

VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION  
AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF  
ARTISTIC ACTION WITH REFERENCE  
TO THE TWO GREAT WARS.

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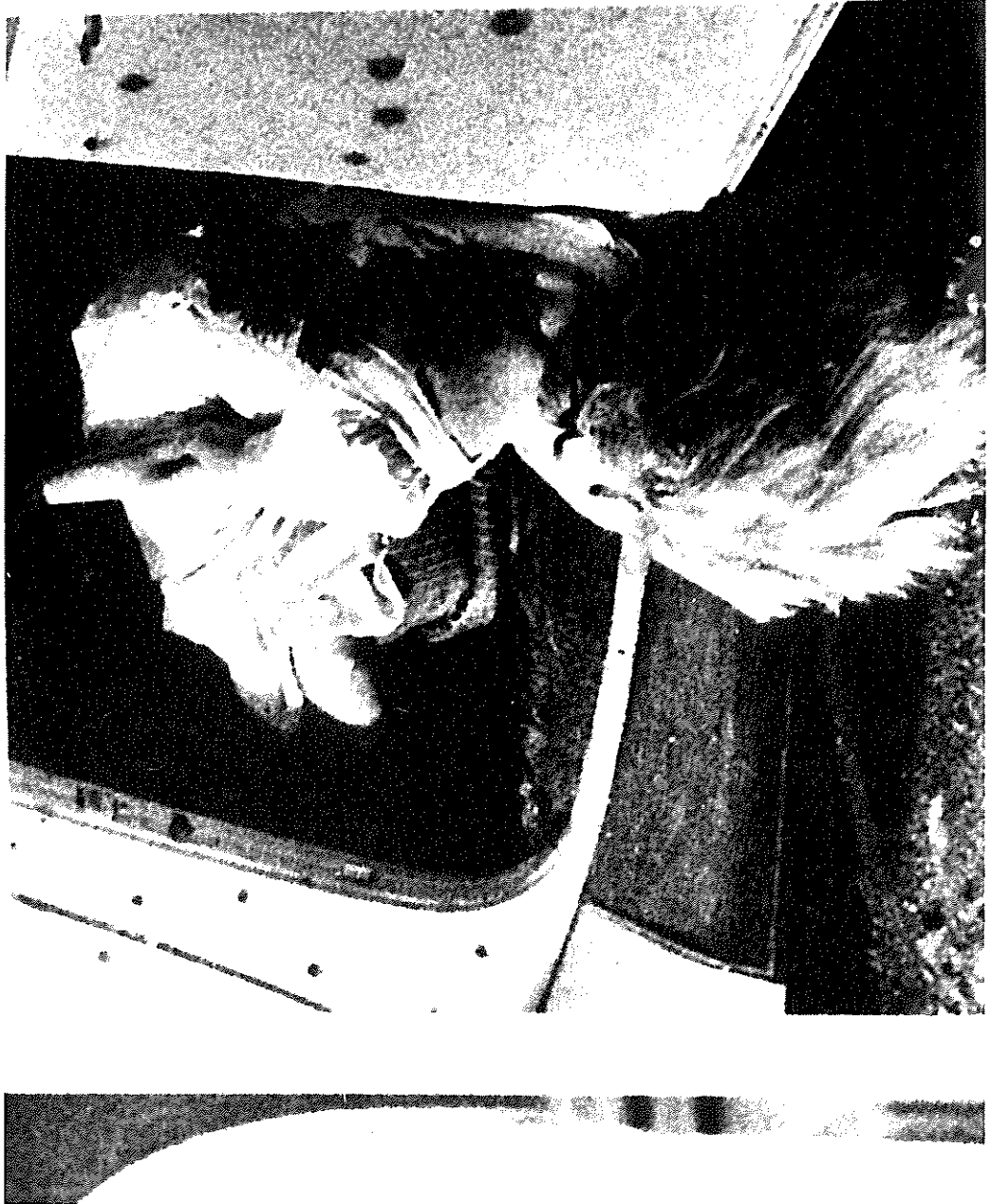
BETWEEN NIGHT AND DAY by the author. 1971.  
(Oil on hardboard. 3'X5').

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

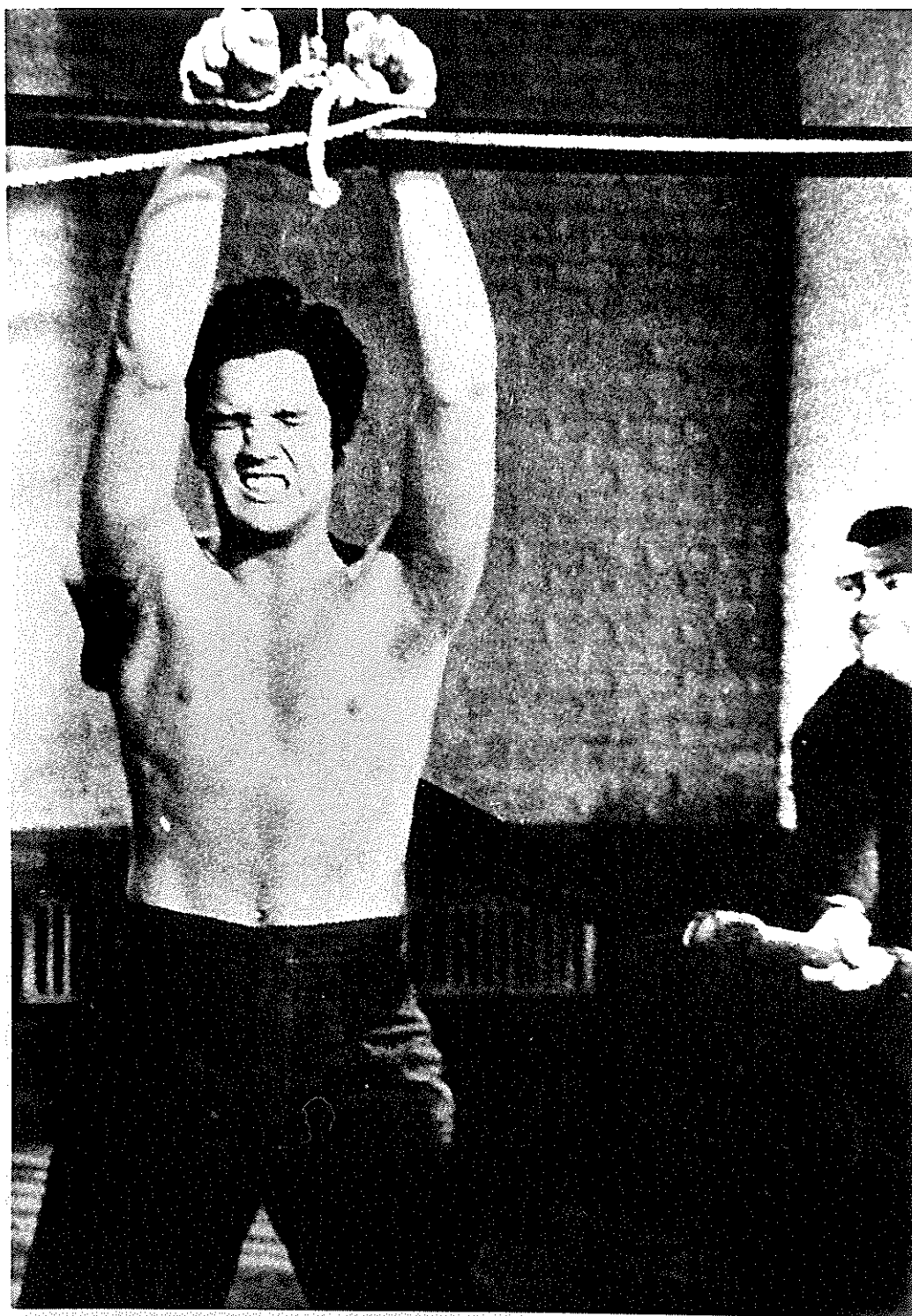
A well known fact about any work of art of any significance is its power to upset current conventions and disturb certain of our normal emotional patterns. The artist frequently achieves this by deliberately expressing emotions that are violent. There is nothing, however, new about the existence of violence in the arts, a large number of works in the history of art being painted with blood. One has only to think of the many battles, rapes, murders, martyrdoms and catastrophes that have been the subjects of many great paintings. Since the beginning of this century, and especially since the work of the Impressionists, in which violence is entirely excluded, violence has taken on a role of great importance and has been used to a greater or lesser extent by artists and group movements. It would appear initially that there are two main reasons in this century for the use of violence: one as a means of using it as a weapon against the academic and avant-garde in the arts, which in turn reflects attitudes found in society, and secondly as a direct reflection of the corrupt society in which we live. This is not to say that the twentieth century is an age in which more violence and sadism is found than in any

other era of history, but never has it received so much publicity. I do not believe that man has changed so much over the years, but it is my view that the apparent increase in this century is due to the vast changes in communications. It is due to the publicity it receives that violence has in recent times become a focal point, with murders, assassinations and war part of our daily lives. Violence is news, and unfortunately, because of this, many artists and especially the ones concerned in the newer arts have taken to exploiting it purely for financial gain. One has only to think of the many gangsters and gunmen who inhabit the cinema screen. Many of these films contain no artistic ideas whatsoever, and are conceived by people whose sole aim is financial gain. "Look at the flow of gangster films and hasty re-issues following the box-office returns of Bonnie and Clyde" (Armstrong, 1969). It is interesting to note that Penn's Bonnie and Clyde was a success not only for the violence shown, but also because of the reaction of the characters to violence, and the interaction between characters occasioned by violence. THESE ARE REAL PEOPLE. With this existing social awareness of violence, and with the exploitation of it by the commercialists and the small-time hustlers, violence has become - to take only one form of

communication, the Cinema - an integral part of entertainment. In defence of violence psychologists have put forward the proposition that seeing it on the screen, for example, does provide an outlet for ones inner suppressions. This idea is also to be found in what is being done in the name of contemporary painting and what has come to be known as the "happening". In London in 1966, and New York in 1968, the "Destruction in Art Symposium" was held, with Nitsch disemboweling a slaughtered sheep on stage and pouring the entrails and blood over a girl, with the animal corpse finally being nailed to a cross. The theory behind this 'art action' is nothing more than the psychologist's defence:- that man's irrational forces will not explode into violence but rather will be subdued by this insight. In other words this explanation suggests the idea of escapism whereas it is well known that in art there is virtually no escape, for a true work of art asks questions and in so doing makes us question ourselves - the world is constructed like a question. The audience in a successful work will be repulsed by violence, when it is correctly depicted on the screen, that is, when the characters involved are real people and not cardboard figures, and repulsion is certainly not a safety valve. Ralf Ortiz's 'Life and Death of Henny Penny' of 1968 in



FAYE DUNAWAY in BONNIE AND CLYDE.  
(Armstrong, 1969).

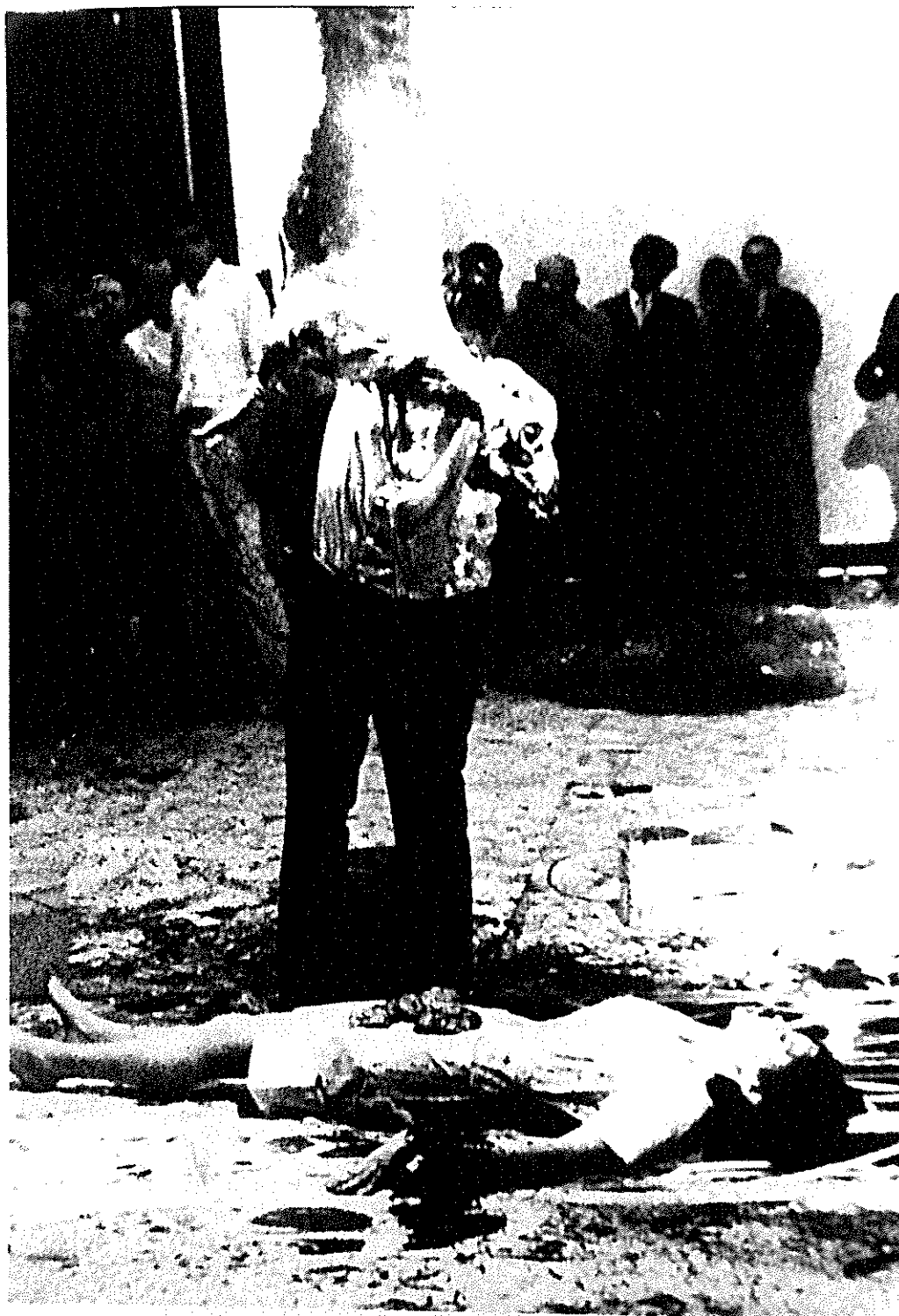


ELVIS PRESLEY in JAILHOUSE ROCK.  
(Armstrong, 1969).



