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# Contested Politics and the Communist Visual: A Critical Analysis of John Heartfield's Photomontages at the End of the Weimar Republic

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Contested Politics and the Communist Visual:

A Critical Analysis of John Heartfield's Photomontages

at the End of the Weimar Republic

by

Justin Kauffman

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

In

History

Lehigh University

August 15, 2014

Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History.

Contested Politics and the Communist Visual: A Critical Analysis of John Heartfield's Photomontages at the End of the Weimar Republic

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Abstract of Master's Thesis, Submitted August 15, 2014:

   The aim of this thesis is to examine a conflict of Communist politics in the last pre-Nazi years of Germany's Weimar Republic through the photomontages of Communist Party member John Heartfield. The research investigates a moment when a radical Communist artist sacrificed his commitment to party line to reach the leftist masses with his propaganda.

   In the first part of the thesis, a background on Heartfield is provided to in order to present a trajectory leading up to his propaganda work for the *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ or Worker's Illustrated Magazine). Following this background, the discussion delves into an analysis of the photomontage in 1930 and 1931 starting with a brief comparison to election posters of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany or KPD). This section uses the photomontage visuals and articles written about the medium in order to outline the aesthetic and practical value of the photomontage as an appealing, widespread form of propaganda. In the final part of the thesis, an analysis of Heartfield's photomontages from July 1932 until February 1933 is presented along with the context of political conflict in the KPD. This section starts by exploring the moment in July 1932 when Heartfield went against the KPD party line with a montage that proposed a united front coalition with Social Democrats.

   In conclusion, the thesis argues that Heartfield's decision to go against party line contributed to the political conflict among German Communists in 1932. Heartfield was willing to undermine short-term changes in KPD policy for the immediate need of reaching his broad audience with what he considered the correct political message.

Figure 1. *Die letze Weisheit der SPD: "Nieder mit dem Marxismus!"*, 1931.

John Heartfield's last piece that appeared in *Die Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*

(AIZ or Worker's Illustrated Magazine) in 1931 was the one shown above. The sarcastic

work titled "Die letzte Weisheit der SPD: 'Nieder mit dem Marximus!'" (The Final

Wisdom of the SPD: "Down with Marxism") contained an image of Karl Marx being

apprehended by the Weimar police. Willhelm Sollmann, a Social Democrat from Köln,

could be seen on the right wearing a police helmet and grabbing Marx by the arm (Figure

1).[1] Heartfield altered a line directly from *The Communist Manifesto* for the piece,

saying, "Wir haben nicht unsere Ketten zu verlieren, sondern unsere Futterkrippen und

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[1] Figure 1. John Heartfield, *Die letze Weisheit der SPD: "Nieder mit dem Marxismus!," AIZ* 10, no. 27 (1931), in John Heartfield, *John Heartfield, AIZ - Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung, Volks Illustrierte, 1930-38*, ed. David Evans and Anna Lundgreen (New York: Kent Fine Art, 1992), 73. From this point forward, when a *shortened footnote* reads "Heartfield, *Heartfield*," it is referring to the secondary introduction of the photomontage compilation written by David Evans or the supplemental analysis that accompanies each montage. Shortened footnotes that read "Heartfield," with a German-language title are referring to the photomontages themselves, also found in this compilation. When "in Heartfield, *Heartfield*" appears at the end of a *full footnote*, it is referring to the place that the actual photomontage can be found in the above compilation.

Ministersessel" (We have not our chains to lose, but our feeding troughs and ministers' seats).[2] This piece was an aggressively cynical criticism of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party of Germany or SPD). Examining propaganda like this at the height of the late Weimar crisis provides the historian with a window into the political contradictions of the Communist left that reached their culmination in the summer of 1932; the piece was attacking the SPD, a political party that many of its viewers belonged to. This discrepancy between readership and bitingly sarcastic propaganda is a paradox that needs to be explored further.

This visual form was an application of the photomontage, an artistic medium that had been explored by modernists after World War I and into the 1920s. The term "photomontage" was first used by the Berlin Dadaists to refer to "their collages of printed ephemera and photographic fragments."[3] This piece follows these aesthetic patterns, as the images of Marx, Sollman, and the police are all cutouts from separate publications; Heartfield juxtaposed them in one piece to make this politically aggressive statement about the SPD.

This image is also striking, because the *AIZ* had a significant SPD-based readership. The illustrated magazine was known for targeting a mass base audience of Berlin's leftist parties, and now, for the first time, it was using this montage form to reach this readership with aggressive propaganda.

The photomontage above is reflective of the struggle in *Die Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe* (International Workers' Aid or IAH) during the late Weimar years to reconcile the popularity of Heartfield's artistic innovations in its propaganda with

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[2] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 72.
[3] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 10.

political allegiance to the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany or KPD). Similar to this image, Heartfield's photomontages in the *AIZ* from 1930 through the end of the Weimar Republic were driven by conscious efforts to shape politics with this growing montage form. In fact, Heartfield had always prioritized the political function of the art over the art itself. As an active member in the Berlin Dada movement, Heartfield rejected the concept of art form as a facet of bourgeois experience accessible to only the upper classes.[4] Heartfield yearned for a differentiated art that would reach a larger audience and convince them of the value in Communist doctrine. His artistic inclinations combined with his desire to make a political impact on the leftist masses led him to the *AIZ* in 1929. With this magazine, he could produce art that was not only cheap and accessible but would spread to a broad viewership. His work for the *AIZ* was not displayed in art exhibitions that charged an entry fee. The originals were those printed in the illustrated weekly and circulated all around Berlin by the IAH.

The IAH occupied a particular niche in its relation to the KPD. The Communist International (Comintern) originally organized it in 1921 as a relief organization for starving workers in Russia. In this fashion, it used propaganda, such as film shorts and illustrated pamphlets, to spread awareness about the suffering in the Soviet Union.[5] Shortly thereafter, it became an independent propaganda organization associated with Germany's Communist Party. Willi Münzenberg, the leader of the IAH, expanded the IAH's network and started several cultural organizations, including the AIZ, which were all funded and controlled by the propaganda organization. He repeatedly clarified that the

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[4] Beth Irwin Lewis, "Grosz/Heartfield: The Artist as Social Critic," in *Grosz/Heartfield: The Artist as Social Critic, October 1 – November 8, 1980* (Minneapolis: University Gallery, 1980), 27.
[5] Bruce Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Cagliari to Kuhle Wampe* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 52.

IAH was an independent organization, which would endorse the KPD's politics but would remain autonomous in its own right.[6] In 1929, Heartfield began producing artwork for Münzenberg and the IAH and gained access to the broad leftist readership that the propaganda organization had already built. As a Dadaist artist, Heartfield's modernist sensibility led him to seek out large audiences to effect with his art, and after 1929, he reached a wider audience than most artists in the Berlin avant-garde could even claim.

As well, 1929 was a crucial year because of official changes in KPD policy. In that year, the party adopted a "social fascist" platform under the instruction of the Comintern and directed a substantial amount of propaganda at the Social Democrats. However, in the spring 1932, the party briefly abandoned attacks on the SPD. The Comintern responded by censuring the KPD for opposing their directive, and by June, the party had reverted back to the "social fascist" platform.[7]

Heartfield and the IAH took a separate political path in these same months. The *AIZ* montages abandoned the vilification of Social Democrats early in 1932 in accordance with the party's direction, but they never returned to this theme for the remainder of the year. Throughout 1932, not a single one of Heartfield's montages targeted the Social Democrats, whereas the year before, anti-SPD ridicule was the prevalent focus in his propaganda. In fact, the *AIZ* printed a montage produced by Heartfield in July 1932 that went against the party line and proposed a united front coalition with Social Democrats.

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[6] This distinct leftist mission brought ridicule from the KPD itself, but without Münzenberg, the propaganda channels open to the Communists would have been more limited. Helmut Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire, 1921-1933," *The Journal of Modern History* 38, no. 3 (September 1966): 289, accessed February 11, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1877352.
[7] Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 82; Sabine Kriebel, "Photomontage in the Year 1932: John Heartfield and the National Socialists," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 1 (January 2008): 116, accessed March 03, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20108008.

This discrepancy between the KPD and Heartfield's propaganda in the IAH challenges a standard narrative of the German Communist political system in the Weimar period.

