much more muted in Italy. Politically, the country had moved to the extreme right after the war with Mussolini's Fascist party coming to power in 1922. Here, as in Germany, the veteran soldier formed a new social class, exerting a profound political and social influence. Newspapers, even those with monarchist leanings, supported the regime, while radio, first appearing in 1924, was under the control of the fascist Costanzo Ciano, later to be linked by family ties directly to Mussolini.[44] As Schwartz notes thirty-six per cent of the population were illiterate while fifty per cent worked the land, and to consolidate its hold, the fascist regime 'made abundant use of more anodine images, ones unlikely to be charged with such cultural and strictly photographic references'.[45]

Among the small community of photographic cognoscenti in Italy there were adherents to both the new forms and the old Pictorialist style. The designs of Rodchenko and El Lissitzky formed the basis for posters and photomontages in the works of Achile Bologna and Bruno Munari and Marcello Nizzoli, but now supporting the fascist government.[46] Contemporary photojournalism in Italy was best exemplified by the work of Lamberti Sorrentino in *Tempo* and the images, mainly by Longanesi, which appeared in the weekly *Omnibus*. However, Colombo and Sontag argue that cultural short-sightedness of the regime on the one hand and a traditional view that literary journalism should prevail over the 'documentary truth' of the photograph on the other meant that Italy did not produce the same high level of photojournalism found in other parts of Europe, apart from the purely propaganda imagery of the government.[47]

Some brief mention must also be made of the utilisation of the new forms of photography for purely propaganda purposes, in particular by the Soviets on the left and the fascist governments of Germany and Italy on the right but subsequently throughout the world, including Australia. As already mentioned, the Soviets under Lunacharsky had early recognised the value of photography. Similarly, the Italian fascists recognised the value of photography as an easily manipulated art for the masses. Germany extolled its technical excellence in producing the 35 mm camera and exhorted 'every German should collaborate in buying a camera'.[48]

Every major political party in Weimar Germany had the support of at least one newspaper and illustrated weekly, ranging from *Beobachter* supporting the National Socialists to *Arbiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* (*AIZ*), the principal left-wing publication established in 1925. The genesis of such propaganda photography may be said to lie in the exhibition *Twenty four hours in the life of the Filippov family*, a group of some eighty images depicting the life of a Soviet worker family that toured Vienna, Prague and Berlin in 1931. The whole exhibition was republished that year in *AIZ.* Several months later *AIZ* published a German version, *Die deutschen Filipows*, produced by a workers'

left: Cover of *A-I-Z* no. 38 'Twenty four hours in the life of the Filippov Family' 1931 Research Library, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

right: Cover of *A-I-Z* no 48 'The German Filipovs' 1931 Research Library, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

collective in Berlin that contrasted sharply the life of German workers with the 'utopian' life in the Soviets.

Riefenstahl, Wolff and others used the same techniques to lionise German sporting achievements in both film and photo-reportage while the same models would be used more overtly in publications like *Die Neue Linie* and later in the Wehrmacht journal *Signal*.[49] Almost immediately the model was adopted by French journals including *Match* and *L'Illustration*, in England by *Picture Post* and America with *Life* and later *Look*.[50]

The use of the photo-book for overt propaganda is a phenomenon of the 1930s with the Soviets again deriving the basic principles from their earlier film techniques – photomontage, rapid cutting and the layering of image on image to produce a dense visual effect. The design work of El Lissitzky, Stepanova and Rodchenko appears in many of the major productions of this period.[51] With the best of its photographers and book designers having left Germany by this time, German examples such as *Deutschland, Volk und Reich Verlag 1936* are more prosaic affairs. By 1933 the techniques had travelled to all parts of the world and similar 'patriotic' photo-books become common.

AD Coleman has made the interesting observation that 'by the early decades of the twentieth century, a considerable number of its serious practitioners (photographers) – more than statistics would project as likely – were of Jewish descent.[52] Certainly this seems true of the inter-war period in Europe. While Coleman offers no further observations on this point indeed, statistics aside, it might reflect no more than coincidence and that photography had not had time to develop a caste structure as was found in other trades and professions before the First World War. Perhaps of greater interest would be an analysis of the role of Jews in contemporary publishing of newspapers, illustrated magazines and photo-books in Europe, Britain and America.

This surely is only one facet of the problem still to be explored. Conventional wisdom has the origins of modern photojournalism being founded in Germany in the 1920s, yet without doubt it is émigré photographers, publishers and entrepreneurs from Central and Eastern Europe who make the most significant contributions to this entire field. In particular, it is Hungarian émigrés who seem to have the greatest single impact after the Soviet practitioners. Aigner, Brassaï, Kepes, Kertész and Munkácsi among the photographers; Moholy-Nagy the principal theorist, photographer and designer; Stefan Lorant as the pre-eminent editor, while the two major French picture agencies of the period, Keystone and Rapho, were founded by Hungarian émigrés moving from Germany to France.