New York church was what he called a 'symbolic ritual' in the name of destructive art, with the idea that 'ritualised violence will prevent improvised violence' (Willard, 1969). This is not unlike the exhibits found in the Brauhaus Winter Exhibition of Cologne Dada of 1920, but unlike Henny Penny those exhibits were done in the name of anti-art, Dada, and the outcome of the provoked violence was well understood by Ernst, who actually provided a wooden object and a hatchet for the public to give vent to their feelings.

Violence, therefore, in a work of art when properly used and when the work is serious, is both a means of repulsing and provoking; it plays a very real and definite part. Art should have the power to disarm us whether we like it or not and to make us react emotionally. It does, however, - to take the cinema once more as an example, - become dangerous when it is related to characters who have little or no involvement - the type of film that is concerned with action and not people. This kind of film is not an art form and does not reflect the world in which we live. It is violence - for violence's sake. Murder here can have no meaning for its audience and it is the class of film which justifies the cry that screen violence encourages its



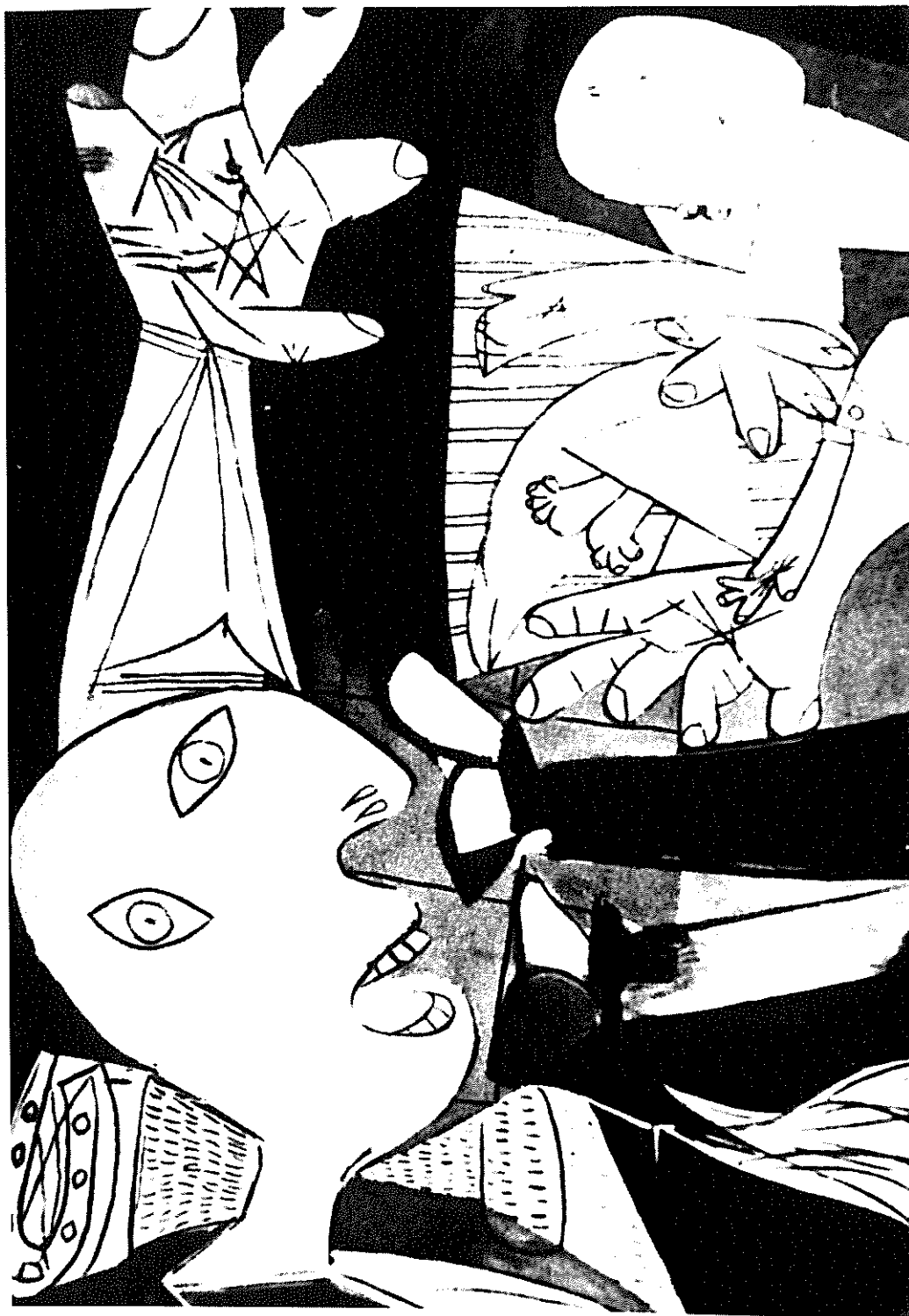
HERMAN NITSCH POURS BLOOD AND ENTRAILS FROM  
A SLAUGHTERED SHEEP ONTO A SUPINE GIRL.  
(Willard, 1969).



LIFE AND DEATH OF HENNY PENNY by Ralf Ortiz.  
(Washington, 1969).

spectators into enacting what they see before them.

'Violence in life is mirrored by violence in art' (Willard, 1969), art that is 'Bonnie and Clyde' and 'Guernica'. But is not art also a questioning of the existing culture in which it lives and reflects? Does it not advocate a change in the existing culture, and by this advocacy cause destruction in order to construct? Art in the nineteenth century could expose economic and social conflicts which were brought to light through its analysis of society in a largely capitalist world. It could in the nineteenth century apply itself to the dialectic and perform a definite constructive role. However these conflicts which it did expose, are no longer to be found in the twentieth century for the classes that were involved in these conflicts have become integrated into a general society - a producer consumer society. More and more passively these classes, which were in the last century imbued with a spirit of defiance, consent to take part in what has been called 'the game of production and consumption', and have become a docile element in the world today. 'This society has closed in on itself on its own constant workings, and no longer fears that there may arise within itself or from itself the least cause for change'. (Cass



GUERNICA (DETAIL) by Pablo Picasso. 1937. (Willard, 1969).

'Art and Confrontation', 1970). Unquestionably romanticism was born in the nineteenth century as a revolt against authority and reflecting the violences of the French Revolution, and according to Malraux from the end of the eighteenth century onwards artists formed themselves into exclusive compact clans from which they launched attacks against the culture of which they disapproved. This is specifically a 'political' explanation with the visual arts against the cultural standards of their time, and art assumes the role of a destroyer of bourgeois values. In contrast to this according to Wyndham Lewis: 'the nineteenth century painters were not a political sect, but a community of painters: the explosive nature of their pictures was not destined to blast society, but to destroy the pictures of the school which preceeded theirs.' (Lewis, 1954). Both these ideas have merit and the truth lies perhaps mid-way between the two. For although the artist can be aware of the political situation, and certainly many of them in the nineteenth century had a low regard for the republics and empires that followed the Napoleonic era, he is also involved in developing new methods of pictorial expression. Also with the 'war' between the 'studios' - Classicism against Romanticism - a situation did nevertheless exist in the nineteenth centu

in which the artistic spirit could live.

However in an enclosed or totalitarian world where nothing exists outside itself and all its ends are found within itself - a world which 'produces in order to consume what it produces', the artistic spirit and therefore the human spirit which is a volatile thing cannot live, and it therefore tears itself away in order to take up a position outside the world. (Cassau, 1970). It is from this outside position that it can fulfil a function that is both violent and critical, and only with an act of violence can it initially hope to break back into the world from which it has been estranged. Art must destroy before it can construct. 'The primary task of the artist is to destroy, to suppress; the rest is, at the most, addenda. In any event, what is negative - destruction - can be decreed: what is positive construction - cannot'. (Lascault, 'Art and Confrontation' 1970). The worship of material goods and the alienation of man from which we find today is a process which has been growing steadily over the century. Today everything tends to be organized, from the exploitation of labour to the organization of leisure; it is a society of considerable technical perfection created by the bourgeoisie with its triple pillars of hierarchy, species

ization and non-communication, and the mass have adapted to it and are more or less satisfied. It is a situation that has been called 'blocked up' by Alfred Willener. A good example of this we can find in the situation in France during May, 1968, as has been suggested by such writers as Willener and Cassau.

Here there was no question of the economy of Gaullist France being at any crisis point. There was certainly no overwhelming unemployment or poverty, but cultural ruin was definitely on the increase if we take as an example the incapacity of the authorities to build, as was shown by the college at Nanterre. This was a wretched architectural plan for a desolate site in a slum area, an environment which militated against both the emergence and development of life. This monument to culture may be compared to concentration camps set up by certain other regimes in that its effect was to constrict the emergence and development of life. All this was recognised by the few and the only way in which they could bring about an awareness was through shock and provocation and the initial violence administered was indeed similar to that used by the Dadaists of nearly fifty years before. Violence and its various forms was the key to the 'unblocking' of this situation as it had been for Dada and



its situation. This unblocking it must be noted did not have the aim of overcoming so much as arousing the widest possible participation and awareness. All the revolutionary 'ideas' of Dada such as absoluteness, exactness, urgency and immediacy were achieved again in May, 1968 by the practice of saying ANYTHING. Saying anything: 'DADA, DADA, DADA' Manifesto of 1918, 'a howl of jarring colours, interweaving of contraries and all contradictions, grotesques, inconsequences: LIFE.' Dada and May France 1968. To shock the enemy. Destroy and demoralize. Action-life. Spontaneity - 'automatic' words. Moan, mumble, yodel, crow and swear. Time not wasted. Surprise and refuse to explain. Speaking as the tap flows - wild talk. Launching missiles and blowing up. Language - new language. Words - own words - new words. Plough up - destruct - disturb - disorganize. Produce thought in the mouth - splutter, stammer. Read while hopping and jumping - action poetry. Plutôt la vie. Very few Dadaists committed suicide - this is not surrealism. A taste for living - fullness, freedom. 'I always speak of myself because I have no wish to convince others.' (Tzara, Manifeste Dada, 1918). 'We'll claim nothing, demand nothing, we'll take' (wall inscription, great amphitheatre, Sorbonne, 1968).

Sense - senseless - nonsense. Nature - direct like nature. 'I write because its natural, just as I piss, just as I'm ill' (Proclamation sans prétention, Tzara 1931). Sweep clean - destroy - destruct - VIOLENCE.

It has been said that in May, 1968, French cultural history with its art and poetry was perhaps for the first time, if not 'in the streets', at least in the public meeting places, cafes and on the stage, and above all practised in the full sense of the word. A farce? Was Dada a farce? 'Dada was not a farce' (Arp, 1949). To frighten man out of impotence, even by using the strongest possible means, is not a farce. Impotence in man breeds apes and parrots which are the greatest enemies of art. Men seek with reason and logic for the key that will open the gate of mystery and therefore, of life, but these will never 'penetrate to the infinite, peacock - coloured halls, in which the golden flames dance and embrace one another'. (Words of Janco as remembered by Arp, Motherwell, 1967).

Destruction comes first: In order for the new to be, the old must be destroyed by the critical spirit of man. With the revolution that was renaissance humanism and its manifestation of conquering the universe we find th:



POSTERS FROM MAY 1968 - FRANCE.  
(Willener, 1970).

spirit of man in the artistic revolution that was involved with it. It was a discarding of forms in which man was depicted as subordinate to his beliefs. The human spirit rose to create something that had hitherto not existed and it was completely natural that its aspirations should in part derive from a rejection of things, and it is imagination which is the motivating force behind the spirit's aspirations and from which the artist's creation springs. 'IMAGINATION TAKES POWER' was one of the many inscriptions to be found on the wall of the colleges and streets of Paris during May, 1968. It was for Delacroix and Baudelaire the queen of faculties, for in taking power it is itself power, and there is no end to the lengths imagination will go to when confronted by a civilization such as ours. When the critical spirit stops history stands still - mechanic activity can only lead to a full stop. Destruction comes first, whether by pure 'Dada means' or by the creation of new forms. There is nothing old in the Homeric Hymn when Apollo, the young god with the pitiless arrogance of human order, secures his shrine at Delphi. It is by an act of violence, i.e. murder, that he strike down Pytho, a child of Hera, the snake of the goddess who was the guardian of the shrine, and in killing her cries out: 'Now rot here upon the soil that feeds man'. (Scul

1962).

'Isn't the artist's role that of perpetual confrontation, a living example of permanent revolution?' (Rayon, 1970). Correct. But art is not only an aspect of revolt, it is also the creation of an alternative to the world. This is not to say that it transforms the world but according to Camus it does, without altering the world itself it offers an imaginative alternative to it. 'The artist remakes the world after his own fashion' (Hanna, 1958). Once again for Camus it is the imagination which takes power and seeks to transform the world, a world in which the mind can find no logical pattern and recognizes its inability to do so. The realization that intellectual explanations of this world are of no use is one of the most important features of the 'absurd' of which Camus speaks. However it must be seen that the imaginative alternative which the artist offers is not a romanticized art of escape from the world and therefore from the absurd and that art for Camus is to be found at the very point of conflict between the desire for transcendence and the impossibility of transcendence. Art is therefore an act of renunciation by confirmation of the absurd. It is tied up in the world of physical appearances because

it is the stuff he is concerned with but at the same time by rejecting a logical interpretation of appearances shows that he is related to it in a negative way. The artist cannot escape the world but he does simultaneously reject it because of its inadequacies for his ideals. Art, therefore, both denies and extols at the same time. It is by this act of the artist creating a world of forms and ideas with which he can identify himself and which are perhaps more closely related to his own aspirations, that he, the artist, performs an act of destruction - a crime against nature, a destructive act which can be seen as extremely violent when in transcribing the world the artist indulges in what has been called by Stanislas Furmet as 'culpable rivalry' with God. 'This doctrine of replacement and rivalry also reminds one of Malraux. In particular it recalls his remark that the acanthus possesses the shape that man would have given to the artichoke if God had taken his advice' (Cruickshank, 1959).

Another form in which destruction manifests itself in art, is in the physical act of painting. Not only are actual physical marks destroyed, wholly or partially, in order to create new ones, but in some cases the method of applying the paint is done in an energetic and often violent manner. A painter such as Karel Appel, who



WOMEN AND BIRDS by Karel Appel. 1958.  
(Lucie-Smith, 1969).



AFRICAN DAY by the author. 1971.  
(Oil on hardboard. 4'X5').



has called himself a barbarian painting in a barbaric age, is a good example of this. This type of action is found to a large extent in Abstract Expressionism, which is the first post-war art 'movement', and has its origins in the 'automatism' of Surrealism. Jackson Pollock in talking about his later work said: 'When I am in the painting I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted period" that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through'. (Lucie-Smith, 1969). Others who demonstrate this are de Kooning and the Cobra Group with an artist such as Jorn. However, with their interest in direct expression, and frequent use of subconscious fantasy, they do in a sense revive and continue an old tradition - Surrealism.