According to this historical account of the German Communist Party, the KPD's allegiance to Moscow grew stronger over the course of the Weimar Republic, and by 1932, top-down Comintern directives regulated KPD politics. For instance, Bruce Murray writes that the "KPD's alliance with the Soviet Union and the Comintern intensified" in 1926, when Ernst Thälmann took over the party leadership. Thälmann thought it required of the party to loyally follow the Comintern and allowed Moscow to tighten its control over the KPD.[8] Eric D. Weitz constructs this same narrative in *Creating German Communism*. He acknowledges that there exists a notion of the Soviet Union as "the nefarious force" controlling the KPD in too "many historical accounts" but states that Moscow *still* cemented its top-down control by the end of the 1920s. By that point, party members knew that to oppose Stalin and the Comintern meant political death.[9] It is possible that Ben Fowkes' book *Communism in Germany* is one of these "historical accounts" that Weitz refers to; Fowkes claims that the KPD's adherence to Moscow's orders only deepened as the interwar period progressed. Like Murray, he focuses on the vital role that Thälmann and his loyalty to the KPD played in this development.[10]

The *AIZ's* visual propaganda in this last year of Weimar Republic challenges this account of the German Communists growing devotion to Soviet Russia. From 1930 until the summer of 1932, members of the KPD opposed the Comintern's instruction, which on its own tests the narrative of strict Comintern control. In any case, by July of 1932, the

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[8] Murray, *Cagliari*, 109.

[9] Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 235.

[10] Ben Fowkes, *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 192-7.

KPD was cooperating with Moscow's direction. At the same moment, Heartfield's

photomontage for the magazine indicated a real subversion of the approved party line.

Moreover, the visual was appearing in an illustrated newspaper with a mass base

audience that far exceeded that of the party organ, *Die Rote Fahne*. With such an

expansive readership, Heartfield's oppositional propaganda in 1932 could have spread to

a significantly large population.

This paper contends that the montages Heartfield produced as IAH propaganda

are a window into a much more bottom-up, rather than top-down, story of what was

happening among German Communists from 1929 to Hitler's chancellorship; These

visual sources demonstrate that there were contested moments during these pre-Nazi

years, in which those involved in the creation of this visual propaganda undermined the

Communist Party line. These findings could suggest that in this instance, an artist who

came from a background in the modernist avant-garde influenced shifts in the political

environment and contributed to a moment of openness and dispute among German

Communists.

This research also makes a new contribution to the literature on Heartfield. With

the exception of a few studies, art historians have written most historical works on

Heartfield.[11] These authors have successfully created an engaging discourse on the artist,

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[11] In the last two years, Andrés Mario Zervigón and Sabine Kriebel published books on the political nature of Heartfield's work. Zervigón argues that Heartfield's success in turning the Communist photomontage into a mass medium came from his experiences with his early Dadaist art in Berlin. Heartfield distrusted the solitary photograph and wanted to reveal the "truth" that it disguised. Kriebel makes a similar argument but maps Heartfield's transformation over the course of the interwar years in Germany. She posits that the photomontage was a highly relevant visual medium in the Weimar Republic, and it was integral to the political culture of the period. For her, Heartfield was essential to this bourgeoning medium. Maud Lavin and Beth-Irwin Lewis are two other art historians who have also done work on Heartfield. Lavin included a discussion of Heartfield in her book *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, and Graphic Design* as a historical example of how graphic designers can be influential cultural actors. Lewis discusses Heartfield alongside his brother, Wieland Herzfelde, and George Grosz. According to her, Heartfield created a

and for that reason, this paper will draw on much of their research and conclusions. However, taken together, they overlook the significance of the Heartfield photomontages in regards to the political relationships between the Communist Party and its associated cultural organizations. Some of this scholarship on Heartfield recognizes 1932 as a pivotal year, but these authors focus on the artist's antifascist propaganda.[12] The appearance of anti-SPD work, and its subsequent disappearance in 1932 is much less prominent in the analyses. Accordingly, this paper will combine an examination of both anti-SPD propaganda and antifascist propaganda with a discussion of the KPD's political situation to illustrate how Heartfield and the *AIZ* disrupted the acceptance of party doctrine in these pre-Nazi years.

This study is foremost a political history of an art medium, rather than the standard art history of a political artist. Despite their dominant focus on schools of art, several historians still manage to consider the political side of the Communist artist's work. I am readjusting their standard interpretation by melding an analysis of the montages with the historical context of the Heartfield-Münzenberg alliance in the AIZ, along with KPD politics, in order to expose a specific instance when the propaganda that came out of modernist art form refused to conform to the party line and contributed to a contested political environment.

This analysis will begin with background on Heartfield and the chronology of his career over the course of the Weimar period. This section introduces the central character

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"uniquely transparent didactic form" in the photomontage, and almost any experience in his career as a Weimar artist was a part of this formation. Andrés Mario Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Sabine Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Maud Lavin, *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, and Graphic Design* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001); Lewis, "Critic," 37.
[12] Kriebel, "Year 1932."

of the study in greater depth and describes his artistic and political development over the Weimar period that transformed him into the radical artist he would remain while working for the *AIZ*. This background will construct a trajectory leading up to Heartfield's IAH service, which began in 1929. His photomontages, which were a result of years of experimentation with his aesthetic as an artist in Berlin, then spread with the IAH's propaganda and the increasing readership of the *AIZ*. Heartfield's work reached an audience he would probably never have found on his own.

After this background, the paper will move into a substantial discussion on official sources of KPD propaganda between 1930 and 1931 in order to provide a comparative framework for Heartfield's photomontages in these same years. After surveying the KPD's official propaganda, this section introduces examples of IAH propaganda, such as written documents pertaining to the photomontage form and the *AIZ* photomontages, in order to establish the differences between formal party propaganda and the tradition of the photomontage. Moreover, these sources demonstrate that Heartfield's unique aesthetic and a broad political readership made the *AIZ* photomontage a more effective form of propaganda than these KPD counterparts.

Following this consideration, the paper will move into a brief discussion on the relevant political relationships between the KPD, IAH, and the Comintern, and how they led to the contested moment in 1932. The relationship between the IAH and the KPD was tested in 1932 as the KPD continued to have its own contentions with the Comintern. This section establishes a political context for Heartfield's oppositional propaganda in the summer of 1932.

Finally, the paper will close with a consideration of his photomontages from July 1932 until February 1933. Heartfield's photomontages in this span of time get at the crux of this paper's argument. The photomontages provide the historian with a window into the political contentions between German Communists in this year. Against the political background, the visual propaganda illustrates that there was a significant break in July 1932. For the most part, Heartfield's photomontages since he started at the *AIZ* corresponded to KPD policy, but in 1932, his work diverged from the KPD line.

This analysis of the politicized visuals also compares other shifts in Berlin's political landscape to the content of the photomontages. For example, as antifascist visuals became the most regular feature of Heartfield's photomontages in 1932, the Nazis were making substantial gains in their voter numbers. All of these images were part of a longstanding effort to undermine the voter leverage that the Nazis had. This antifascist material was complicated by the debate among Communists over the official stance on Germany's Social Democrats. By considering the political situation in this year and the imagery of the montages side by side, the historian can further understand the motivations behind the propaganda and how these concerns conflicted with party policy.

Before getting to his montage creations, a context for Heartfield's life and work in the Weimar Republic is warranted. John Heartfield was actually born Helmut Herzfelde, but later Anglicized his name as a protest to World War I. He started producing art for Malik Verlag, a publishing house, in 1916. Malik Verlag began as an antiwar conduit for Heartfield, Herzfelde, and George Grosz, a talented painter and close friend of Heartfield for most of the 1920s.[13] The three men started a short-lived antiwar periodical called *Neue Jugend*. The periodical was banned several times by the Reichstag government, but

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[13] Lavin, *Clean*, 14.

Malik Verlag was able to run it in some form for most of the war by changing the print schedule and the name. Heartfield was responsible for managing the paper's typography.[14] In this position, he experimented with presenting words and images in an appealing arrangement and used that experience to form the layout and composition techniques for his photomontage artwork that would come later.