Photographic technology also played a major role in the evolution of this new style of photography, particularly as it affected the fields of documentary and fashion photography, firstly in Germany but soon after in Russia, Europe and America. The development of miniature cameras in Germany in the early 1920s provided the technical means necessary for the new photographic forms. With the introduction in 1924 of the Ermanox, a small camera with a very fast lens, candid low light photography became possible.[53] 1925 saw the introduction of the Leica camera at the Spring Trade Fair in Leipzig.[54] While not the first 35 mm camera produced, the Leica camera system rapidly led to the domination of the 35 mm format in most fields of photography and pioneered a new approach to documentary photography that lasted until the introduction of the Japanese Nikon F single lens reflex in June 1959. By the mid 1930s German camera technology was the dominant force both in 35 mm and medium format.

While it is difficult to isolate any one factor underlying the popularity of the Leica, for example, Zeiss lenses of the period were optically superior to their Leitz counterparts, the Leica phenomenon rapidly spread through Europe, then America and Japan, greatly aided by Ernst Leitz and its agents. The 1930s saw a considerable volume of independent publications using Leica images, and actively promoting the camera. These were not confined to Germany, with many others coming from Japan, America, England and the rest of Europe. Major periodicals devoted to the Leica commenced in Germany in 1931, America in 1932, and England in January 1935, while Leitz-sponsored annual international exhibitions of photography toured extensively in England and America.

Despite initial technical disadvantages resulting from the coarse grain of contemporary film, the Leica's compactness, inconspicuous operation, and large film load produced a camera that was, for the first time, an 'extension of the eye', ideally suited to the emerging needs of the new breed of 'non-photographic' photographers. Moreover, the wide range of accessories available for the Leica and, subsequently other German 35 mm cameras such as the Contax and the Exakta, saw the rapid spread of 35 mm into many fields of photography hitherto thought to be the preserve of large format cameras.

The significance of the Leica and the newly introduced Zeiss Contax for the photographic industry can perhaps be gauged by the decision of the American giant, Eastman Kodak, to enter the European market. Acquiring the firm of Dr August Nagel in Stuttgart in late 1931, Kodak brought to the market its own 35 mm camera, the Retina, and, more importantly, a 35 mm daylight-loading single-use cassette. Both designed by Dr Nagel, the cassette was engineered to be used in Leica and Contax cameras as well as the Retina and rapidly became the industry standard for all manufacturers of 35 mm film.

This perceived dominance of the future of photography is further illustrated by the decision of the German manufacturer, Agfa in 1932, to introduce their revolutionary lenticular colour film in 35 mm format and the subsequent decision by Kodak, in 1935, to market the new Kodachrome still film firstly in 35 mm format. The publishing industry kept pace with the technology with the publication of Anton Baumann's *Das Farbige Leica Buch* by Knorr & Hirth in Munchen in 1937, the first book with colour plates engraved directly from 35 mm transparencies.

Another measure of the dominance of firstly Leica and secondly the 35 mm format can be seen in the decision of the Soviet government to commence production of exact copies of the Leica II at the FED Commune, the first being produced in October 1932, six months after the release of the Leica II in Leipzig.

While the German government had mandated in 1936 that all press photography had to use the 35 mm format, the adoption of the Leica and its contemporaries by photographers in the rest of Europe and America ensured the dominance of 35 mm format until the coming of the digital era more than fifty years later.

The photographic image has dominated all aspects of human society since the middle of the twentieth century; indeed it is almost inconceivable for contemporary societies to contemplate a world devoid of such images. The impact on political thought, economies and social structures of removing photographic images from journalism, education, advertising and fashion to name but some areas of society is probably incalculable. Yet the all pervasive nature of photography in modern society arose from the destruction wrought by the First World War and the rise of the Soviet socialist state.

Robert Deane
Honorary Researcher
Photography, National Gallery of Australia

CARL SCHUNEMANN, Bremen: Cover for an advertising folder

MODERN PHOTO-GRAPHY 1937-8

EDITED BY C. G. HOLME

LONDON: THE STUDIO LIMITED, 44 LEICESTER SQUARE
NEW YORK: STUDIO PUBLICATIONS INC., 381 FOURTH AV.

left: Frontispiece of *Modern photography* 1937–38 Research Library, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

right: *Das farbige Leicabuch*, 1937 property of the author

Notes

1 Petter Österlund, *USSR in construction*, exhibition catalogue, Sweden: Sundsvall Museum of Photography, 2006.

2 Valerie Lloyd, *Soviet photography. An age of realism*, New York: Greenwich House, 1984, p. 9.

3 Grigory Shudakov, *Pioneers of Soviet photography*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1983, p. 9 et seq.