PART TWO - THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

The First World War was a great shock to Europe - a Europe that had experienced many years of peace. 'And then came down on top of us the greatest war of all time: came Heartbreak House, came Red Revolution, came everything that you would expect to come upon such a long established blank of genteel fatuity'. (Lewis, 1937). This war seemed to come as a logical conclusion to the long-suspected bankruptcy of nineteenth century RATIONALISM and of the bourgeois culture it had animated, and it is not surprising that we find many artists reacting to the war in a positive manner, and even being pro-war in many cases. World War One brought about a crisis in values and also caused physical displacements. For example, Marcel Duchamp goes to New York in 1915 where he was better insulated against the aesthetic tradition of Europe - the tradition of Manet to Cubism. The mood of America at that time was right for the emergence of such an anti-art movement as Dada. Its atmosphere of youth and energy had created such figures as the 'American' boxer-poet Arthur Craven - a proto-Dada hero in France.

The blood-letting in World War I removed both France and England as world powers and destroyed a process that

had been at work since the Holy Roman Empire. From this war America emerged as the heir to Western civilization, however young and bewildered she was at the time. This war marked the end of old Europe, or at least it appeared to do so, and in the revolutionary situations that followed many artists seemed to strive for a new social ideal within which art could demonstrate its 'modernity'. It produced a revolution of the artist's social function and certain men became as much involved with the creation of a new society as with the creation of a new art. Artists were no longer satisfied with reflecting the aims of society; there was now also a desire to create them as well, for example Van Doesburg, El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy. Art began to act as a persuasion technique towards the new society and artists began to address themselves to a mass culture. Thus we find great pride taken in methods of communication and presentation, with typography becoming a main-stream art in the twenties.

But even prior to the war itself certain men realized the stagnation to be found around them in Europe. A man like Wyndham Lewis in England reacted to the situation with 'Vorticism' and the bulky magazine Blast which he edited in 1914-15. Blast and the

movement as such urged with very strong and often violent words nothing less than a rejuvenation of European consciousness, something that would be worthy of a new way of seeing. It expressed an attitude to life and art in a provocative and lively way and was often associated with quarrels and putsches. Other key members associated with Vorticism are Ezra Pound who invented the name a month before the appearance of Blast, together with Gaudier-Brzeska, E. Wadsworth and a number of others whose signatures are to be found on the second Manifesto of the first issue of Blast. 'In ... "Life is the Important thing", the "pure painter snob is exposed, and shown to be a person still under the spell of the French Impressionists, rather than one belonging to the contemporary world. I contrast the creativity of Daumier with the Academic camera that was Degas'. (Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 1939). 'LIFE IS THE IMPORTANT THING' is the all important sentence for understanding Vorticism.

It has been said that with this 'movement' an English outpost was established for the first time in twentieth century art, and that it might have provided a new starting point for a development of art in this century, had it not been cut short by the war. Whatever the out-

come may have been the magazine Blast today has lost very little of its relevance. Vorticism hit hard at the art situation in England, hit with unadulterated extremism at 'Mr Fry with "Post Impressionism"', and has been described by Lewis that 'it was in the nature of a foul blow' (Michel & Fox, 1969). If we look at the two manifestoes the tough approach taken by Lewis and the others becomes evident: 'Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way;' 'We start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set-up violent structure of adolescent clearness between two extremes'; 'We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the same cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours'; 'Mercenaries were always the best troops'; 'We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World'; 'The nearest thing in England to a great traditional French artist, is a great revolutionary English one'. (Michel & Fox, 1969). Once again this was seen as a revolutionary movement with the imagination taking power, and in Lewis' own words: 'for only the revolutionary says invent'. For him all former ages and manners must be dispensed with, and it would be better to dispense with everything than to imitate the past. Lewis was both a Revolutionary and a Traditionalist but



WYNDHAM LEWIS.  
(Lewis, 1937).

always the former came first for him. This movement was thus the blasting of Britain into the modern age.

With the beginning of the Great War the Vorticists, like so many other people, did not fully realize what was about to happen. It looked at first to Lewis and the others that the war was going to prove their contentions. For them the beginning of the war was still a time to shatter the visible world and to build something closer to their own desires. None of them fully recognized the significance of the disaster that was about to overtake them, and it was perhaps only when Lewis found himself in the mud of Passchendaele that he discerned that the community to which he belonged would never be the same again. He realized that the war had drained all the vigour that had existed in people before it began. One of the biggest set-backs for the Vorticists was the death of the volatile Gaudier Brzeska, aged twenty-three, who was killed in France. Before the outbreak of war he had gone home only to find he was listed as a deserter -the man who returned to defend his country was arrested, thrown into jail, and told that he was to be shot. Later after escaping and returning to England he received safe conduct to France where he enrolled in the army, attaining the rank

of sergeant before being killed. Ezra Pound had been excited by the work of both Brzeska and Epstein, and an article which he wrote on The New Sculpture in the Egoist of February 16, 1914, shows the strength and sentiments of the Vorticists. In this article Pound condemns Humanism and says that the artist has been at peace with his oppressors for too long. He goes on to say that with Vorticism the artist has at last realized that war between him and the world is a war without truce, saying that his only remedy is slaughter. Also: 'Modern civilization has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits and we are the heirs of witchdoctor and the voodoo, we artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control'. (Mullins, 1961). It is in writings such as these that we find a kind of war dance that preceded the appearance of a Vorticist Manifesto which appeared in the magazine Blast. Also it is interesting to contrast the presentation of the first Blast magazine, which was large and puce-coloured being about the size of a city's telephone directory, with that of the second issue which finally appeared with a sober khaki cover in July, 1915. Included in this second issue was a last note written from the trenches by Gaudier-Brzeska: 'With all the destruction that works around us nothing



is changed, even superficially. Life is the same strength, the moving agent that permits the small individual to assert himself'. (Mullins, 1961).

These words were put into a small black box, with the note, '"Mort Pour La Patrie", killed June 5, 1915'.

(Mullins, 1961). Pound said before Brzeska was killed that if the Germans did succeed in damaging him, they would do more harm than if they destroyed Rheims Cathedral - a building can be rebuilt, but a man of genius cannot be set forth by another.

Vorticism was tough, stern and severe and was meant to be a deliberate tonic, but in all these things it was professional. It stood opposed to the Bloomsbury Group, against the Cubists who imitated nature by using things they could see, against the Impressionists who carried naturalism to its photographic extreme, against the Expressionists who were 'ethereal, lyrical and cloud-like', against the Futurists who represented thing like the machine, in violent movement with the final result a blur. Vorticism thus condemned the art around them - Vorticism: 'a violent central activity attracting everything to itself, absorbing all that is around it into a violent whirling - a violent central engulfing.' (Michel & Fox, 1969). It was at its core an

intellectual eruption, and often an eruption associated with violence.

Violence in art is a weapon against academism and the avant-garde in art which in turn reflects attitudes found in society: 'It is in Italy that we launch this manifesto of violence, destructive and incendiary, by which we this day found Futurism, because we would deliver Italy from its canker of professors, archaeologist cicerones and antiquaries'. (Initial Manifesto of Futurism, first published in Le Figaro, Paris, February 20, 1909). Also from this Initial Manifesto: 'We wish to glorify War - the only health giver of the world - militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the Anarchist, the beautiful Ideas that kill, the contempt for woman'. Kill - destroy. Set fire - burn - shelves, libraries. Deviate - flood - cellars, museums. Seize, use - pickaxes, hammers - destroy. 'For art can be naught but violence, cruelty and injustice'. (Initial Manifesto). Frenzy - strife - aggressiveness, violent onslaught. WAR - VIOLENCE. 'Let's kill the moonlight' (Taylor, 1961). This movement was launched in Italy against an Italian public who were content with tradition and who refused to take notice of the new world around them.

The Futurists carried their ideas directly to the public with manifestoes, paintings, noise and tactics, with many of their antics and credos receiving newspaper coverage throughout the world. The word Futurism was coined by Marinetti in 1908 with the other poets such as Palazzeschi, Buzzi and Altomare soon joining in under the flag. With these men as a nucleus public assaults were staged by shouting their manifesto and reading poetry in theatres throughout Italy.

It was only later in 1909 that Carrá, Boccioni and Russolo came into contact with Marinetti and that painting came to be included in the movement. A new manifesto was drawn up (Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto of April 11, 1910) with the result that five men became known as 'Futurist painters': Balla, Boccioni Carrá, Russolo and Severini.

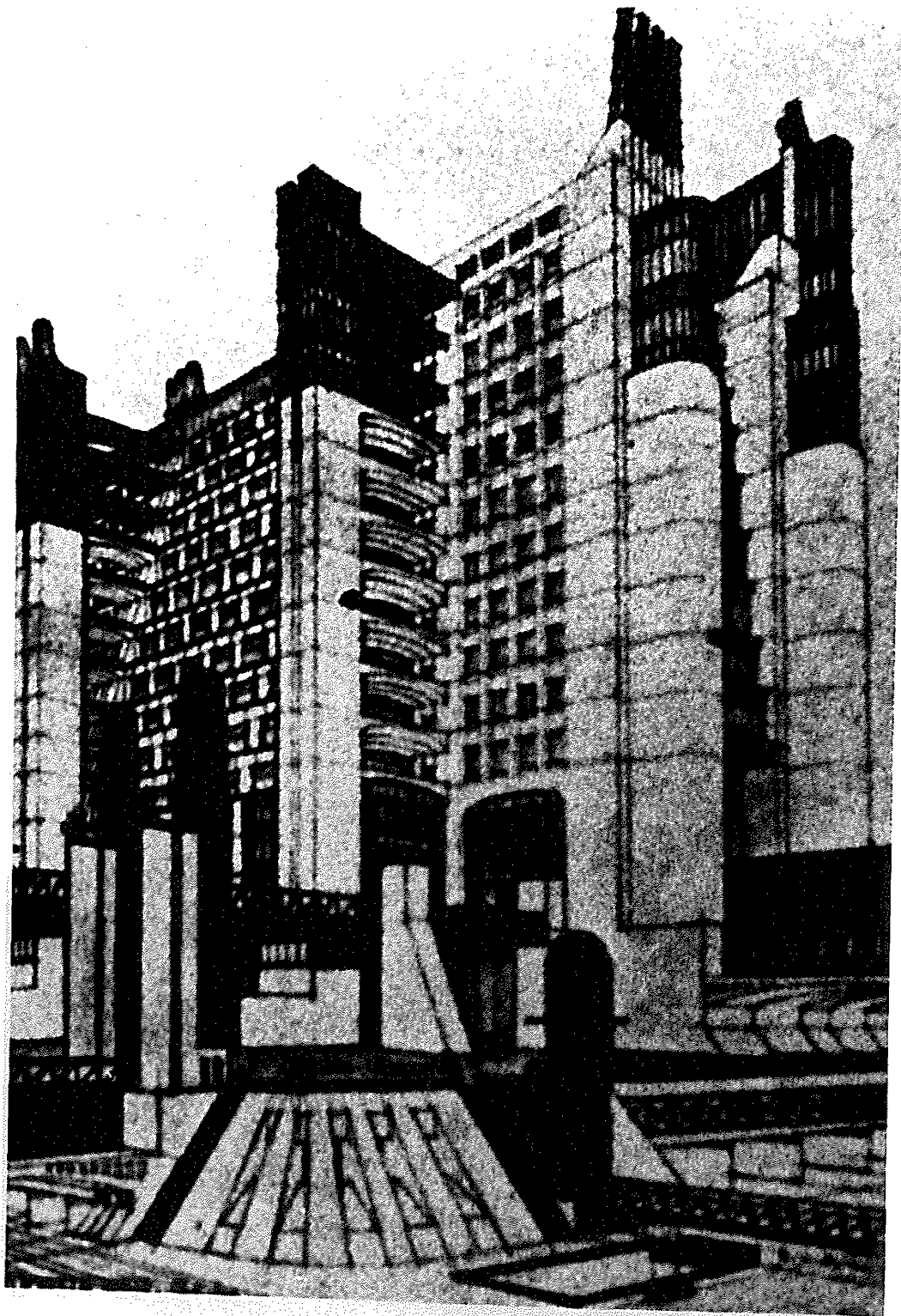
Right from the start these men had shared anti-Austrian sentiments, but this is not to say that politics played major role in their activities before 1913. Their glorification of war and their preaching of a fighting spirit which is found in their original manifesto is above all a desire for a creative life both active and courageous. It was through art that they hoped to discover new values for society, a new art and a new

SANT'ELIA, BOCCIONI, AND MARINETTI. 1915.  
(Taylor, 1961).



vision from new experiences. Marinetti claimed that he was directly inspired by his experiences in the trenches of the Italo-Turkish war in the winter of 1912. It is, however, only at the end of 1913 with the Italian political situation becoming intensified that Marinetti declared his sentiments in a political Futurist manifesto. As war became inevitable in the spring and summer of 1914 the spirit that had characterised Futurism as an artistic force could only live on by being put into direct physical action. With the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the declaration of war the Futurists found an outlet for their passions in violent anti-neutrality demonstrations. At the Teatro dal Verme Boccioni tore an Austrian flag to shreds while Marinetti waved an Italian banner. This was followed by similar incidents which finally led to their arrest and imprisonment for a few days. Similar outbursts as these in Milan were conducted in Rome where Balla tailored new brightly coloured clothing which was worn, for example, at the culmination of Marinetti's rallies in December, 1914, at the University of Rome. Later Balla himself became active in these pro-intervention activities, being arrested on two occasions.

Although there has been much controversy as to whether



THE NEW CITY (1914) by Sant'Elia  
(Taylor, 1961).