Heartfield's relationship with Grosz also shaped his with art and propaganda during and shortly after the war. The two men became close after meeting in Berlin in 1915, and together, they invented a crude form of antiwar agitprop.[15] As Heartfield and Grosz saw it, film and photography had degenerated into archaic and useless mediums, because the government censored war publicity. Their response to this was to send disconcerting postcards to German soldiers at the front; they used images, and an early form of the montage method in order to expose the true horrors of war, upset the recipients, and spread discontent.[16] Grosz would sketch drawings for the cards, and Heartfield would arrange the layout. The postcards were the first of much collaboration between these two Dadaists. More importantly, the postcards were another step in the evolving form of Heartfield photomontage.[17] He learned how to convey a satirical message against the war effort using the visual devices of this propaganda. Even before he joined an official party, Heartfield was a politically motivated individual who had begun to devise an avant-garde photomontage form.

Heartfield, Herzfelde, and Grosz all became members of the German Communist Party almost immediately after its foundation in 1918. Malik Verlag eventually became

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[14] Beth Irwin Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 45.
[15] Lewis, *Grosz*, 41.
[16] Zervigón, *Agitated*, 42.
[17] These postcards are "known to us today only through descriptions." Zervigón, *Agitated*, 41.

closely associated with the party as an essentially outsourced publishing house, but it never became an official branch.[18] Nevertheless, Heartfield experimented with party artwork while working there. For instance, he designed book jacket covers for Communist authors, such as Grosz or Kurt Tucholsky. Many of these covers again relied on the photomontage method that would make Heartfield famous in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[19] From postcards to book covers, his early experiments with the montage method allowed him to engage with an aesthetic form that had vast political potential.

The photomontage's political value in the Communist movement thrilled Heartfield. He saw no use in art that did not have a political role. He was deeply troubled by the artists' status in a capitalist society. This anxiety is a facet of the artist's life that Lewis addresses in her essay, "Grosz/Heartfield: The Artist as a Social Critic." Her words are worth quoting in length: "For both men, the veneration of art and culture was a bourgeois swindle designed to keep the masses docile, to dampen revolutionary ardor, and to undermine the class consciousness of the proletariat."[20] Here, Lewis is identifying a belief that drove Heartfield and Grosz to create sarcastic art that opposed mainstream culture. Heartfield would express this viewpoint many times over the remainder of his career. Not only did bourgeois art disguise the harsh realities of the world, it hindered the class revolution, which Heartfield considered himself a part of. His solution was an original proletariat culture that rejected all bourgeois counterparts.

He wanted the working class to harness art as a weapon against bourgeoise culture and society. This desire compelled him to join the Red Group or Union of Communist Artists in Germany in 1924. The Red Group was an artistic association, and

[18] Lavin, *Clean*, 14.
[19] Lavin, *Clean*, 14.
[20] Lewis, "Critic," 27.

its mission statement mandated that the members act as a Communist first and as "special or skilled worker" second.[21] These artists pledged that all their ability and talent was to serve a single function: the advancement of the communist struggle.

Heartfield's contribution to this movement would be to reshape the medium of photography and create a new modernist aesthetic that he could use to reach and inspire the masses. He distrusted the message of traditional art forms, the photograph included. The failure of the solitary photograph was part of what drew him to the photomontage medium in the first place. He wanted images to portray a raw reality, and for them to do this, he would have to devise a new visual medium that was political and belligerent.[22] Heartfield used images he took from the illustrated press to achieve this end. Many of these pictures had already appeared to the public and thus, his manipulation of them could have a greater satirical effect. Nonetheless, he still feared that the photomontage would work to deceive the public rather than inform it as the bourgeois photograph had done before.[23]

He was consequently troubled by an uncertainty about his own medium's value. Andrés Mario Zervigón already considers this anxiety in *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image*. Therefore, it is not the goal of this discussion to reflect on it at length. Nonetheless, it is evidence of the effects of Communist politics on his artistic maturation. Communist ideology taught Heartfield to remain skeptical of all bourgeois art. This skepticism evoked a relentless fear in Heartfield over his own work, because he was aware that the photomontage had to rely on the mechanics of photography when targeting the leftist masses.

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[21] Lewis, *Grosz*, 115.
[22] Zervigón, *Agitated*, 6-7.
[23] Zervigón, *Agitated*, 6.

Münzenberg, who had similar political inclinations, created a propaganda network that would ultimately allow Heartfield to reach this audience with his art and become an influential propagandist himself. Münzenberg was a KPD member, and his Communist propaganda network spread to multiple European countries.[24] The German IAH was perhaps the largest organization he built in his lifetime. It was a vast network for Communist propaganda, which had no equal in the years from 1929 until 1931.[25] The IAH consisted of a film production company, two tabloids, literary magazines, and most importantly for the purposes of this paper, two periodicals, the *AIZ* and *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* (The Worker Photographer). Münzenberg started printing these two periodicals between 1924 and 1926.[26]

Münzenberg was also the man responsible for hiring Heartfield to work for the *AIZ*. The two men's partnership was no coincidence. Münzenberg was surely aware of Heartfield's work, especially by the mid-1920s when Malik Verlag began operating as essentially an outsourced publishing house for the KPD. In addition, Heartfield and Münzenberg had an ideological likeness. They were both convinced that the leftist artist had a revolutionary role to uphold in the creation of political propaganda.

Heartfield started working for the magazine in 1929; by the next year, it had experienced a noticeable spike in its readership.[27] Determining exactly how the *AIZ* achieved such a circulation is problematic. The respective popularity was highly

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[24] Cristina Cuevas-Wolf, "Montage as Weapon: The Tactical Alliance between Willi Münzenberg and John Heartfield," *New German Critique* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 186, accessed February 11, 2014, http://ngc.dukejournals.org/content/36/2_107/185.full.pdf+html.
[25] Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.
[26] Cuevas-Wolf, "Montage," 185.
[27] The *AIZ*'s readership was 350,000 by 1930, an increase of approximately 100,000 from its 1927 figure. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 211.

dependent on consumer habits. All the same, there is ample reason to believe that Heartfield and his montages played a large part in the soaring popularity of the magazine.

Heartfield's experiences in the first ten years of the interwar period shaped his photomontage aesthetic and his particular politics, but the cultural dissemination of his work was limited to leftist art circles in Berlin. By working for the *AIZ*, he could satisfy his urge to deliver his new montage form to a mass base audience. That audience only grew as he spent more time at the magazine, and the photomontage went from a radical form of the avant-garde in Berlin to a familiar propaganda medium.

The KPD's official sources of propaganda were declining in popularity in the same years that the photomontage was on the rise. The secondary literature on the KPD has considered this dilemma.[28] A common narrative that has emerged from the scholarship is that the Nazis had a relatively greater ability to appeal to wider audiences with their propaganda. In his study of political violence, Dirk Schumann claims the NSDAP was "modern in its propaganda techniques and in its status as a 'people's party'

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[28] According to historian Dirk Schumann, the streets became a setting for political performances in the wake of World War I, and Nazis and communists transformed this into violent struggles for urban terrain. He argues that the Nazi storm troopers and the less-organized Rotfrontkämpferbund (Red Front Fighter's League or RFB) adopted a precedent of violent political action that was set by middle-class organizations like the *Stahlhelm* in the middle years in the Weimar period. Eve Rosenhaft's *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* also focuses on political violence, but it brings to light a significant contradiction in the history of the KPD's Weimar years: there was rarely a consensus between party leaders and the KPD rank-and-file. She uses print journalism to make the argument that party rhetoric did not match reality in the apparatus of Weimar communism. Bernhard Fulda's *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* proposes that Berlin readers did not necessarily read the newspapers of their political parties through its comprehensive comparison of electoral and circulation statistics. More important, however, is Fulda's analysis of the KPD's official press sources. He documents the decline in popularity of the party organ, *Die Rote Fahne*. Timothy Brown compares Nazi and Communist organizations to contend that both parties fought for a certain symbolic authority through their nationalist and socialist rhetoric. This symbolic struggle involved a political performance that he breaks down into subcategorical elements, the most important of which was a test of authenticity. Much of his comparison pertains to party propaganda. Hence, hix work is useful in this discussion. Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933: Battles for the Streets and Fears of Civil War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*; Fulda, *Press*; Timothy S. Brown, *Weimar Radicals: Nazis and Communists between Authenticity and Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

that was aimed, in principle, at all social strata."[29] The Nazis maintained the image they were a classless party. In contrast, the KPD misjudged its rank and file of German workers, the party's most crucial class of voters, a point that Eve Rosenhaft makes in her study on political violence in Weimar Berlin. According to her, writings in *Die Rote Fahne*, the party organ, were reflective of a lack of consensus between the Central Committee of the party and the rank and file.[30] Not even KPD members were inclined to read the party's newspaper. Bernhard Fulda confirms that there was a lack of interest in the political press among Communist members in *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*.[31]

Timothy S. Brown agrees with this explanation for the discrepancy between Nazi and Communist propaganda. "All aspects of Nazi propaganda," he argues, "were used because they had a wide appeal, a fact confirmed by many observers across the political spectrum."[32] This "wide appeal" allowed Nazi propaganda to serve its proper function, that of persuading numerous Germans to support their right-wing party. The Communists, however, did not witness this same degree of success because they held on to their party organs despite their waning popularity over the course of the Weimar period.