4 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'The armed vision disarmed. Radical formalism from weapon to style', in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The contest of meaning: critical histories of photography*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989, p. 89.

5 Alexandr Rodchenko, 'Trends in contemporary photography', in Varvara Rodchenko and Alexandr Lavrentiev, *The Rodchenko family workshop*, London: The Serpentine Gallery, 1989, p. 66.

6 As Solomon-Godeau points out 'the making strange of the familiar' *ostranenie* was developed for literary purposes by Victor Shklovsky in 1916. Solomon-Godeau, p. 86.

7 Quoted in Valerie Lloyd (ed.), *Soviet photography. An age of realism*, New York: Greenwich House, 1984, p. 12.

8 Hanno Hardt, 'Constructing photojournalism in Weimar Germany 1928–33', *Communication review*, 1:3, 1996. The influence of Vertov can be seen in the comparison of his *The man with the camera*, portraying the daily life of an ordinary Moscow citizen, with Siodmak's *People on Sunday.*

9 Hardt.

10 I am indebted to Dr Erika Wolf for providing copies of her papers on the origins of Soviet photojournalism and the provision of illustrations for this paper. Erika Wolf, 'The context of early Soviet photojournalism', *Zimmerli Journal*, Fall 2004, no.2, p. 108.

11 Wolf, p. 109.

12 Wolf suggests that this idea might have originated with Mikhail Koltsov but passed to *Nashi dostizheniia* because of paper shortages that might not affect the State publishing house. Erika Wolf, 'When photographs speak, to whom do they talk? The origins and audience of *SSR nab stroike [USSR in Construction]*', *Left History,* 6.2, 2001, p. 57.

13 Maksim Gor'kii quoted in Wolf, p. 59.

14 Wolf, p. 64.

15 Wolf, p. 61.

16 The layout of several of these reportages is illustrated in Robert Lebeck and Bodo von Dewitz, *Kiosk. A history of photojournalism 1839–1973*, Gottigen: Steidel Verlag, 2001.

17 Solomon-Godeau, p. 85.

18 That social rationale, admittedly later a political necessity, enabled Rodchenko, Alpert and other Soviet photographers, while extolling the 'joy in the industrialisation of the land of the Soviets' (Rodchenko, *Novyi Lef*, 1928, no. 11) through projects such as the White Sea canal, to ignore that they were built with slave labour at massive human cost.

19 Hardt. However, while the Fascist government was quick to use this new form of photography for overt propaganda, there was not the same adoption of photojournalism in the contemporary Italian press.

20 The British Broadcasting Company commenced operation in 1922, becoming the BBC in 1926. Radio broadcasts commenced in France from the Eiffel Tower also in 1922, with Germany and Czechoslovakia the following year and Italy in 1924. The broadcasts of news events by radio had a profound effect on the timelines and editorial policies of newspapers, especially in Germany.

21 Bernd Weise, 'Photojournalism from the First World War to the Weimar Republic', in Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas (eds), *German photography 1870–1970. Power of a medium*, Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997, p. 60.

22 Varvara Fedorovna Stepanova, 'From my reminiscences. In our studio (1927)' in Varvara Rodchenko and Alexandr Lavrentiev, *The Rodchenko family workshop,* London: The Serpentine Gallery, 1989, pp. 22–23.

23 Heinrich Winkler, 'Images of revolution and the Weimar Republic', in Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse, and Karin Thomas (eds), *German Photography 1870–1970. Power of a Medium*, Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997. p. 44.

24 Weise, p. 57.

25 Weise, p. 58.

26 Tim N. Gidal, *Modern photojournalism. Origin and evolution, 1910–1933*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973, p. 16. At the same time both Ullstein and Atlantis Verlag pioneered the *Lander, Volk und Reisen* travel books popularised by Martin Hurlimann and Paul Wolff.

27 It is noticeable that most of the photographers of this period responsible for photo-reportages came from non-photographic backgrounds and training. Among many examples were. Salomon, the physician Dr Paul Wolff, Hans Baumann (Felix H. Mann) trained as a journalistic draftsman; Martin Munkácsi trained as a painter while Gidal trained as an academic economist.

28 Gidal notes that Lorant's first article 'Behind the scenes at the Haller review' published in *Das Magazin* in 1925 lists Lorant as both author and photographer. Gidal, p. 18.

29 The 1929 exhibition *Film und Foto* organised by the Stuttgart Artists Federation was the most influential show of contemporary modern photography from Europe and America. Moholy Nagy encouraged Franz Roh to publish 76 of the images in a book *foto-auge/oeil et photo/photo-eye.* The radical nature of the images and Roh's essay led to the Nazi's destroying all remaining copies of the book and briefly imprisoning Roh.