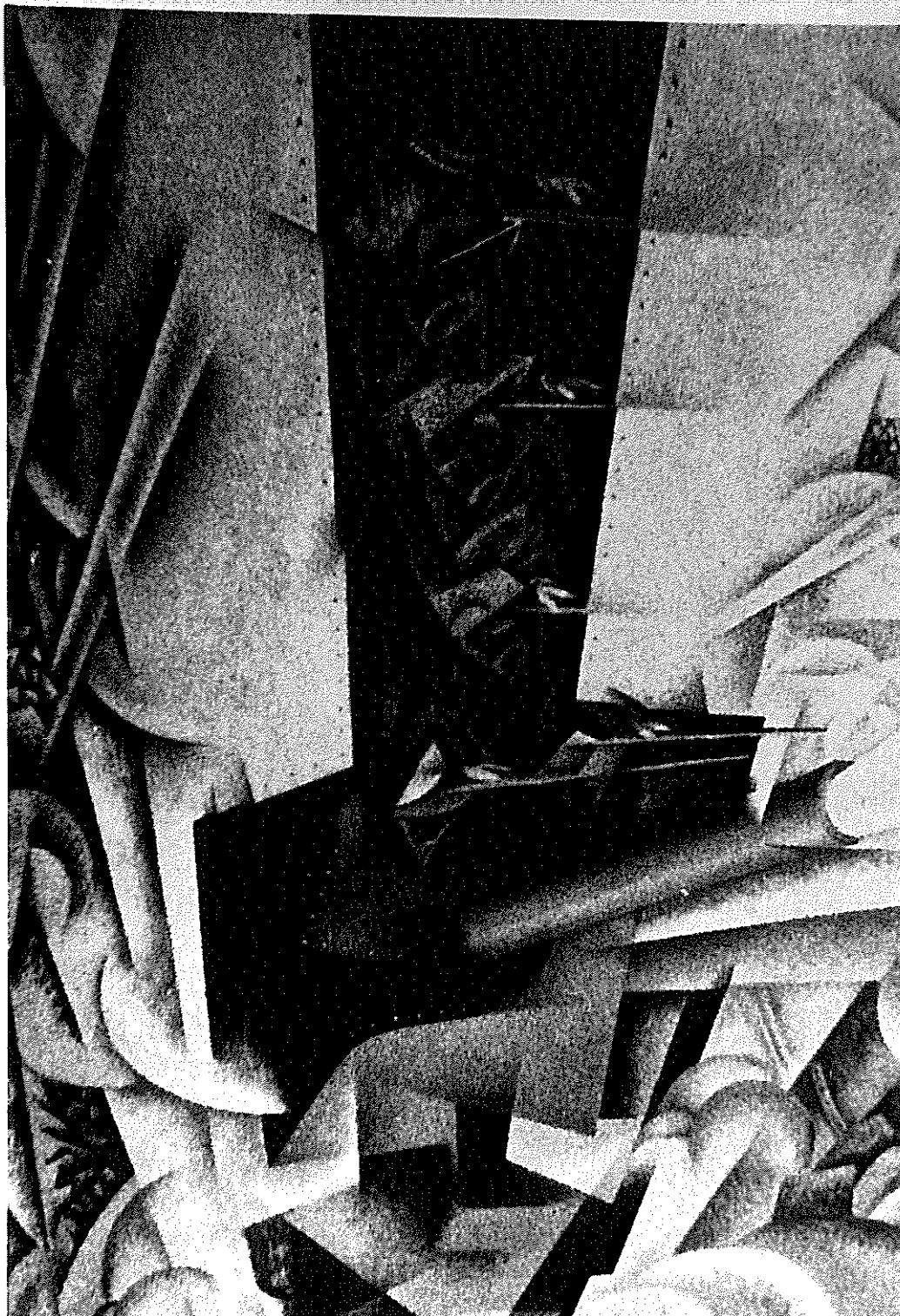
or not Sant'Elia was every inch a Futurist, he did share their urge to create and build, with many of his ideas being governed by a 'Marinettian machine aesthetic'. (Taylor, 1961). Even before Le Corbusier, Sant'Elia compared the modern building to a huge machine, and is similar to Marinetti and a man like Adolf Loos when talking against superimposed decoration. Many of his ideas run parallel to Boccioni's ideas on sculpture, such as the exploration of new materials. Many of his urban complexes include passages for speed such as movement and communications, and in these the Futurist aesthetic is expressed. Also next to skyscrapers we find the power house a theme which greatly occupied Sant'Elia's attention which once again recalls the Futurist's preoccupation with electric energy, which is a generator of dynamism. It has been said that the work of this architect looked ahead to the architecture of Le Corbusier and Gropius in the Twenties

After the initial excitement of the declaration of war had worn off with the demonstrations losing much of their meaning, it was once again Marinetti who set out to show a new way for artistic action. Art was now put at the service of war with many paintings being created with military trains, fortifications, wounded and the like as their subject matter. A lot of

the criticism levelled at Futurist painting by Wyndham Lewis is true, that in the majority of their works 'to represent violent movement is to arrive at a blur, or a kaleidoscope'. (Michel & Fox, 1969). Also many of their paintings do tend to have form that is impressionistic, with many of their machines being soft and fluid, when in reality the real spirit of a machine is hard and cold. The Vorticists looked at the machine from the outside, unlike the Futurist who tried to identify himself with it. The works of the latter are tied down too much to rules and regulations: it is the work of prisoners rather than that of free men. An artist prejudiced by propaganda - in the case of the Futurists it was Marinetti's - will always find it difficult to put himself into the content of his work and dominate it. However, with some of their later works, when war became a reality for them, a lot of the above criticism falls away. With a painting such as 'The Armoured Train' of 1915 by Severini, Futurism in Italy does become valid and have meaning for painting in this century. This is perhaps due to the fact that Severini was more able than the others to follow Marinetti's appeal for artists to interest themselves pictorially in war. Another work almost of the same calibre as 'The Armoured Train' is the only one



THE ARMoured TRAIN by SEVENTH  
(Taylor, 1961).



produced by Boccioni at this time: 'Cavalry Charge'.

With Italy finally entering the war Futurism was perhaps saved from having to face the fact that the movement had ceased to exist. By the beginning of 1915 artists such as Carrá and Sottici had already broken away from the idea of trying to find a more stable art. Even an artist like Boccioni appeared to be showing signs of fatigue. Nevertheless Boccioni, Marinetti, Russolo and Sant'Elia together with others enlisted in the army as voluntary cyclists, and in the autumn of 1915 saw action together. And so their wish to glorify war as the only health giver of the world was put to the final and extreme test. 'Boccioni's letters from the front record his experience with a mixture of youthful, overawed excitement and understandable anxiety: "I live in terrible noise. I have been under fire. Marvellous! Ten days of marching in high mountains with cold, hunger, thirst! .... Sleeping in the open in the rain at 1400 (metres) .... 240 (pieces of) shrapnel have fallen on my unit .... received with ironical laughter .... War is a wonderful, marvellous, terrible thing! In the mountains it .... seems like a fight with the infinite. Grandiosit immensity, life and death! I am happy!"' (Taylor, 1961).

In December of 1915 they, the Futurists, returned to Milan on leave after their unit had been disbanded. With Boccioni's second call to active duty in July, 1916, we find a man apprehensive of military routine and more concerned with art than anything else, for he said at the time that art was the only thing that existed. Not long after this Boccioni was killed falling from a horse during a military exercise. Two months later Sant'Elia was killed in action, with both Marinetti and Russolo being seriously wounded in the following year.

In conclusion it can be said that violence and destruction played an important part in the establishment of Italian Futurism. With its expression of anger, scorn, open emulation and proto-Dada activity, it gave a new meaning to Italian art which has left its mark on much that has followed. War brings about a change, a change that is only made possible by violence and destruction. It is therefore not surprising to find some artists identifying themselves with war as in the case of the Futurists and also the Russians. Also there is an art to war.

Art in Germany before the war was dominated by Expressionism and the 'Blaue Reiter' group, France by Cubism,

which had developed into Orphism, and also by the machine painting of Duchamp and Picabia and Cubist works by Léger; Italy by the Futurists and their 'propaganda' work. Russia at this time was in touch with all these movements with many of its artists working in Europe. However with the outbreak of the 1914 war many of these men returned home. Chagall, Puni, Altman and Bogoslavskaya returned from Paris, El Lissitzky from Darmstadt and Kandinsky from Munich. Thus the war brought about a consolidation of Russian artists in their own country in contrast to the other centres in Europe which were broken up. Although a number of artists saw active service, with some of them becoming war artists as in the case of Mayakovsky, many of them remained in Moscow and Petrograd. This coming together of Russian artists was celebrated with such exhibitions as The Futurist Exhibition: Tramway V, and included constructivist works by both Tatlin and Malevich (Malevich did not exhibit any of his Suprematist works at this exhibition).

Intoxication with speed and an abandonment to a dynamic, with the machine being idealized, is not present in Russian Futurism as it is with the Italians. Malevich, for example, is 'preoccupied with the idea of the new man which emerges from machine-power: a super-

man, man becomes machine'. (Gray, 1962). For the Russians nature is a force against them and the machine is seen as a liberating power from nature, for with the machine they see the possibility of creating a man-made world. All this had to be built on the destruction of the past - and it is for this reason that many of them welcomed the war. From Constructivism Malevich developed Suprematism which led to an antagonism between him and Tatlin. Tatlin objected to abstract painting and with the opening of the exhibition O.10. The Last Futurist Painting Exhibition in Petrograd at which Malevich showed his Suprematist works for the first time, actual physical fighting broke out between the two men. However by 1918, Suprematism was established in much of Russian Art, and during the two years prior to the Revolution younger artists pursued either Suprematism or Constructivism.

Thus Russian art before 1917 was dominated by a sense of power and optimism. There was much excitement as artists felt they were on the brink of discovering a new world. But there was also a sense of hopelessness and uselessness as these men found themselves unable to communicate their optimism to the society in which they lived. It was for this reason that they began at

this time to employ ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that would rouse a reaction from the bourgeois stupor. Wild scenes - orgies. Mocking - scandal. Grotesque masks - violent clothing. Abuse - VIOLENCE. All this was very similar to much which characterized the contemporary Dada movement in Zurich. Dynamic decor - antics - constructions by Tatlin, Yakulov and Rodchenko. Fighting - artists against audience - police intervention. Nonsense verse - roaring poetry - manifestoes. Strutting, gesturing - Greek classics performed in jeans - cardboard costumes Blast, bombard - bombard societies' senses - plays - plays like Kruchenikh's Gli-Gli. Stop at nothing to realize ambitions and plans in art to transform the world into a likeness of one's own desires. IMAGINATION TAKES POWER.

It is not difficult to see why these men regarded both Cubism and Futurism as foreshadowing the Revolution and why they jumped without hesitation into the Bolshevik cause. For them it was another way of exterminating the old order and creating a new one based on industrialization, a communal way of life in which the artist would be an integrated member of society. Creation by destruction - but destruction first. They

identified their revolutionary artistic discoveries with revolutionary ideas in the economic and political sphere. To recreate the world belonging to man now had a reality and a direction with the Revolution. Their energies took the form of a propaganda war for the new life, with their canvases becoming the streets and city squares. (The canvas as such was a weak form of communication and had associations with the bourgeois way of life). Also the need for the artist to be an active builder, such as found in Tatlin's constructions, found expression. These men now had a purpose for existing and became lightheaded from their release, while the rest of their fellow-citizens were engaged with the struggle of day-to-day survival. It has been said that this is perhaps the first time in history that your artists have been given the opportunity to realize their visions in practical dreams.

They set up museums of their art all over the country and demonstrated publicly such as the decorating of the central obelisk in front of the Winter Palace with huge abstract sculptures. This was to celebrate the first anniversary of the October Revolution. Two years later they re-enacted the storming of the Winter Palace. This was mainly organised by Altman, Puni and Bogoslavskaya who felt that decoration was no longer sufficient.



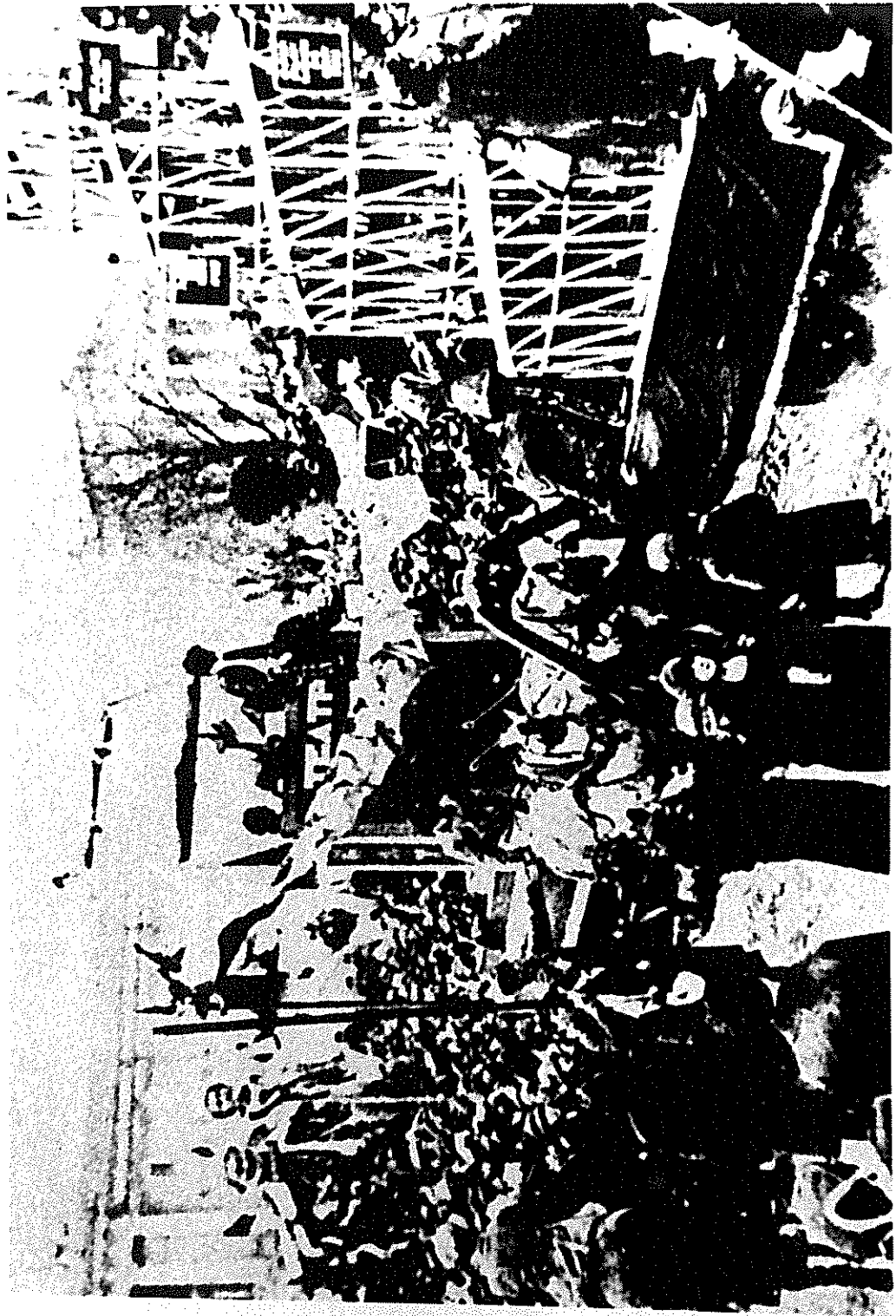
AGITATION-PROPAGANDA TRAIN OF  
THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.  
(Elderfield, 1970).