A newspaper survey in 1924 taken by the party's central newspaper, *Die Rote Fahne*, demonstrates how the popularity of the KPD's political press was fading well before the IAH's illustrated press took off. The Communists, concerned about their circulation figures in the competitive environment of the Berlin press market, published a

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[29] Schumann, *Violence*, 213.
[30] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 65-6.
[31] Fulda, *Press*, 26.
[32] Brown, *Radicals*, 53

report titled "What do workers think about *Rote Fahne*?"[33] They received around sixty

answers from a variety of people ranging from readers within the party to non-

communists who did not read the paper at all. Most of the responses were unflattering.

One respondent answered that the "style" was not meant for the working class, its

primary target audience. Rather, it was "more a paper for party functionaries than for the

masses."[34] The respondents disagreed on the exact reasons why they preferred other

papers or simply did not read political newspapers at all, but most saw *Die Rote Fahne* as

uninteresting or beyond their political comprehension.[35]

Seven years later, *Die Rote Fahne*'s situation had only worsened as they dropped

from a circulation of over 30,000 to 23,000 in 1931. In addition to the declining

popularity of the *Die Rote Fahne*, the KPD was struggling to match the right wing's

success in the polls with its election propaganda. Between 1928 and 1930, the NSDAP

(Nazis) improved its voter percentage from 2.6 percent to 18.2 percent and surpassed the

KPD, which saw only a 2.5 increase in voter percentage from 10.6 to 13.1.[36]

At the same time, Münzenberg and Heartfield were making names for themselves

in their illustrated press ventures. The IAH's two photography periodicals managed to

dwarf lesser Communist newspapers in their circulation numbers throughout this

period.[37] The success of the *AIZ* tests Brown's comparison of Nazi and Communist

propaganda, because the magazine had a wide appeal.

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[33] Fulda, *Press*, 26.
[34] Fulda, *Press*, 26.
[35] Fulda, *Press*, 26-7.
[36] "Elections in the Weimar Republic," Administration of the German Bundestag, March 2006, accessed March 1, 2014, http://www.bundestag.de/blob/189774/7c6dd629f4afff7bf4f962a45c110b5f/elections_weimar_republic-data.pdf.
[37] Fulda, *Press*, 24.

As an illustrated weekly, the *AIZ* competed with not only newspapers but also visual propaganda, such as political posters. Hence, the political posters are another visual medium to consider here. The differences in formulaic qualities combined with the readership and production in the IAH allowed Heartfield's photomontages to achieve a wider cultural spread. It could be argued, therefore, that the photomontages in the *AIZ* were more effective propaganda.

A political poster from 1929 serves as a useful starting point. The poster contained an image of a skull with an SA helmet on it and a tattered Prussian imperial flag in the background. The prominent text read, "Faschismus der Todfeind der Arbeiter!" (Fascism, the deadly enemy of the worker!), and "Faschismus" was drawn as if it was dripping with blood (Figure 2).[38] This cartoon signified anticommunist violence on the part of the Nazis, implying they were both a political and physical threat.[39] The violent illustrations represented an imminent threat of an anticommunist war, a common idea among German Communists. Many German Communists, including Münzenberg, expressed a fear over an impending war against the Soviet Union.[40] This poster referred to that notion by suggesting that the Nazis would instigate that sort of militarism.

Just as important than the message of the poster, however, was its visual composition. The poster was a rudimentary hand-drawn cartoon with a limited amount of detail. For example, it appeared as if someone with the most basic drawing skills sketched the birds flying in the top left corner of the poster. Additionally, the cartoon was

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[38] Figure 2. KPD, "Faschismus der Todfeind der Arbeiter!" (poster), Bundesarchiv, 1929, accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/archives/barchpic/search/_1394219365/?search[view]=detail&search[focus]=19.

[39] Ironically, combative paramilitary groups could have taken this as approval of their skirmishes on the streets of Berlin, although the KPD officially discouraged this type of "individual terror." Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 58.

[40] Gruber, "Empire," 295.

essentially a single drawing with a consistent color scheme. Unlike the photomontage that took fragments from a variety of different sources, this cartoon was an original drawing done from scratch to make a simple political statement. Heartfield too worked towards clear political messages with his montages for the *AIZ*, but he wanted his viewership to be actively engaged with the propaganda. To achieve this end, he stole recognizable images from the popular press. Beth Irwin-Lewis calls this his "uniquely transparent didactic form."[41] With a little bit of time, the informed reader could gather Heartfield's purpose in compiling images in such a distinct manner. In comparison, the educated individual could not miss the immediate meaning of a political poster with such explicit text and artless cartoons.



Figure 2. "Faschismus der Todfeind der Arbeiter!,"1929.

The next example also contained illustrations referring to the threat of an imperialist war against the Soviet Union. The illustrator drew an outstretched arm

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[41] Lewis, "Critic," 37.

grabbing a rifle with a red flag tied around the barrel (Figure 3).[42] The poster was an

antiwar plea for Germany Communists to protest the imperialist war or "krieg dem

imperialistischen Kriege" (fight the imperialist war).  Although this poster was not

explicitly antifascist, Communists regularly claimed that the Nazis were behind an

imperialist war against the Soviet Union.



Figure 3. "Krieg dem imperialistischen Kriege!," 1931.

The illustrations in this antiwar poster are even simpler than the previous

example. The arm and gun were only sketches, and black and red were the only two

colors in the poster. The arm could have, in theory, belonged to anyone, which was a tool

the KPD could have used to portray its working-class base. In contrast, Heartfield did not

need to use this kind of technique in his photomontages. He had a plethora of images

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[42] Figure 3. KPD, "Krieg dem imperialistischen Kriege!" (poster), Bundesarchiv, 1931, accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/archives/barchpic/search/_1408042178/?search[view]=detail&search[focus]=44.

from Berlin's mainstream press at his disposal. Instead of using universal images of the common worker, he could draw on a diverse range of sources and select recognizable photographs to cut into fragments for a photomontage. As a result, his montage form was a more intimate and deeply perceptive form of propaganda.

Another poster from 1930 focused on a similar antifascist theme as the first example. Once again, a Nazi soldier with an SA helmet was depicted as a menacing skull. The whole left side containing the SA soldier was black and ominous, which contrasted with the right side of the poster showing a Communist family enjoying life outside their modest house. The three words jutting across this dichotomous illustration read "Tod oder Brot" (Death or bread) (Figure 4).[43] Similar to the previous poster, this cartoon denounced the Nazi Party for its violent predilections.



Figure 4. "Tod oder Brot," 1930.