30 Solomon-Godeau, p. 91.

31 Erika Wolf, 'The context of early Soviet photojournalism, 1923–1932', *Zimmerli Journal*, Fall 2004, no. 2, p. 114.

32 David Mellor, 'London-Berlin-London: a cultural history. The reception and influence of the New German photography in Britain 1927–1933', in David Mellor, *Germany. The New Photography 1927-33. Documents and Essays Selected and Edited by David Mellor*, London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, p. 116. The Film Society, established at the New Gallery in 1925, was an important vehicle for the showing of German and Soviet films in London.

33 Mellor, p. 116. Hoppé also had an Australian connection, travelling throughout the country in 1930. The resulting images were published in EO Hoppé, *The fifth continent*, London: Simpkin Marshall, 1931.

34 Mellor, p. 122.

35 *The British Journal of Photography*, 15 August 1930, p. 496.

36 Among the most influential were Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten*; Karl Blossfeldt's *Urformen der kunst* which was published in English translation *Art forms in nature* by Zwemmers in 1929; Renger-Patzch's *Die Welt is Schon*; Graff's *Es kommt der neue Fotograf* and Franz Roh's *foto-auge/oeil et photo/photo-eye.*

37 Mellor, p. 123.

38 *The Night Mail* was made in 1936 by the General Post Office Film Unit directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright. A poem by WH Auden was specially written for it, as was music by Benjamin Britten.

39 Sarah Kennel, 'Fantasies of the street: emigré photography in interwar Paris', *History of Photography,* 29, no. 3 Autumn (2005): p. 288.

40 Kennel, p. 288.

41 Bouqueret discusses the role and impact of many of these and provides bibliographies of some of the lesser figures in Christian Bouqueret, *Des années folles aux années noires. La nouvelle vision photographique en France 1920–1940*, Paris, Marval, 1997, pp. 269–79.

42 Notably Germaine Krull's *Etudes de nu* and *Metal*; Laure Albin-Guillot's *Micrographie décorative;* Fargue and Parry's *Banalité*. Moi Ver, Ilya Ehrenburg and Brassaï produced photographic visions of Paris that defined the city for native and foreigner alike for decades to come.

43 The use of photomontage in *Vu* can be seen in Robert Lebeck and Bodo von Dewitz, Kiosk. *A History of Photojournalism 1839–1973*, Göttigen: Steidl Verlag, 2001, pp. 174–5.

44 Angelo Schwartz, 'Fascist Italy', in Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé, *A History of Photography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 140.

45 Schwartz, p. 136.

46 Schwartz, p. 136.

47 Cesare Colombo and Susan Sontag *Italy: One hundred years of photography*, Florence: Alinari, 1988, p. 105.

48 Goebbels at the opening of the Berlin Photography Fair, *Die Kamera* in 1933 quoted in Rolf Sachsse, 'Germany: The Third Reich', in Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé, *A History of Photography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 150.

49 Riefenstahl's famous film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics *Olympia* and Paul Wolff's *Was ich bei den Olympischen Spielen 1936 sah* were seen by contemporaries as models of photographic style. Riefenstahl's *Schonheit im Olympischen Kampf*, illustrated with stills from the film, was far less successful as a photo-book.

50 By the time of the first edition of *Life*, the fore-runner of all these publications, *USSR in construction*, was in its seventh year of publication. An Australian link to the original Soviet model is to be found in the images of Edward Cranstone, particularly those documenting workers of the Australian Civil Construction Corps during the Second World War. Cranstone was particularly influenced by Soviet films shown in Melbourne by the Australia–Soviet Friendship League prior to the war. Martyn Jolly, 'Edward Cranstone, photographer', *Photofile*, Autumn, 1984, pp. 1–4.

51 Examples of these including *Moscow under reconstruction* designed by Stepanova and Rodchenko and *The USSR builds for socialism* designed by El Lissitzky are illustrated in Gerry Badger and Martin Parr *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2004.

52 AD Coleman, 'No pictures: Some thoughts on Jews in photography', in Anna Auer and Kunsthalle Wein, *Übersee. Flucht und emigration Österreichischer fotografen* 1920–1940, p. 28.

53 Exemplified by the political documentary photography of Dr Erich Salomon, the small Ermanox suffered from its use of single glass plates. The introduction of the Leica in 1925 made it uncompetitive.

54 The Leica camera, designed by Oscar Barnack (1879–1936), was manufactured by Ernst Leitz GmbH in Wetzlar.

left: **Edward Cranstone**
Worker with a drill 1942–1944
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, gift of Edward Cranstone 1983

right: **Sievers Wolfgang**
AMP and Mobil buildings, *Melbourne* 1960 printed 1982
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1982

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back cover: **Aleksandr Rodchenko** *Mother* 1924 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

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