They organised plays throughout the country, designed sets which were accompanied by factory siren symphonies. They decorated entire trains which were sent to the front carrying news of the Revolution. In response to a suggestion made by Lenin in 1918 that towns should erect propaganda monuments, these were executed, but with little success, for most of the artists commissione were of the realistic school. However there was one in which the style matched the subject: Tatlin's Monument to the IIIrd International, which although neve built did exist in model forms. In 1918 the Depart- ment of Fine Art IZO was created and was dominated by the 'leftist' artists owing to the liberal outlook of Lunacharsky. (Lunacharsky was Commissar of Education and the IZO fell under the Commissariat for People's Education or Narkompros).

During the years of 1918-21 many museums were set up and Russia became the first country to exhibit abstract art officially. In 1921 the Bolsheviks emerged triumphant, the civil war, the war with Poland and Allie and German intervention had come to an end. Russia was at peace. The 'Organization for Proletarian Culture' (Protecúlt) had existed since 1906 and had be- come an effective body in 1917 with its aim of creating

a Proletarian culture with art as a social product conditioned by social environment, and was basically concerned with the creating of a mass-culture with industry its natural starting point. This idea of a separate Proletarian culture (this was in direct opposition to Lenin's ideas who said that art should be under the aegis of a Party control), continued throughout the twenties until 1932 when 'Socialist Realism' became the official style of Russian art. Many of the constructivists became members of the Proletcult, such as Tatlin and the Communist Rodchenko, who insisted that the artist must be a technician, 'that he must learn to use the tools and materials of modern production in order to offer his energies directly for the benefit of the Proletariat' (Gray, 1962). In direct opposition to these artists stood Malevich, Kandinsky together with the Pevsner brothers who said that art was a spiritual activity and that in becoming useful art ceases to exist. It must be remembered that with the end of the 'dictatorship' there was a return in a way to a capitalist system, and under Lenin's New Economic policy a new bourgeoisie arose who were able to patronize the arts. The art that this bourgeoisie favoured was more inclined towards what had existed before the Revolution in every sense of the word. The period of



TATLIN'S MONUMENT TO THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL  
BEING CARRIED THROUGH THE STREETS OF Leningrad.  
(Elderfield, 1970).

four years from 1917 to 1921, known as 'heroic communism' was over, leaving many of the 'leftist' artists disgusted.

As a result of this the Pevsner brothers left Russia early in 1922 to evolve their Constructivism in the West. Anton Pevsner finally settled in America after having been through Berlin and England. Kandinsky was offered a post in the Weimar Bauhaus which he accepted while Malevich himself spent little time in Moscow during 1920 and 1921, thus in a way handing over to the 'production art' group.

DADA: Huelssenbeck: "Dada was to be a rallying point for abstract energies and a lasting slingshot for the great international movements".

Speaking of bruitism: "..... at first it was intended as nothing more than a rather violent reminder of the colourfulness of life".

"Tzara ..... never really understood what it meant to make literature with a gun in the hand".

"Dada has operated not as a mild suasion but like a thunderbolt, ...."

"Dada is German Bolshevism. The bourgeois must be deprived of the opportunity to 'buy up art for its justification'. Art should altogether get a sound thrashing,



and Dada stands for the thrashing with all the vehemence of its limited nature".

Ball: "The bankruptcy of ideas having destroyed the concept of humanity to its very innermost strata, the instincts and hereditary backgrounds are now emerging pathologically. Since no art, politics or religious faith seems adequate to dam this torrent, there remain only the blague and the bleeding pose ....."

"Dadaism - a mask play, a bust of laughter? and behind it, a synthesis of the romantic, dandyistic and - daemistic theories of the 19th century".

Tzara: "Let each man proclaim: there is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean".

"Every act is a cerebral revolver shot - the insignificant gesture the decisive movement are attacks ....."

"True dadas are against Dada".

Georges Hugnet: "Dada, a phenomenon bursting forth in the midst of the post-war economic and moral crisis, a savior, a monster, which would lay waste everything in its path. They felt that it would be an offensive weapon of the first order".

"Dada upset and demolished everything to make possible a new start in any direction".

Breton: "Peace at any price is the slogan of DADA in time of war, while in time of peace the slogan of DADA is: 'War at any price'".

Tzara: "The beginnings of Dada were not the beginnings of art, but of a disgust. Disgust with the magnificence of philosophers who for 3000 years have been explaining everything to us (what for?), disgust with the pretensions of these artists - God's - representatives - on - earth, disgust with passion and with real pathological wickedness where it was not worth the bother; disgust with a false form of domination and restriction en masse, that accentuates rather than appeases man's instinct of domination, disgust with all the catalogued categories, with the false prophets who are nothing but a front for the interests of money, pride disease, disgust with the lieutenants of a mercantile art made to order according to few infantile laws, disgust with the divorce of good and evil, the beautiful and the ugly (for why is it more estimable to be red rather than green to the left rather than the right, to be large or small? 'As Dada marches it continuously destroys, not in extinction but in itself. From all these disgusts, may I add, it draws no conclusions, no pride, no benefit". (Motherwell, 1951).



ANDRÉ BRETON. 1917-18.  
(Rubin, 1969).

DADA WAS DESTRUCTION? DESTRUCTION AND DESTRUCTION.  
 DADA WAS: TERRORISING THE POPULATION - POPULATION:  
 EMPTY SKULLS. FIGHTING - FIGHT - THE DADAIST  
 FIGHTS: THE WORLD - A SYSTEM GONE TO PIECES. THE  
 DADAIST WAS AGAINST SYSTEMS - NO THEORY. THE DADAIS  
 SPITS - YES. THE DADAIST SPITS ON HUMANITY - YES.  
 DADA WAS EXTERMINATION, BRUTAL, AND MURDER. DADA WAS  
 ALSO WITHOUT THEORY - NO THEORY. DADA WAS BUNK -  
 DADA WAS DEMANDING LIVE BIRDS IN PET SHOPS. DADA DOES  
 NOT GIVE PAINTINGS AND LITERATURE. DADA WAS COWARDLY  
 COWARDLY LIKE A MAD DOG. DADA WAS AN ANTISEPTIC BATH  
 ATTACKS - BORN OF WHAT IT HATED - DADA WAS CLEANING  
 A CLEAN SWEEP OF THE PAST. DADA WAS AN ADVENTURE -  
 ADVENTURE WITHOUT ITS EQUAL. DADA WAS DESTRUCTION -  
 NOT ART - ART IS CREATION BY DESTRUCTION. DADA WAS  
 ANTI-ART.

A lot of the essence of Dada has been taken over in  
 the name of art by what is called Neo-Dada, or New Realism  
 Pot Art and Assemblage. A lot of truth about the  
 'spirit' of Neo-Dada is perhaps found in these words by  
 Duchamp in a letter addressed to Hans Richter in 1962:  
 'This Neo-Dada ..., is an easy way out, and lives on what  
 Dada did. When I discovered ready-mades I thought I  
 discourage aesthetics. In Neo-Dada they have taken



ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty'. (Lucie-Smith, 1969). Even if these movements did start out in the spirit of confrontation with their art of derision (which shows a lack of imagination anyway), rather than total rejection like Dada, this 'rejection' has been taken over by the society in which we live. This is made clear by the fact of Arman, César and Martial Raysse ending up at the Hôtel Matignon in the collection of M. Pompidou. With the consumer society in which we live anti-works' by Duchamp have been cast in bronze. Soulages' work has been hung in the office of M. Georges Pompidou. Posters of Che Guevara together with those of the May Revolution have become objects of esthetic consumption. In our society both propaganda and 'anti-art' art are accepted as having the same standing as the work, as for example, of a man like Matisse.

Dada never had a consistent set of principles and was never coherently organized, even less did it stand for a particular style in art. As it emerges in New York and Zurich and later in Berlin, Cologne and Paris, the only thing that was common to the way it manifested itse



TRISTAN TZARA, ZURICH. 1916.  
(Rubin, 1969).

was its aim of subverting modern bourgeois society. It was a work given to a state of mind and creative activity which was perhaps in the air from 1912 if one looks at the cases of people like Duchamp, Jacques Vaché and Arthur Cravan. In all these centres (apart from Berlin, where its importance is extended through an involvement in radical politics), it was concerned with the promotion of the existing avant-garde and with the creation of its own art. This (anti) art had no other activity at first glance than the practice of creating public scandal in as violent and absurd way as possible and of provoking the public. Dada was provocation rather than contestation. There was no desire to convince or to win people over to the Dada cause. Dada rejected didacticism as lacking in real interest.

With Europe in turmoil it was Switzerland and the United States of America which offered the most convenient refuge from the war. The word 'Dada' was first used in Zurich in 1916, and Zurich became the meeting place for many pacifists, poets, painters and revolutionaries from all over Europe. Hugo Ball had fled Germany for Switzerland in 1914, and it was in Zurich that he decided to establish a gathering place for people

with similar ideas and feelings as his own. Together with Marcel Janco, Tristan Tzara, and Jean Arp (Richard Huelsenbeck was to come later), he rented a small hall which was baptized the Cabaret Voltaire. Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco had come from Romania while Jean Arp had come from Alsace via Paris. (Marcel Duchamp's going to New York has been noted at the beginning of this chapter). In Cologne we have the demobilized soldier Max Ernst returning to create a new type of collage which established a reputation for him in Paris within eighteen months after his return, without his ever having lived there. Ernst, together with Alfre Grünwald, founded the Dada conspiracy of the Rhineland which culminated in the Brauhaus Winter exhibition held in Cologne in April, 1920. Even if, as some people maintain, Dada and Surrealism produced nothing of merit, at least Max Ernst involved for a time in these two "movements", and his work may be regarded as amongst the best of this century. At the end of the war Paris saw a homecoming of many of the artists she had lost because of it. Picabia and Duchamp returned in 1917 and 1919 respectively, Tzara in 1920, Man Ray came in 1921, followed by Ernst himself in 1922. However, the principal moving forces behind Paris Dada were the young

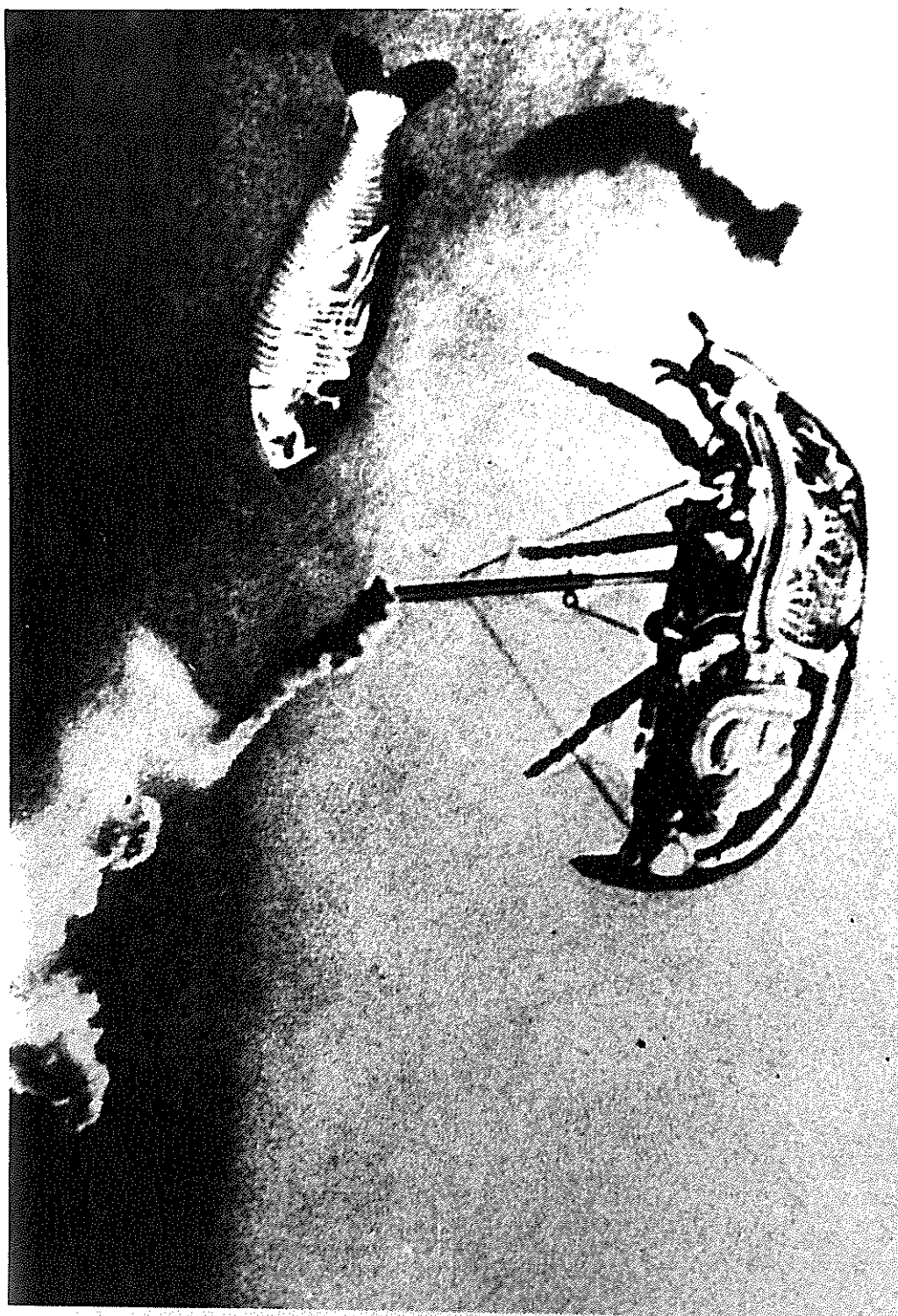


MAX ERNST. 1920.  
(Rubio, 1969).

French poets. These poets together with their friends Jean Paulhan, Paul Eluard, and Georges Ribemont-Desaigues had all seen war service, and it was not until their return to Paris in 1919 that they were able to see what had been going on with wartime Dada. The young French poets wrote for the avant-garde magazine Littérature which had been founded in 1919 by André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Phillipe Soupault, and it is also in their writings for Dada in Paris that the beginnings of Surrealism is to be found.