This second poster contained a comparable set of visual qualities. It was also hand-drawn, and each side had a fixed color scheme. Although this poster looked like it required more time and effort than the previous example, the person who drew it was

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[43] Figure 4. KPD, "Tod oder Brot" (poster), Hoover Institution Political Database, 1930, accessed February 9, 2014, http://hoohila.stanford.edu/poster/view_subject.php?posterID=GE+828.

probably an illustrator, not an artist with the extensive background of Heartfield. The cartoons on the right side of the poster were also noteworthy, because they were generic figures of a Communist family. Nothing was significant about them other than their typical working-class appearance. Although the cartoons juxtaposed illustrations as one can see in the poster below, they were mere caricatures. The figures that would appear in a Heartfield photomontage were most often familiar faces taken from their original sources in the popular press and would. Communist Heinz Lüdecke noted this distinction in 1931 when he wrote, "Instead, we see something printed 'in the original.' The pictures, therefore – this is obvious – are more than 'illustrations.'"[44] Here, Lüdecke referred to how actual photographs could serve as "pictorial" examples of a certain text, rather than only illustrate that text as drawings would. Heartfield's photomontages added another element to this. The images were recycled to construct a new political message, but if the viewer recognized that the pictures were taken from another source, as many probably did, they had an additional political undertone. Therefore, they could evoke a more acute reaction.

Unlike the photomontage, these political posters did not have a history of artistic tradition or a set of aesthetic principles taken from an avant-garde movement. Heartfield's works in the *AIZ* had a tradition dating back to the post-World War I experiments in Dadaist Berlin. A variation on the aesthetic from that art movement characterized the photomontages that later appeared in the *AIZ*. There is a slight irony in this comparison. Although it was more time-consuming, Heartfield could assemble a photomontage like a cartoonist could draw a political poster. He could create an entirely

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[44] Heinz Lüdecke, "Bild-Wort-Montage: Ein Vorschlag zur Zusammenarbeit von Fotografen und Schriftstellern," *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 9 (September 1931), in *Worker Photography*, 114.

new image almost from scratch. And yet, by including clippings and images that an average Berliner would recognize, Heartfield's montages had a political relevance that posters did not.

The photomontage and the political poster also diverged in their consumption and production. Political posters were usually created and distributed by the Communist Party itself, frequently during months leading up to party elections. One could find them hung as a banner on a building, in a kiosk window, or attached to a light post. In contrast, photomontages were circulated by the IAH through the *AIZ*. They did not necessarily correspond with a political milestone but still echoed the political realities. Heartfield's photomontages were placed on many covers of the *AIZ* and inside of it for special topic issues.[45]

The photomontage technique that Heartfield first experimented with as an artist working for Malik Verlag in Berlin had become a creative medium that the German Communist movement desperately needed to reinvigorate its party propaganda. Although this new form eventually came under the control of the IAH, an associated but ultimately independent Communist organization, the photomontage was a much-needed boost to Communist propaganda.

Just as these montage creations appeared with more regularity in 1930 and 1931, Communists began to write for the IAH about photography experimentation and its vast potential as propaganda. *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf*, the IAH periodical, serves as an excellent written record of Communist theorizing in this section. Münzenberg founded *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* for the purpose of teaching German workers how to harness the photograph and all it entailed as an effective tool for the communist class struggle. Its

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[45] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 14.

writers thought of photography as an ideal rallying tool, and they underlined many of its practical advantages with their contributions. These writers believed that experimentation in new photographic technique could help the IAH galvanize the leftist masses that consumed their propaganda.

Münzenberg himself authored several pieces for *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf*, which allows the historian to account for his notions about his propaganda efforts. An essay written by Münzenberg in 1927 is an effective starting point for this part of the discussion because it predicted the later success of his project. In it he envisioned an organization called "Die Internationale der Arbeiter-fotografen" (The Worker Photographers' International). Münzenberg was one of the first to grasp the immense potential behind photographic propaganda.[46] The photography that would result from education in his organization would be "practical" propaganda, rather than art. It would serve an unequivocal purpose in the class revolution that he and his fellow Communists sought to inspire. Münzenberg realized the social and political implications of Communist photography, and the content of his magazine reflected this awareness. He believed there were far more benefits to an illustrated journal than a political daily, saying, "Photographs convey impressions and genuine experiences to a much greater degree than does the written word."[47] The literate public in Berlin appeared to agree with this, because in the late 1920s just as the circulation of the *AIZ* took off, the circulation of newspapers, like *Die Rote Fahne*, continued to shrink.[48]

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[46] Willi Münzenberg, "Die Internationale der Arbeiter-fotografen," *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 5 (January 1927), in *The Worker Photography Movement, 1926-1939: Essays and Documents*, ed. Jorge Ribalta and Erica Witschey (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011)*,* 100.
[47] Münzenberg, "Internationale," 101.
[48] Fulda, *Press*, 24.

Other Communist authors joined Münzenberg in this consideration of photography's role in Communist propaganda. Hermann Leupold was one of these writers. He argued that those bourgeoisie people with leftist leanings were part of the audience that could be stimulated by worker photography. At the beginning of one of his essays, Leupold castigated the bourgeoisie in standard communist fashion but then admitted that middle-class photographers could still be politically turned. "New recruits can be won for the class struggle; it is necessary to organize them."[49] According to Leupold, bourgeois photography could never capture the essence of the class struggle. He went as far as making the generalizing accusation that it was based on forgery and outright lies.[50] Photographic propaganda was a task reserved for the Communist individual, but that did not mean that the bourgeoisie should be excluded from the IAH's propaganda.

Leupold wanted to separate working-class photography from that of the middle and upper classes. According to not only him, but also Heartfield, bourgeois photography was for superfluous enjoyment. Alternatively, the photography and photomontages of the proletariat had a vital political role. This theorizing about the differences between proletariat and bourgeois photography alluded to the larger readership of the IAH. These writers would not have been making these arguments in a photography journal if there were not a non-communist readership seeing their material. In fact, several of the people who contributed to the *AIZ* were not Communist members. Helmut Gruber posits that this

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[49] Hermann Leupold, "Das Bild: Eine Waffe im Klassenkampf" (The Picture: A Weapon in the Class Struggle), *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 11 (November 1931), in *Worker Photography*, 119.
[50] Leupold, "Waffe," 117.

was intentional on Münzenberg's part.[51] He wanted to maintain the broad leftist image of the magazine.[52]

The photomontage's appearance in the *AIZ* starting in 1930 was an extension of this appeal to the wide audience that the magazine maintained. The IAH network would ensure that Heartfield's photomontages reached thousands of readers from a number of parties, including the KPD and the SPD. As this portion of the paper demonstrates, the photomontage became a leading form of propaganda in the late 1920s and early 1930s due to not only its popularity as propaganda with a distinct aesthetic but also its connection to the IAH's widespread leftist audience. To understand the photomontage as German Communists used it, a discussion of the appeal behind this visual medium as expressed by Communist writers is also warranted. The influential Communists behind this medium were committed to a campaign of mass dissemination, and it would come to rely on Heartfield's photomontage, just as his photomontages would rely on the IAH's network. Both written sources describing these efforts and the photomontages so crucial to them serve as an entry point into this propaganda crusade.

In 1931, Münzenberg outlined the "Tasks and Objectives" that fueled visual propaganda, particularly in the *AIZ*. He discussed some of the advantages that the *AIZ* had as an illustrated publication, which were indeed a factor in its increase in circulation. He compared the illustrated magazine to dry political dailies, arguing that "an illustrated magazine is more entertaining than a leading article in a political daily."[53] By 1931, this

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[51] Gruber, "Empire," 290f.
[52] Kurt Tucholsky and Kathe Köllwitz were two non-communists that contributed to frequently contributed to the magazine. Kriebel, "Year 1932," 57-8.
[53] Willi Münzenberg, "Aufgaben und Ziele der internationalen Arbeiter-Fotograften Bewegung" (Tasks and Objectives of the International Worker Photographer Movemement), *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 5 (May 1931), in *Worker Photography*, 110.

statement had already proven true as *Die Rote Fahne's* circulation reached a new low of 23,000 that year.[54]

He claimed that the photomontage could impress on the politically naïve reader because of its interplay between photograph and text: "That is the decisive point. In this way, a skillful editor can reverse the significance of any photograph and influence a reader who lacks political sophistication in any direction he chooses."[55]

Take for example one of Heartfield's first photomontages from 1930. It contained the image of Emile Vandervelde, a Belgian Social Democrat active in the early twentieth century, superimposed over press clippings in English, French and German. (Figure 5).[56] The message of this piece came out of the pairing of Vandervelde's image with newspaper clippings. A standalone image of the politician would have lacked any significant meaning. Likewise, the collage of newspaper headlines would have had no clear connection without a large Vandervelde in the center of the frame. When Heartfield assembled the montage how it is shown above, a connection between violence and capitalist countries became apparent. Vandervelde was known for his belief that there could be stable peace in a capitalist country.[57] He was a member of the Second International, an international coalition of Social Democratic parties founded in 1889. Many of the politicians involved in this association, including Vandervelde, believed in an orderly capitalist society that, for example, could achieve labor reform without

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[54] Fulda, *Press*. 24.
[55] Münzenberg, "Aufgaben," 111.
[56] Figure 5. John Heartfield, *Vandervelde oder Die vollkommene Schamlosigkeit* (Vandervelde or the Absolute Lack of Shame), *AIZ* 9, no. 22 (1930), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 51.
[57] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 50.

revolutionary violence.[58] The newspaper clippings suggested the opposite: that capitalist rule caused violence and repression. For example, one clipping started with the words "Blutige käm-" (Bloody fight-?), but Vandervelde's right shoulder covered the remainder of the headline.[59] Other headlines included "Polizei schiess-" (Police shoot-?) and "Rote Fahne beschlagnahmt" (*Rote Fahne* confiscated).[60]



Figure 5. *Vandervelde oder Die vollkommene Schamlosigkeit*, 1930.

This was the visual interplay that Münzenberg described. Heartfield, "the editor" had altered the "significance" of the photographs by arranging the montage in this particular way. Heartfield separated these images and headlines from mainstream media to derive a meaning that they would not have had in their original form. The layout of this

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[58] Janet L. Polasky, "A Revolution for Socialist Reforms: The Belgian General Strike for Universal Suffrage," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 3 (July 1992): 463, accessed August, 14, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/260900.

[59] Heartfield, *Vandervelde*, 51.

[60] Heartfield, *Vandervelde*, 51.

piece was striking, because it was this contrast between the clippings and image that created a logical overlap between Vandervelde and capitalist violence.

This ultra-leftist stance was a regular feature of Heartfield's work, especially throughout 1930 when "social fascism" became a common theory among German Communists, but his favorite target was the NSDAP. It is therefore necessary to consider an illustrative instance of his antifascism. In an *AIZ* issue from the same year as the last example, he produced a photomontage that depicted a relationship between the two Communist enemies of Nazis and capital.[61] The photomontage portrayed Hitler as a shark in the mouth of a larger catfish representing capital (Figure 6).[62] The catfish wore a top hat with a swastika on it. The top hat was a visual sign often used in Communist propaganda to symbolize big business capitalism. The text across the belly of the upturned fish and along the bottom of the frame made the association of Nazism with big business jump out at the reader if it did not already: "MIT GOTT FÜR HITLER UND KAPITAL. 'Und den Fisch hab' ich gewählt!'" (WITH GOD FOR HITLER AND CAPITAL. "And *this* is the fish I elected!").[63] In addition, this photomontage was a reference to the September Reichstag elections, in which the Nazis gained ninety-five seats, a significant jump when their previous number was only twelve. The images suggested that capitalist business was the driving force behind the political victory.

The visual tools added significance to this piece. Heartfield used anthropomorphism as a satirical device here. Nazism was shown as a slimy fish, helpless in the mouth of a much larger animal, which had its own set of suggestions about the

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[61] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 56.
[62] Figure 6. John Heartfield, *6 Millionen Naziwähler: Futter für ein großes Maul* (6 Million Nazi voters: Fodder for a Big Mouth), *AIZ* 9, no. 40 (1930), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 57.
[63] Heartfield, *Naziwähler*, 57.

party's integrity and competency. Heartfield would use this anthropomorphic technique many times after this when using images of animals to portray anything from other Weimar figures to war or capitalism.
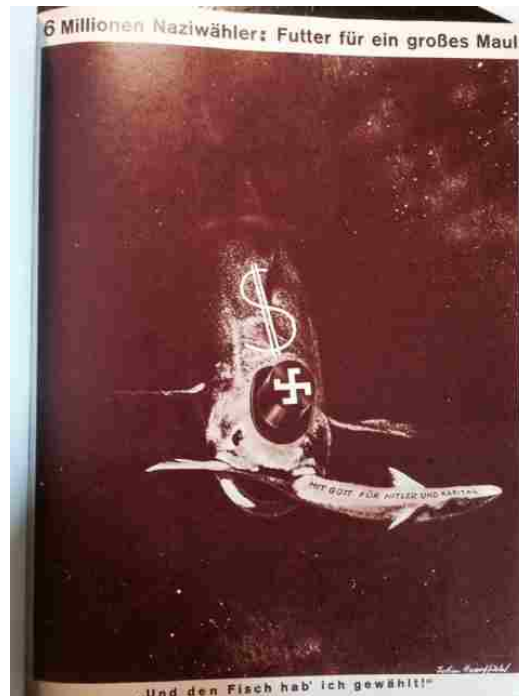


Figure 6. *6 Millionen Naziwähler: Futter für ein großes Maul*, 1930.

The words that accompanied the solitary image of the two fish made the connection between the fish, capitalism and Nazism overt.  In this way, this photomontage was exemplary of text's value in Heartfield's aesthetic. Text played a prominent role in every one of Heartfield's photomontages in these later Weimar years. It allowed the viewer to more easily assess the meaning of a photomontage that contained Heartfield's abstract devices, such as the anthropomorphism above or metaphors of scale. Yet, the text was not some sort of key to define the images outright but rather, a part of the artwork itself. The text and images were both vital to the aesthetic that could be found in Heartfield's montages.

Lüdecke wrote an essay in 1931 that considered the pairing of text and photograph images. He demanded that writers and photographers collaborate for the purpose of propaganda. This article, written for *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf*, envisioned a medium that combined skilled writing with photography. In the essay title, "Bild-Wort-Montage: Ein Vorschlag zur Zusammenarbeit von Fotografen und Schriftstellern" (Picture-Word-Montage: A Proposal for the Collaboration of Photographers and Writers), he alluded to what seems like the photomontage but avoided the usage of the actual term.[64]

His "Bild-Wort-Montage" would simply be a new publishing format for a niche medium, which Heartfield and Münzenberg already excelled in. Lüdecke's compound medium would transcend both the meaning of the photograph or the "red mass" book.[65] This theoretical significance alluded to a problem of the non-illustrated political press. Berlin workers were not necessarily seeking out dense political writing. They preferred the accessibility of the magazine or the illustrated journal to the political daily. Thus, the lengthy "Bild-Wort-Montage" that Lüdecke imagined might have been marginally popular, limited to intellectual circles within the Communist Party, while Münzenberg's illustrated press would continue to do just fine.

Lüdecke still managed to indirectly outline the photomontage's practical functions by describing his imagined idea. He claimed that people with little reading skill could still understand montages. The propaganda's meaning would be accessible due to the text positioned next to the image. As well, he acknowledged that the rapid pace of

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[64] Lüdecke, "Bild-Wort-Montage," 113-5.
[65] Otto Biha, "Der proletarische Massenroman" (The Proletarian Mass Novel), *Die Rote Fahne*, August 2, 1930, in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 239.

modern life in Berlin left the worker little time to read. This understanding was an

underlying factor of all press journalism, but it applied more concretely to the union of

picture and text. The worker needed to efficiently gather information and the

accompanying pictures would expedite the process. He could shuffle through the text and

receive guiding cues from the pictures or he could also just spare a quick glance at the

photos alone.[66]

The text was even more important in Heartfield's next montage from 1930. In this

piece, Heartfield targeted both the Nazis and the Social Democrats with his criticisms. On

the middle right side of the montage, there was a group of formally dressed Nazis

marching with their flag held above their heads. The Social Democrats are shown on the

other side, marching in the same manner as the Nazis (Figure 7).[67] This photomontage

was simpler in its lack of satirical devices, but the text on the bottom of the frame is

worth quoting at length:

> "Socialization is on the march!"
> the "Social" Democrats placarded, -
> and at the same time decided:
> Socialists are to be shot down.
>
> Since then the reaction is on the march:
> and today how mockingly scream
> National "Socialists"
> (I cannot help laughing): "Germany awake!"
>
> In vain! – For you vile parties
> have overlooked a vital factor:
> The German worker will awake
> and make Socialism a reality![68]

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[66] Lüdecke, "Zusammenarbeit," 113-5.