Dada and Surrealism was not only for the destruction of the 'ruins' found in 'and after' the First World War, but also for the destruction of the Society which had made the war possible. Nevertheless it must be remembered that in many cases the war itself produced a psych shock on individuals who had been involved with it. A young man who wears a uniform at the age of twenty and engages in warfare, loses a lot of those things that are important during a time of peace. Breton and others returned from the front, where they had been fighting for ideas such as democracy and peace (or so they had been told), and on their return they turned against those very ideas in a paradoxical but recognisable psychic reaction. Solemn and tragic moments are often receiv

by a paradoxical explosion of a kind of humour. The comic aspect of early Surrealism and its program of destruction so often carried out as an embittered joke, may well be explained in this way. Also it might be thought that bourgeois society collapsed with the First World War, and that the Dadaists and Surrealists were confronted by this collapse. However capitalism was not destroyed and as subsequent history has shown it has been able to adapt itself, not only surviving but also increasing its prosperity. The 'ruins' therefore so often referred to by the Dadaists and Surrealist are not so much material but cultural ones. Bourgeois society was culturally corrupt, and before the 'new man' could be made, the 'old man' had to be destroyed. This destruction produced by Dada and Surrealism has had a lasting impact: "Apart from the historical fact that for a long time now there has been no major artistic school outside advertising, nor, since Surrealism, a movement of any scope, but only an ever more rapid succession of ephemeral 'groups', the disintegration is also to be found in the profusion, not to say confusion, of methods techniques, and variations, including the multifarious but very sincere forms of artistic protest. The artist himself tends to disintegrate in a society that makes not only expression but the formation of a whole

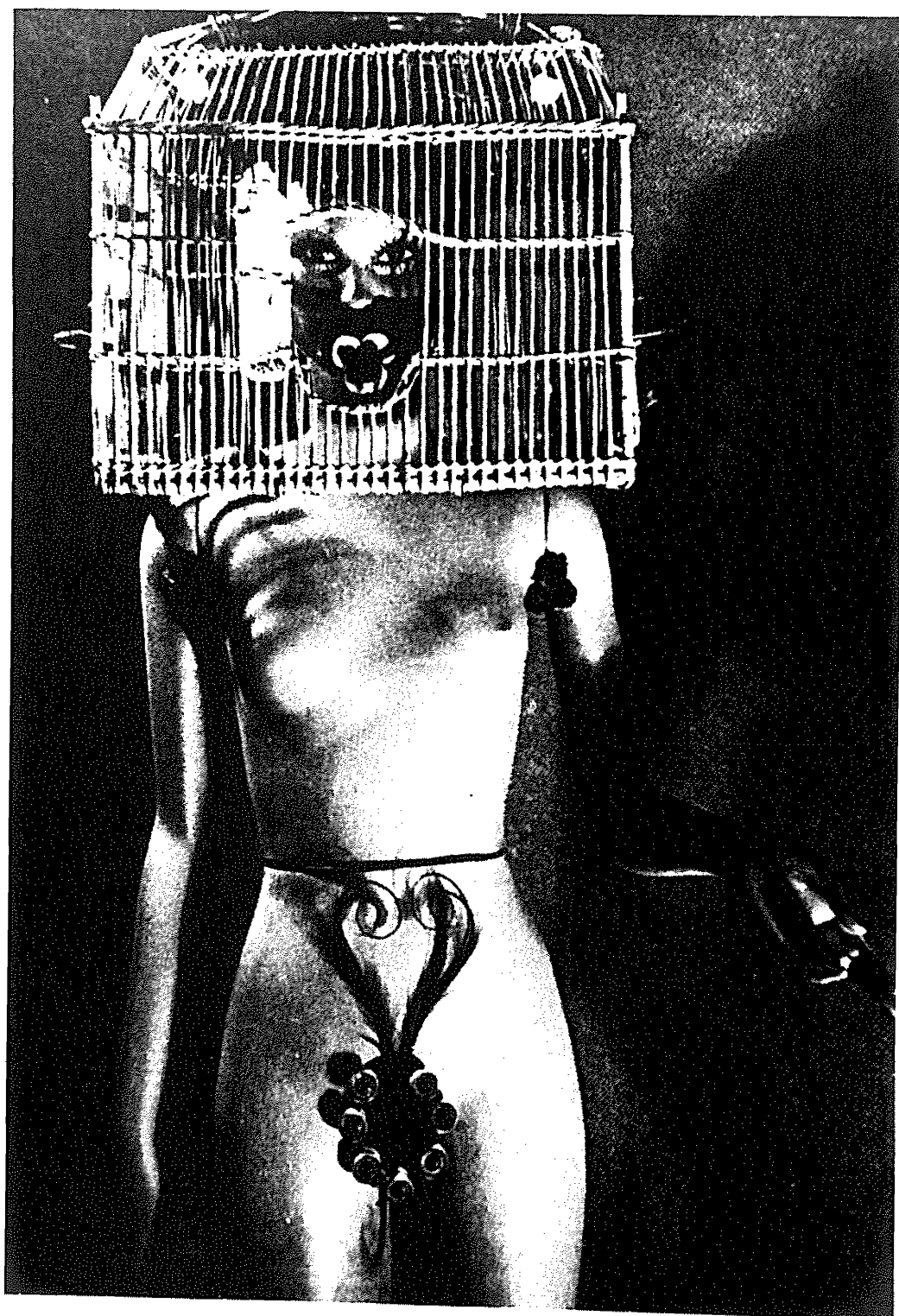


THIRD GASOMETRIC PAINTING by Max Ernst. 1920.  
(Motherwell, 1951).



personality so difficult". (Willener, 1970).

The period of change from Dada to Surrealism is a period of confusion and the one overlaps and is part of the other. When Dada appeared to be at the high point of its activity with the Cologne exhibition of 1920 paralleled by the international Dada fair in Berlin Europe had in actual fact passed its maximum receptivity to the movement. The period of change has been called the three years which preceded the publication of the first Surrealist manifesto in 1924, but then again Picabia has said that the true Dada spirit existed from 1913 to 1918. The Surrealists tried to construct a new religion from Dada which has been called 'the Virgin Microbe'. The Dadaists postulated total destruction saying that only from this a better world would emerge, there was no attempt at creation after the destruction. The Surrealists, however, hoped to draw from destruction some kind of creation, they hoped to draw from the juxtaposition of those dislocated fragments a new, super reality, rather than mere destruction of the old'. (Lippard, 1970). Surrealism looked back to 'the Romantic - Symbolist tradition', to people in literature such as Baudelaire, Gérard de Neval, and Aloysius Bertrand, also to Jarry, Lautrémont and the German Romantics such as Novalis and Achim von Arnim. (Rubin, 1969)



MANNEQUIN by André Masson. 1938.  
(Rubia, 1969).

Guillaume Apollinaire was another who was resurrected and it is he who takes the credit for the invention of the term 'Surrealist'.

Thus Surrealism developed between 1916 and 1922 under the influence of war, and it is interesting to note that some of the most important literary works it admires such as the writings of Lautrémont and Rimbaud, came into being at the time of another war - that of 1870. Much of the final results from Surrealism live within the destructive part of creation, and as such do not emerge as works of art. Even in the writings of Lautrémont (who was greatly admired by them) we find only the passion of revolution and no love - most revolutionaries become lovers after the revolution. He, Lautrémont, deals only with the principle of destruction and perhaps symbolises only the first stage in the evolution that is art. In the long run Lautrémont's 'Maldoror', with his many experiences of violence and his acts of trying to forget the lessons of tradition and convention, is not dissimilar from much Surrealist painting. Surrealism penetrates what is negative, and this certainly is its value, but even the worker who cuts down trees does so in order to construct - to construct beams and boards, etc. Perhaps the essence of



JACQUES VACHÉ. 1918.  
(Rubin, 1969).

Surrealism is found in these words by Sartre:

'Surrealism, borrowing of methods from bourgeois analysis, inverts the process; instead of destroying in order to construct, it constructs in order to destroy. Its construction is always alienated; it is compounded in a process whose end is annihilation'. (Sartre,1970).

Jacques Vaché was for Breton and most of the young Surrealists a dramatic symbol of their revolt, and it is not strange to find that in the end Vaché, pushing his philosophy to its logical conclusion, committed suicide.           ART IS NOT DESTRUCTION ALONE.

PART THREE - THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND SUMMARY.

It is extremely easy to think that Nazism was against any form of modern art, and although Hitler had personal feelings about what he called 'the cubist grimace', it did not really attack any of the current movements during the twenties. This was mainly due to the fact that during the twenties the Nazis had not really formulated an artistic policy as such, and it is only from about the time of the depression that we find them bringing art into policy statements, and it being part of the general increase in propaganda. It is in 1921 that Rosenberg established his KAMPFBUND FÜR DEUTSCHE KULTUR as an instrument for Nazi cultural propaganda, the formation of which remains until 1933 when the Nazis gained governmental power. Rosenberg had studied architecture, had painted landscape and was familiar with both art history and the currents of the time. With his *THE MYTH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY* in which he writes a great deal about art we can find much of what was to become totalitarian art with its theory, to become what has been called: 'art as a demonstration of an enveloping spiritual mythology and art as an instrument of social integration' (Elderfield, 1970).

From the very beginnings of Weimar art there had

existed a conservative criticism that modern art was un-German, and it was this that Rosenberg had come to inherit. In the beginning criticism and controversy had played an important part in the Weimar Bauhaus world but these had subsided by the mid-twenties only to be reawakened around about 1930. This reawakening stems from people like Alexander van Senger, a Swiss architect who attacked the new architecture as part of an international plot to undermine culture. He is mentioned by Le Corbusier in connection with the Palace of the League of Nations as the man who created hostilities when the final decisions were being made with regard to the building. With regard to the racial question which was very much more deep rooted and which is to be found in the writings of Hans Guenther and Paul Schulze-Naumburg, and it is their followers and admirers who ascend into the Nazi hierarchy and who help to label modern art as degenerate. With the racist writer modernism is no longer merely regarded as a possible index of a national power structure, rather it now arise as a threat to 'German-ness', and in 1928 Schulze-Naumburg takes a stand against Gropius and his followers. A journal such as the Völkischer Beobachter which before had attacked modern art on a political front now devoted itself entirely to criticism of 'the new architecture'.

There now arises a search for German-ness which the moderns never survived, but then neither did Kampfbund because with the Nazis taking power it was Goebbels and not Rosenberg who came to control cultural affairs. To the conservatism of the Kampfbund, Goebbels was unsympathetic for he had a strong interest in expressionistic art.

It must be noted that it was felt by many that Expressionism was the new art which Germany was looking for, and Party Officials such as Otto Andreas Schreiber and journalists associated with such periodicals as Kunst der Nation and Kunstkammer wanted to fuse German expressionism with National Socialism in the same way that Futurism had been linked with Italian Fascism. This spirit is to be found in Gottfried Benn, the writer in whose essays Art and Power we find a vindication of Expressionism and a homage to Futurism, especially to Marinetti. The Schreiber group tried hard to get their way into the Nazi pantheon by showing that certain elements in the work of Nolde and Barlach were essentially native to German life. In 1934 Kunst der Nation used a Barlach sculpture as a cover design, featuring articles on Beckmann, Rohlf's and Nolde. It is interesting to note that Nolde, a party member, was featured by the paper Der Angriff which Goebbels had

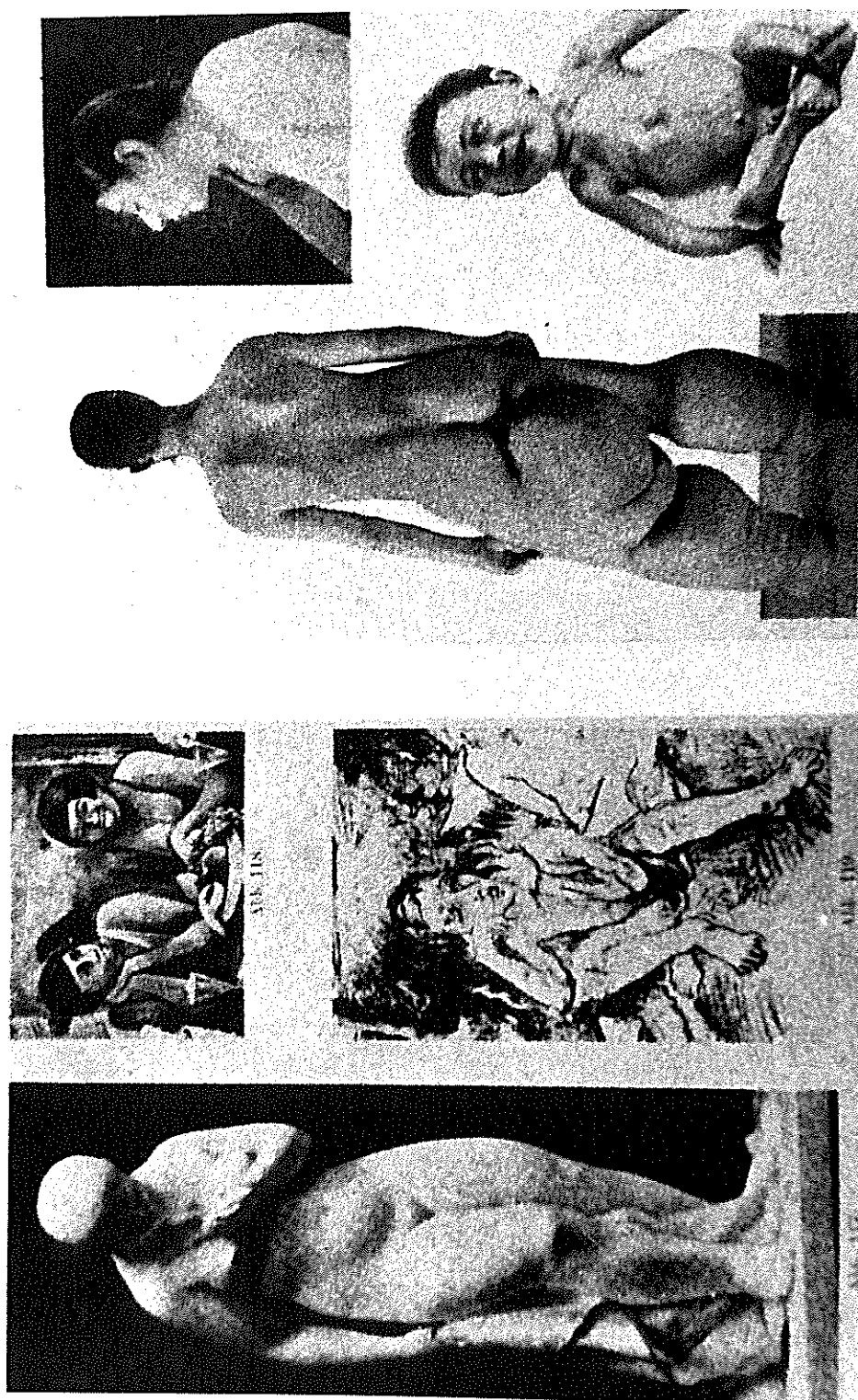


found, and it is a well known fact that he, Goebbels, owned personally many works by both Nolde and Barlach. Expressionism did have many good qualifications to become the new art, such is its Gothic tradition, its individualistic power - orientated ethos and its evolution of the 'transalpine' peoples. These were, however, the claims put forward at the time in its favour.