[67] These images could have suggested multiple interpretations. First, the Social Democrats seemed to be leading the Nazis in their marching columns, since they were marching from right to left and the Social Democrats were on the left hand side. Second, the connection between capital and Berlin's alternative political parties was borderline explicit. The Social Democrats were dressed in expensive suits and wearing top hats. Figure 7. John Heartfield, *Noch is Deutschland nicht verloren!* (Germany is not yet lost!), *AIZ* 9, no. 41 (1930), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 59

[68] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 58.

Figure 7. *Noch is Deutschland nicht verloren!*, 1930.

The reader would have gathered the political message of the montage from these

stanzas. Heartfield accused both parties of fraudulently attempting to pose as socialist

organizations. By placing the word socialism in quotes every time it referred to the

NSDAP or the SPD, he was arguing that these parties' promises of social reform were

baseless. The only times that socialism appeared free of quotes was when it was used to

describe German Communists. The KPD was the only party that could "make Socialism a

reality" while these other parties were merely constructing a false myth.[69] The title *Noch*

*is Deutschland nicht verloren! (*Germany is not yet lost!) warned the viewer of the

consequences of joining these "vile parties" at the top of the frame.[70] If Berliners

continued to vote for the Nazis and Social Democrats or if they simply supported the

Social Democratic government, the country would be "lost." This title also highlighted

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[69] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 58.
[70] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 58.

the redemptive role that the KPD would play in Germany's recovery. The harsh sarcasm of this piece took shape once the text was added to the images of the marchers.

This photomontage leads to a discussion of the wide-ranging appeal of the IAH. The IAH competed with mainstream media, and Münzenberg wanted its propaganda to spread to all leftists in the working class, even those who only sympathized with Communists yet did not want to join an official party.[71] The *AIZ* was run by the expansive IAH and therefore, directed at a significant non-communist readership. Kriebel notes, "The purpose of the *AIZ* was to propagate a communist point-of-view to non-Party members and the so-called homeless left."[72] It was these individuals that Heartfield wanted to reach with a montage such as this. They remained outside of the Communist fold but would still see his work in the *AIZ*. The hope was that they would consider joining the true party of the "German worker" after viewing this piece. Heartfield's photomontages were the ideal form to serve this propaganda function. The satirical devices and pairing of text and imagery gave them a profound aggression and an appealing humor that the KPD's official propaganda did not have.

Münzenberg even admitted that *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* and the *AIZ* catered to a leftist middle ground. Under Münzenberg's direction, the *AIZ* had absorbed a readership that was not exclusively Communist but included Social Democrats and other leftist parties. In yet another one of his authored pieces, "Zeitschriften und Bild" (Magazines and Photography), he celebrated the rise of the IAH and the subsequent founding of the *AIZ*. As one would expect, he wrote that the *AIZ* started as a proletarian endeavor. Nonetheless, it eventually gained respect within the wider Berlin press. He wrote, "In

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[71] Murray, *Cagliari*, 112.
[72] Kriebel, "Year 1932," 104.

1925 it was taken on by the publishing house Neuer Deutscher Verlag and continued as

*AIZ*, which has become one of the leading magazines not only in the workers' press but

also among bourgeois illustrated magazines worldwide."[73] Münzenberg knew that his

tabloids and periodicals included a significant number of non-communist and even non-

political Berliners, and as one would expect, they were targeted through the propaganda

and distribution methods of the *AIZ*.[74] The magazine found its readership by "way of

newsstands, local bookstores, and a posse of street sellers."[75] Readers who got their hands

on the magazine this way were told to pass it on by any means they could.[76] In this way,

the *AIZ* spread to a continually growing readership of Berlin's leftist parties.

Münzenberg was aware of the party breakdown of his readership and intentionally

played the line between the two. Therefore, he did not place strict restrictions on the

artistic freedom of his writers and artists, particularly in the *AIZ*. As long as the theme of

the political material was pro-communist, it had a chance of making it to print.

Heartfield's accusatory propaganda continued to appear in Münzenberg's

magazine until the summer of 1931 when he departed for a yearlong hiatus in the Soviet

Union.[77] One of his photomontages in the months before he left showed a human-like

figure with the head of a snarling tiger. The tiger was wearing a suit, complete with a tie

and a swastika pin (Figure 8).[78] The accompanying text stated that the tiger was a symbol

of capitalism, and that the Social Democrats did not want to "break out the teeth of the

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[73] Willi Münzenberg, "Zeitschriften und Bild," in *Solidarität: zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921-1931* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1931), in *Worker Photography*, 119.
[74] Gruber, "Empire," 289.
[75] Sabine Kriebel, "Manufacturing Discontent: John Heartfield's Mass Medium," *New German Critique* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 58.
[76] Kriebel, "Discontent," 58.
[77] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 33.
[78] Figure 8. John Heartfield, *Zum Krisen-Parteitag der SPD* (On the Occasion of the Crisis Party Conference of the SPD), *AIZ* 10, no. 24 (1931), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 69.

tiger" but instead, wanted to replenish his "health and feed him."[79] Reading just these

words, one could assume Heartfield was making the allegation that SPD was allying with

the enemy of Communists and presumably socialists: capitalism in all of its forms. He

then followed this text with an explicit accusation, saying, "Social Democracy does not

want the breakdown of capitalism. Like a doctor, it wants to try to heal and improve it

(Fritz Tarnow, chairman of the Woodworkers' Federation)."[80] This indictment *did* have

an explainable basis. Fritz Tarnow, the man referred to in the text, was an SPD trade

unionist who was notorious for his assimilationist views. He believed that unionists and

workers should adapt to capitalism, since it appeared to be effectively working in 1931

Germany.[81] Heartfield used Tarnow as an emblematic example of the entire SPD.



Figure 8. *Zum Krisen-Parteitag der SPD*, 1931.

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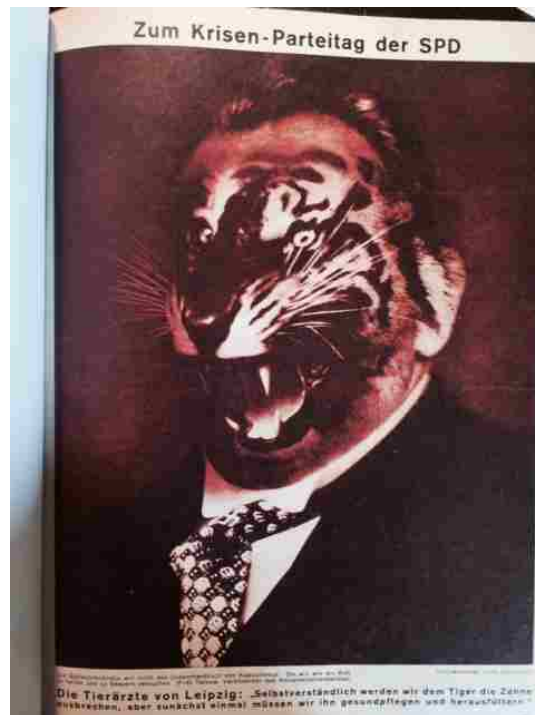
[79] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 68.
[80] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 68.
[81] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 68.

In addition, this photomontage used hybridization, a graphic device not as prominent in the other montages. Hybridization or "the inmixing of binary opposites, particularly of high and low, such as that there is a heterodox merging of elements usually perceived as incompatible," could be seen in the central image.[82] Capitalism was depicted with a comical image: a snarling tiger's head on top of a human body. This binary opposition was a creative device for a leftist artist with contempt for capitalist society. With these two cutouts, Heartfield implied that capitalism was man's violent and unnatural creation.

In 1932, Alfred Keményi reflected on the success of propaganda like this over the course of the last few years. He wrote an essay titled "Fotomontage als Waffe im Klassenkampf" (Photomontage as a Weapon in Class Struggle) in which he gave rather high praise to Heartfield for the work he had done for the Communist Party. Keményi tried to explain the popularity of the photomontage. First, he praised the satire of Heartfield's work, saying his photomontages were "among the most significant satirical creations of our time."[83] As well, Keményi noted how the photomontage medium became popular in a crucial political period for German Communists, "Because not only did it [the photomontage] not oppose the revolutionary development of humanity, but it developed in close conjunction with the revolutionary workers' movement."[84] The "revolutionary workers' movement" could have been referring to a number of developments since the Russian Revolution, but perhaps the best indicator of its progress *in Germany* was as Keményi saw it, Heartfield's decision to employ his artistic talent in

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[82] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 44.