In 1933 Goebbels was appointed Minister of Propaganda. Within months there was an open party conflict as he tried to bring cultural affairs into his sphere of influence. With the exhibition of expressionist art organised in July the same year (which included a painting by Goebbels' aide, Hans Weidemann) Rosenberg appealed to Hitler himself. However Hitler, in his party speech that September, did not give a precise artistic policy for the party and was in short noncommittal. Goebbels' cultural take-over gained ground and with the establishment of the Reichskulturkammer as a branch of his ministry he became responsible for the state organization of the arts. In 1934 the publication of Art and Power (already mentioned) and certain of the modernists in architecture stressed the German-ness of their work. Gropius, for example, said that the Bauhaus style was the union of both the classic

and the Gothic traditions. However it was soon clear that Goebbels was not so much concerned with art as he was with politics, and his early concern was purely that of preserving a party image for abroad and justifying a private interest. Discussions of a public nature were stopped with no commissions going to the radicals, although no architect was excluded from the Reichskulturkammer, Behrens and Mies both being members. It was for Goebbels in the long run too risky to support Expressionism and all the accusations associated with it and the value of his initial support can be clearly seen by the fact that racial and political affiliation affected application to the Reichskulturkammer, with proscribed art put into the following categories: JEWISH (e.g. Chagall, Soutine), 'PRIMITIVISM' EXPRESSIONIST (e.g. Heckel, Kirchner), and 'BOLSHEVIK' BAUHAUS (e.g. Kandinskii, Klee). Also being a member of the Nazi party itself did not prevent persecution as in the case of Emil Nolde (These facts are to be found in Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda by Ernst K. Bramsted, Michigan, 196

1933 to 1937 was the time of growth and experiment of the Nazi state, but from 1937 onwards policies became rigidly defined with Hitler now taking a stand, saying that the modernists had had four years in which to reform



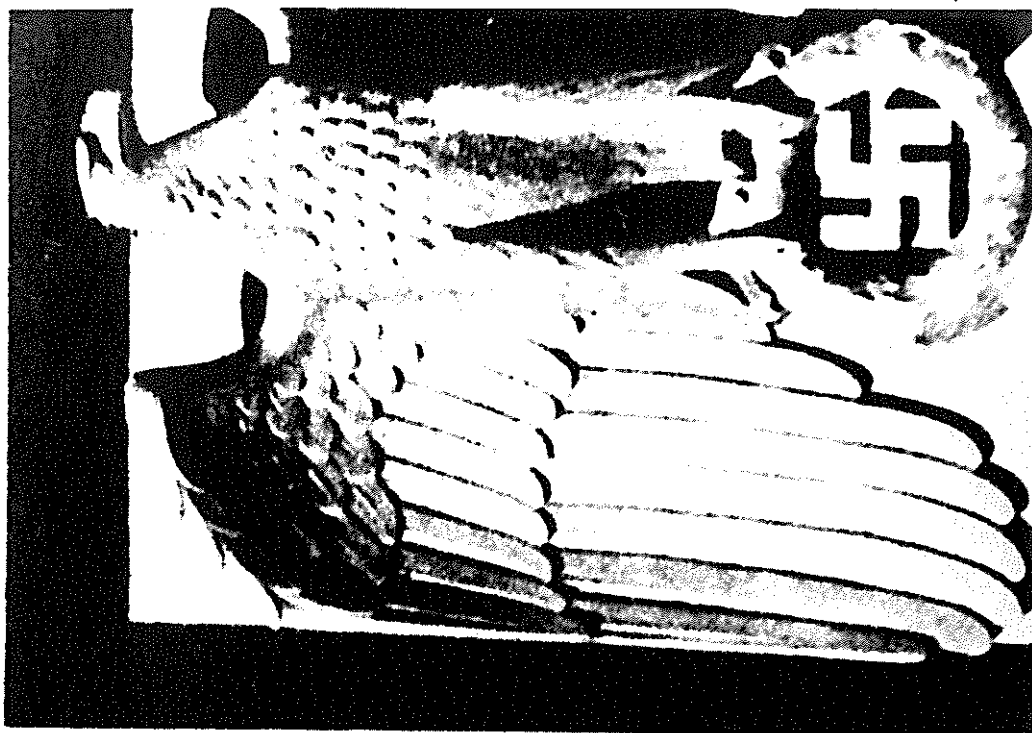
SCHULZE-NAUMBURG'S COMPARISONS OF  
MODERN ART TO PHYSICAL DEFORMITY  
(ELIAS-FELD, 1970).

and that 'cliques of chatterers, dilettantes and art forgers will be picked up and liquidated' (Elderfield, 1970). This speech of 1937 was made at the opening of the Haus der deutschen Kunst in Munich and is without doubt the most important cultural political document in modern times. And it was not long before it made itself felt in practical ways, the beginnings of which were the two exhibitions of 'degenerate' art opened in Munich in July, 1937. A four-man tribunal was sent around the country to remove all paintings, sculptures and drawings regarded as degenerate, the four men being Professor Ziegler, Schweitzer-Mjölnir, Count Baudissin, and Wolf Willrich. Later in 1938 Count Baudissin, who was also a director of the Volkswang Museum in Esser demanded that all degenerate art be removed from private collections as well, and it was this demand that promoted Rudolf Kirchener's suicide in Switzerland. Degenerate art was not definitely explained but seemed to include all work since 1910 which was racially suspect and pacifist or bolshevist, and thus included all types of Expressionism and abstract art.

Again it is violence that is used to destroy existing art so that the new can live. However, the violence used by the Nazis is more in the generally accepted sense of the word, and more of a physical nature. It

is directed against the artists and their work, against the artistic richness of the post-war period which had actually made Fernand Léger envy Germany her wartime defeat. He was referring to Nolde and Barlach in whose work the aftermath of war had enriched with religious and humanitarian impulses, also to Arp and Ernst who had reacted to the changed world after World War I, and lastly but not least, to the artist-teachers of the Bauhaus: Klee, Gropius, Kandinsky, Feininger, Schlemmer, Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Breur. The swathe the four-man tribunal cut through Germany's artistic treasure has been given at upwards of 16,000 works: 1,000 pieces by Nolde, 700 by Haeckel, 600 each by Schmidt-Rottluff and Kirchner, 500 by Beckmann, 400 by Kokoschka, 300-400 each by Hofer, Pechstein, Barlach, Feininger and Otto Müller, 200-300 each by Dix, Groz and Corinth, 100 by Lehmbrück as well as much smaller numbers of Cézannes, Picassos, Matisses, Gauguins, Van Goghs, Braques, Pissarros, Dufys, Chiricos and Max Ernsts (Grunberger, 1971). Of this vast total some 4,000 in 1939 were burned in the courtyard of the headquarters of the Berlin fire-brigade. Not only was there direct destruction by burning, but many of them were used as fuel in the fires of Philistinism. In 1937 the huge Exhibition of Degenerate Art was organised in Munich, an

was the most popular display ever to be put on during the Third Reich for it attracted two million visitors. The works were hung completely haphazardly, without frames and were given such headings as 'Thus did sick minds view Nature'. With one hundred and twelve eminent artists publicly ridiculed at this exhibition and the general state of affairs, Goebbels was saying that it all had nothing to do with the suppression of artistic freedom and modern progress. Thus the work of the past was destroyed. Walter Gropius has said: 'If I had known then what I know now I would have had to tell myself that it was an impossible undertaking that the intermezzo between the First World War and the Thousand Years Reich was far too short to create anything of lasting value, that the long winter's sleep imposed on all creative spirits during the Nazi Period would destroy the carefully sown seed'. (Neumann, 1970). The Nazis had associated 'degeneracy' with the art of the German revolution of 1918, and titles such as Novembergeist (meaning November spirit, and referring to the 1918 revolution; also 'November criminals' used by Hitler when referring to the Weimar politicians), had been included in earlier exhibitions of 'Entartete Kunst' during the Rosenberg and Goebbels conflict.

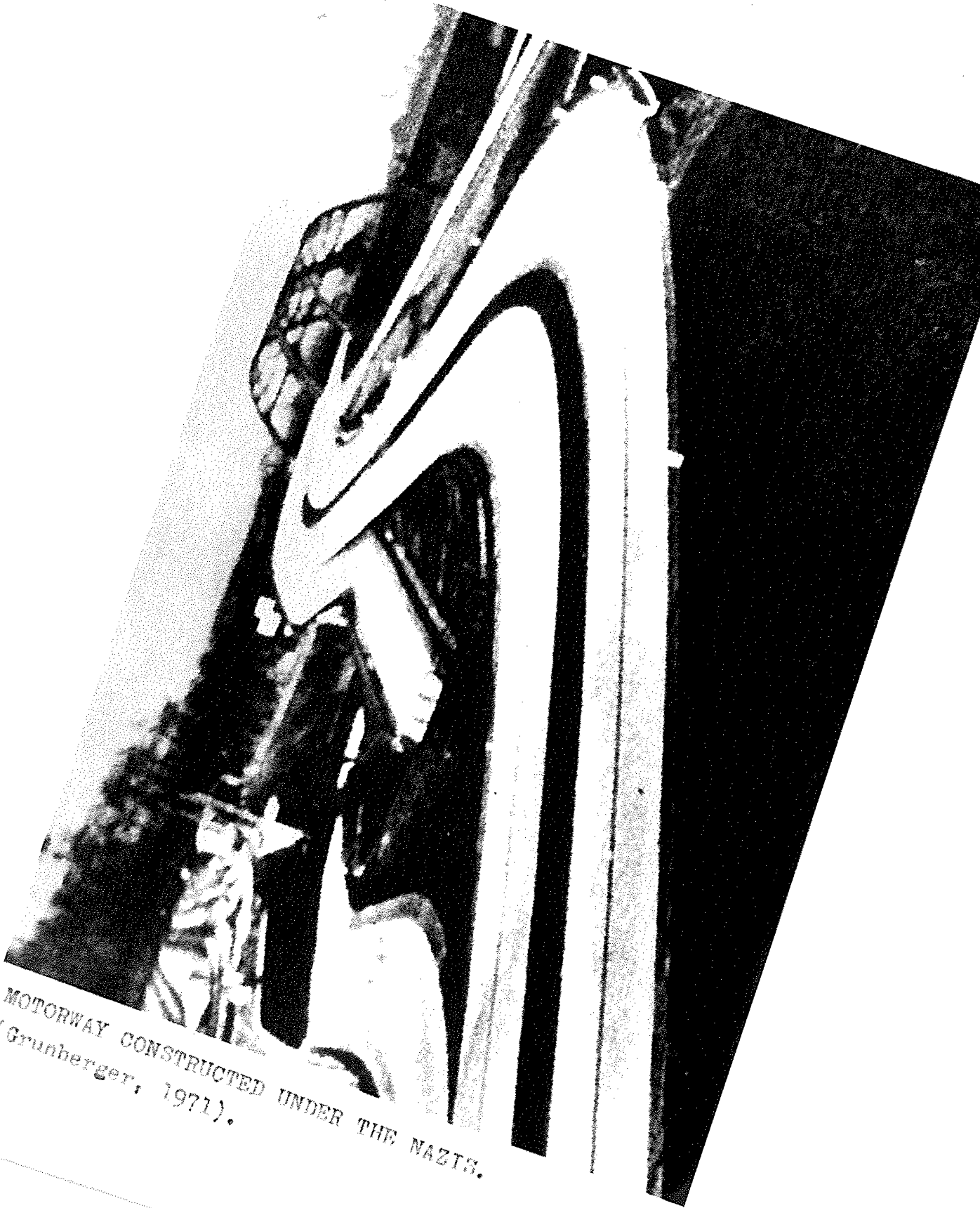


EMBLEMS OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC AND OF THE  
THIRD REICH.  
(Elderfied, 1970).

However, the 'Nazi revolution', with its associated violence, in the arts brought about nothing new, and was in actual fact not a revolution at all. What they made and built can be seen in a position similar to the development of Weimar art, and not as something opposed to it. Their aspirations were in many cases the same, one only has to look at Speer's 1938 light environment, which was an experiment of making architecture with light by the use of fifty high-powered searchlights, to be reminded of Gabo's 1929 project for a light-festival or the cathedral of the Future of the Bauhaus proclamation. The image of the 'Master Builder' was accepted by Hitler, and this together with his plans for vast city networks, reflects expressionist utopianism. In Albert Speer's work (Hitler's personal architect) there is much that relates to the immediate past, an architecture, although classical in general appearance, with many modern elements such as the relative freedom from ornament, the use of 'blocky' elements and an abstract feeling for form. Although much traditionalism prevailed in architecture, it mainly stemmed from individual ministries, but where projects did not fall into their scope and where ideology was thought to be unimportant, a modern type did exist such as much of the industrial architecture and the autobahns



Town-planning produced under the Weimar Republic, and especially the Stradtkrone or civic centre as envisaged by Bruno Haupt, was another idea taken over by the Nazis. In many of the Nazis' architectural blue-prints one can see buildings placed around a plaza and aligned to an avenue of approach along a central axis. This idea of focusing the life of an urban community, as cathedrals had done during the Middle Ages, was definitely not new or peculiar to the Nazis. The use of people, banners and movement under the Nazis is not unlike earlier revolutionary art. They became in many cases almost pure form and perhaps vaguely reminiscent of abstract painting and are derived from such films as Metropolis, and from Weimar formalism. Many of the artists and designers of Weimar seem to have been concerned with the establishment of a total art as an educational force, but the basic social problem remained how to unite aestheticism and utilitarianism, how to unify artistic freedom and governmental regulation. There had always been an insoluble conflict in the Bauhaus a man like Feininger would never hear of the unity between art and technology. The same applies to Klee, while on the other hand Schlemmer would have liked to have found some synthesis of the two opposing forces. It is interesting to note that while technological processes



MOTORWAY CONSTRUCTED UNDER THE NAZIS.  
(Grunberger, 1971).

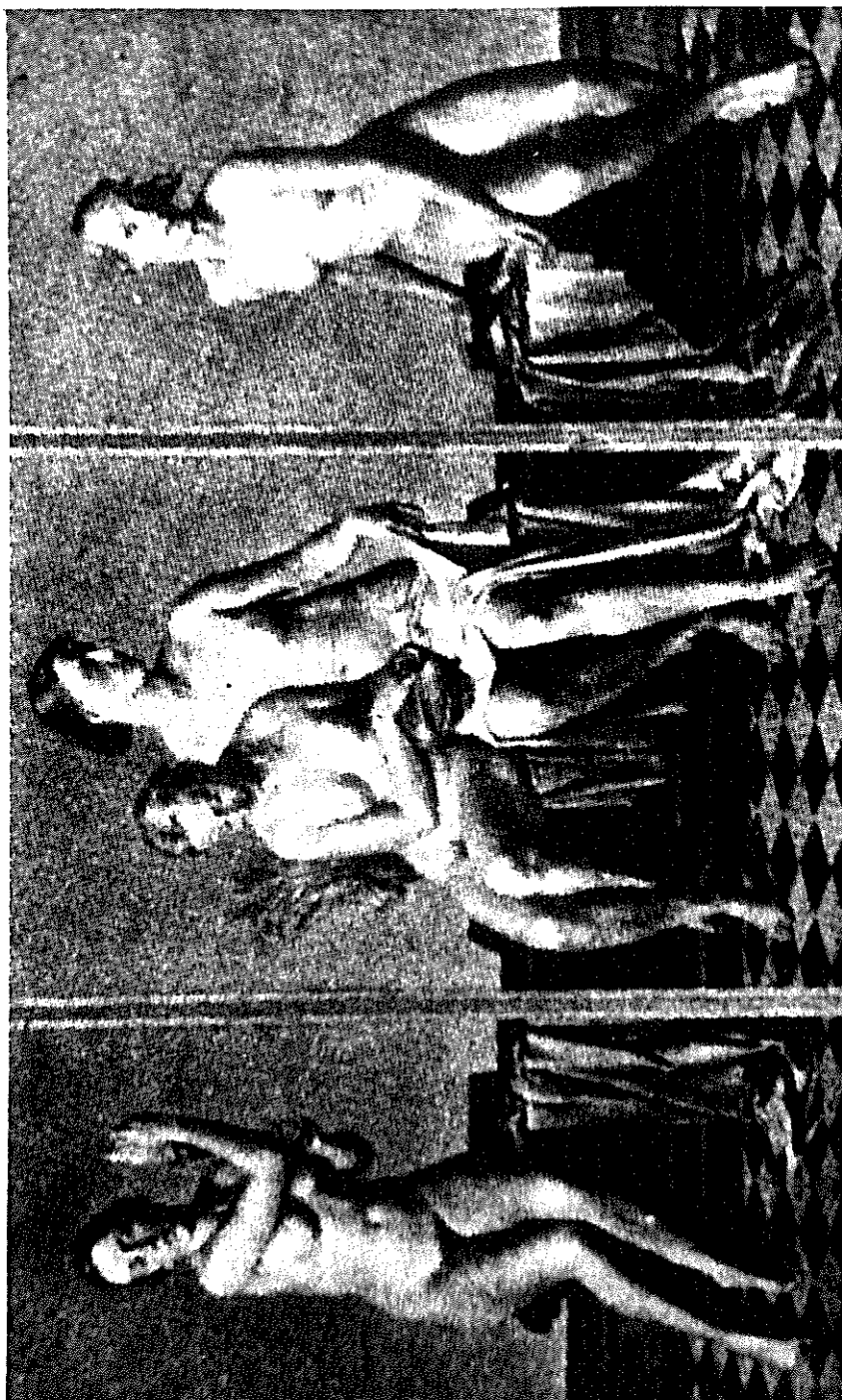
occupied the foreground of the Bauhaus it was the painters who gave it lustre and they had hardly anything in common with the rational principles of the organization.

For the Nazis there were no such problems as the above because for them the administrative was more important than the aesthetic. The arts which achieved prominence were those which furthered practical ends: architecture, design and gardening. Painting and sculpture were forced into a clarity of depictive style so as to illustrate the new mythology. Precise depiction of events and subject was the order of the day concentrating on national utilitarian ends, and painting became idealistic, commemorative and mythological with all stylistic and intellectual concerns in a secondary role. Hitler said: 'The artist does not create for the artist, he creates for the people and we will see to it that henceforth the people will be called in to judge its art'. (Elderfield, 1970). Depiction of correct events in painting need not necessarily lead to bad art if we think of someone like David, for example, but under the Nazis this work did not come from advanced artists who were stifled because of the fear that they might disturb the ideal optimism which Nazi painting 'showed'. Art was taken away from the artists and given to the

people - art became propaganda. This propaganda is also found in the fields of print, film and radio. Hitler himself credited the cinema together with the radio and motor-car as having made the Nazi victory possible. He understood the importance of all these mediums and on numerous occasions intervened personally. It was he who decreed, for example, that Otto Gebühr who had appeared in the Weimar film 'Frederick the Great' should reappear in the first Nazi Fredericus film, so that the continuity of the image should not be broken in the minds of cinema-goers. Not only films of great leaders were made but also films that had at their centre people who exemplified the triumph of untutored genius over formal learning, life stories of people such as Parnacelsus the alchemist, the poet Schiller and the inventor Diesel. Art alongside these other mediums received the same attention as can be seen from the opening of the First Exhibition of German Art in Munich with flags flying and Teuton warriors carrying a giant sun and the tinfoil covered cosmic ash-tree Yggdrasil in solemn procession. This House of German Art was designed by the Architect Professor Troost and was a monotonous building in the classical manner with a pillared facade, earning such names as the 'Munich Art Terminus' and Palazzo Kitschi. The artists represented at

this first exhibition included Adolf Wissel, Karl Leipold, Adolf Ziegler, Elk-Ever, Rothang and Professor Thorak. With a painting such as 'the Goddess of Art' by Adolf Ziegler in which lifeless nudity is represented with painstaking work the exhibition is perhaps summed up. It was this work by Ziegler that earned him the title of 'Reich Master of Pubic Hair'. If in some of these paintings there is an aura of authenticity it is because of the meticulous attention given to technical detail, which was largely the result of official guidance given to artists. This official guidance took the form of lightning visits to artists by officials who were always full of advice. This advice given to artists was not by any means consistent, a good instance being a remark made by Baldur von Schirach to the effect that pictures which could be confused with photographs might be good technically but that they must not be confused with art, since art had another truth other than reality.

Thus the violence directed against the art produced very little that was new, but what of the violence directed against the artists themselves? Their number has been estimated at 15,000 and it is especially amongst the painters that we find the strongest refusal to capitulate before the regime. The sanctions imposed on the men took three main forms : Lehrverbot



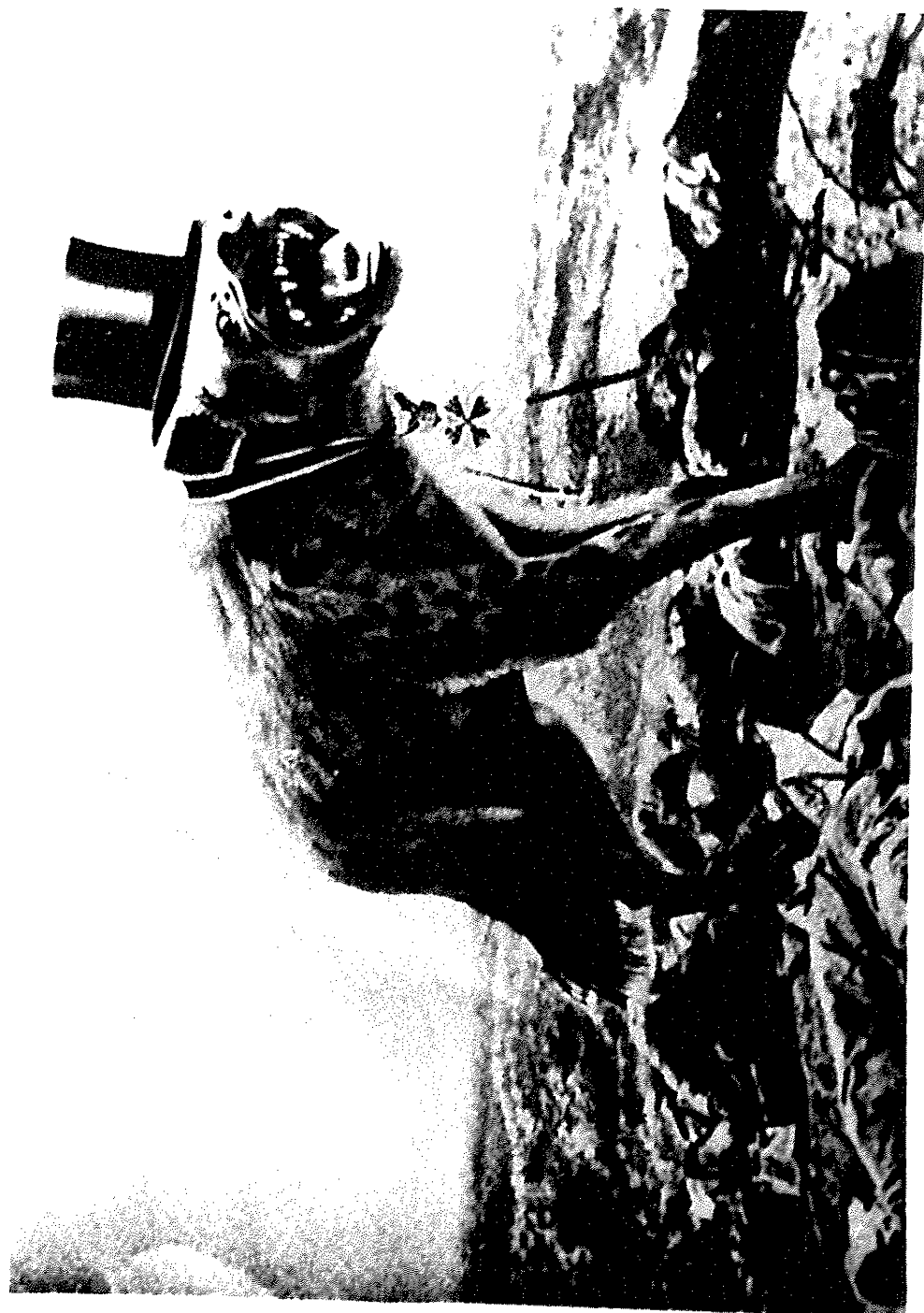
THE FOUR ELEMENTS. by Adolf Ziegler  
(Elderfield, 1970).

(deprivation of the right to teach), Ausstellungsverbot (deprivation of the right to exhibit), and Malverbot (deprivation of the right to paint). To enforce Malverbot raids were carried out on artists' homes and lists of artists' names were distributed to paint suppliers to ensure that the listed artists' materials were cut off at the source. Carl Hofer was one of many who received a visit from the Gestapo who came to check whether or not his paint brushes were still wet. Out of the enormous number of defamed artists it is interesting to find that very few actually went into exile. A few of the non-Germans, such as Klee and Feininger returned to their native countries, the former to Switzerland, and the latter to the United States. Kandinsky went to France, Kokoschka to England, Beckmann to Holland (Max Beckmann coincidentally left Germany the morning after Hitler's speech inaugurating the House of German Art in Munich 1937, a speech in which he forbade any artist to use colour that was different from that found in Nature), Kirchner to Switzerland, Grosz together with many of the Bauhaus people, such as Maholy-Nagy, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Mendelsohn to the United States. Max Lieberman and Ernst Barlach died relatively early, Barlach being abused even in Weimar times and spending the last years of his life as a recluse

after having been badly shaken by S.A. vandalism in 1933. His death was followed a year later by Kirchener committing suicide in exile in Switzerland. Oscar Schlemmer died in 1943, mainly due to the fact of Malverbot. Some of the artists who stayed produced paintings in secret, such as the anti-Nazi paintings by Otto Pankok, Hans Grundig and Otto Dix. Emil Nolde already mentioned as a party member and yet proscribed carried on, fearing detection but nevertheless painting water-colours in his North Sea cottage. The sculptor Hartung lived a life of seclusion with hardly anyone ever knocking at his door, while Baumeister guarded himself against discovery by referring to his paintings, which were abstract as experiments in camouflage.

John Heartfield continued his work in Prague as an exile until 1938. However, with the Gestapo closing in on him he fled to England where he lived until 1950. He left behind him twenty years work which was burnt in the bonfires of the New Order. With his photomontage every significant event in the Third Reich was ruthlessly marked. His work, even that of the post World War I period associated with Dada activities, had always been an instrument of extreme ridicule and destruction - destruction of German chauvinism, social injustice and political treachery. Compared with a lot of Berlin





WAR AND CORPSES - THE LAST HOPE OF THE RICH  
(27 APRIL 1932) by John Heartfield.  
(Scharf, 1968).

# DURCH LICHT ZUR NACHT



Also sprach Dr. Goebbels: Laßt uns auf neue Brände entfachen, so daß die Verblendeten nicht erwachen!

DURING THE LIGHT OF NIGHT (19 MAY 1933)

by John Heartfield.

(Scharf 1968).

Dada his work was first and foremost a political weapon and always serious. He also, unlike others who used photomontage, went to great lengths to arrive at his final results, often engaging carpenters and others to make props to be photographed. All this was carried over into his attack on Nazi ideology, and it was not without cause that he became one of the Nazi's prime targets.

In 1945, the Second World War ended with a Europe battered and exhausted. Modern art had had great difficulty in surviving in those countries invaded by the Germans. The strength of the Ecole de Paris had been weakened by a massive exit of artists. What emerged was the United States, not only as a world power but as a place enriched by many of the best artists of Europe. From as early as 1930 there had been a flow of these men into the United States and especially to New York. Nazi terror with its violence and destruction had in a sense created America as a force in world art. The United States had long been hospitable to the avant-garde art of Europe with a tradition stretching back to the Armory Show of 1913, and even to other pre-First War exhibitions. Also during World War One itself New York had been a centre of Dada activity with artists such as Duchamp, Picabia and Man Ray. The depression

years of 1930 turned American art in on itself and by 1939 art in the United States was of very little significance by world standards. It is with the outbreak of war and the arrival of the exiles that America begins to come into her own. Abstract expressionism would never have been born in New York without the arrival and stimulus of the Surrealists, not only Breton himself but also Ernst, Matta, Dali and Masson.

#### SUMMARY

To paint in one's time is not to reflect the 'world' passively - it is either a wanting to maintain it or a wanting to change it, and thus going beyond it into the future. In the artist's struggle to change the 'world' he is placed more deeply in it, and this 'change' is always accompanied by destruction and often associated with violence. War and Revolutions bring about changes, and it is for this reason that many artists have identified themselves with it (for example the Italian and Russian Futurists). Destruction first in order that the new can live (Dada), then Creation with its associated struggle giving form to something which has unity, destiny and completeness. Art must impose unity on 'reality', and in this sense the

artist is like all men in their fight to make love,  
principles, etc., ever enduring things of their lives.

ART IS LIFE.

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