[83] Alfred Keményi, "Fotomontage als Waffe im Klassenkampf," *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* 6 (1932), in *Sourcebook*, 654.

[84] Keményi, "Fotomontage," 653.

the class struggle. Keményi credited Heartfield with the *resurgence* of the photomontage, but this development could hardly be called recent.[85] Heartfield had been working for the *AIZ* since 1929.

Still, Keményi was correct in giving Heartfield exuberant praise for his efforts. Alongside Münzenberg, Heartfield had created mass demand for the medium, and therefore, the *AIZ*. By 1932, the year Keményi's essay appeared, the *AIZ* had reached a circulation of 500,000 prints per week and was the second most popular illustrated magazine behind only the moderately left *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*.[86] Heartfield had become an influential cultural leader in Germany's Communist movement due to his new satirical form and aesthetic and his attachment to the *AIZ*. Therefore, his choice to go against the party line in the summer of 1932 was immediately controversial.[87]

The conflict in 1932 was also due to the shifts in Communist policy in the late 1920s. These changes led to political tension within Germany's Communist Party. From 1928 until 1932, there were multiple instances in which leading party members, including Willi Münzenberg, opposed Comintern policy.

In 1928, the Comintern officially introduced the idea of "social fascism" during the Sixth Congress of the international organization.[88] In July of the following year, the Comintern expounded on its theory:

> In countries where there are strong social-democratic parties, fascism assumes the particular form of social-fascism, which to an ever-increasing extent serves the bourgeoisie as an instrument for the paralyzing of the activity of the masses in the struggle against the regime of fascist dictatorship. By means of this monstrous system of political and economic oppression, the

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[85] Keményi, "Fotomontage," 654.
[86] Kriebel, "Year 1932," 104.
[87] Kriebel, "Year 1932," 116.
[88] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 31.

bourgeoisie, aided and abetted by international social democracy, have been attempting to crush the proletariat for many years.[89]

The description went on, but the Comintern made it clear that these conditions were apparent in Germany, and the KPD needed to concentrate all its efforts against the "terror of German social fascism."[90] "Social fascism" was then adopted by the KPD in May of the following year at their Twelfth Party Congress in a Berlin working-class neighborhood. Earlier in this month, the Berlin police force had shot and killed twenty-five unarmed Communist demonstrators under the instruction of the SPD police chief Karl Zörgiebel. The shootings during the annual May Day celebrations only confirmed that the SPD was a "social fascist" party for the members of the Central Committee. Multiple KPD leaders began to assert "social fascism" as part of the German party line almost immediately after the KPD Congress. Although there remained slight contention in the Central Committee of the KPD over this course since the SPD held onto a large bulk of the proletarian masses, most Communist propaganda directed at the SPD became harsher following this turn in May of 1929.[91]

However, this "social fascist" turn between 1928 and 1929 can hardly be seen as a sharp break in KPD theory and discourse. Rather, it was the official announcement endorsed by Moscow that led to significant changes in KPD policy and associated propaganda. In fact, as early as 1924, the notion of the SPD as the true fascist party surfaced in KPD circles. Ultra-left hostility toward the SPD became common after an attempt at an *Einheitsfront* (united front) with the Social Democrats from 1922 until 1924 disastrously failed as Ruth Fischer, a strong proponent of the ultra-left course, took over

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[89] Communist International, *Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents*, ed. Jane Degras (Abingdon, OX: Routledge, 1971), 44.
[90] Communist International, *Documents*, 29.
[91] Fowkes, *Communism*, 153-4.

party leadership.[92] This sentiment was only reinforced when another united front in 1927

and 1928 resulted in a similar ending. This time the right-wing faction of the KPD that

supported a united front with the SPD was removed from the Central Committee, clearing

the way for Ernst Thälmann to pursue another ultra-left path as the party's new leader.[93]

The KPD would continue to support potential united fronts from below between rank-

and-file workers and trade unionists, but these years of failed attempts are important,

because the united fronts were began as an official policy of alliance with SPD leaders.

The Comintern witnessed opposition to the "social fascist" turn in the early 1930s

from within the KPD. Certain leaders were swayed by the potential benefit of united

fronts "from below" and went against the Comintern to voice their disapproval over the

"social fascist" agenda. Thälmann gave a speech in the fall of 1930 that demanded that

the KPD direct its fight against the Nazis rather than the SPD. Thälmann was known to

be a staunch supporter of Comintern directives, so it came as a surprise that he resisted

Moscow's position. The Comintern quickly responded to his plea and reminded him that

Social Democrats were the true fascist enemy.[94]

A similar kind of contention occurred in the winter of December 1931 when a

coalition of free-trade unionists, Social Democrats, and Communists formed. The

Comintern responded by restating the terms of the November resolution from a month

before, which included an anti-Social Democratic stance. The Comintern continued to

resist KPD efforts for a united front well into 1932. Moscow reprimanded certain KPD

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[92] Fowkes, *Communism*, 114.
[93] Fowkes, *Communism*, 198.
[94] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 71-2.

leaders for negotiating with the SPD in June and even worse, removed people from the party who opposed the "social fascist" platform.[95]

Heinz Neumann was one of these people and he was both a KPD Central Committee member and a co-editor of *Die Rote Fahne*. He was a leading doctrinaire of the party and had initially reinforced the idea of "social fascism" through his newspaper. In May 1929, the month of the "social fascist" announcement in the KPD, it was *Die Rote Fahne* that exclaimed "Beat the Fascists wherever you find them," suggesting that the SPD was as much fascist as the ring-wing NSDAP.[96]  His paper then made a similar claim in December 1930 when it printed the words "Fascist dictatorship is no longer merely a threat, it is already here."[97] In September 1931, however, Neumann became concerned about the possibility of a Nazi takeover and began to support united-front fighting against the NSDAP. He continued to support united-front initiatives in the next year and for that, was expelled from the party leadership.[98] Thälmann, on the other hand, treaded lightly and opportunistically adjusted to the Comintern's directives.

Rosenhaft ascertains that a true conflict existed within the KPD leadership throughout 1932. She lists a number of other KPD leaders that were disciplined over the course of the year, including Central Committee members Hermann Remmele and Leo Flieg, as well as Communist Youth leaders Alfred Hiller and Kurt Müller. Factions emerged in the KPD with Thälmann and the Comintern on one side and Neumann and Remmele on the other.

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[95] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 82, 96.
[96] Rosa Leviné-Meyer, *Inside German Communism: Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), 158.
[97] *Die Rote Fahne*, December 2, 1930, in Fowkes, *Communism*, 162.
[98] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 115.

Münzenberg was an active propagandist for the party during these moments of political conflict, but at points, it seemed as if he too was risking his credibility as a loyal Communist member. In 1924, he joined the ultra-left faction that arose in the party after the first united front failed.[99] For the next half decade, he supported Moscow in all its directives and praised the cultural activity coming out of the country.[100] However, in 1930, he contemplated the possibility of an antifascist united front after the Nazi's electoral success. Then a year later, Münzenberg and Neumann spoke out against Thälmann and the Comintern in an attempt to sidetrack anti-SPD propaganda for the sake of building a campaign against the Nazis.[101] Münzenberg's influential status within the Communist Party did not allow him to escape criticism from its leaders.[102] Despite the IAH's designs to spread communist ideas, the KPD occasionally treated his organization as an uncontrollable nuisance.

A subtle resistance to the party line could also be found in Heartfield's photomontages that were printed in the *AIZ* in 1930. Rosa Leviné-Meyer, a Communist Party member and wife of Ernst Meyer of the KPD's Central Committee, remembered in her memoirs that after the Party Congress in 1929, "Our entire propaganda concentrated on war scare and vilification of the 'social fascists.'"[103] Leviné-Meyer must not have been considering Heartfield and the *AIZ* when she made that statement, because the Nazis and the Social Democrats were both regular targets of the artist's photomontages.

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[99] In a set of memoirs written by party member Rosa Leviné-Meyer, she describes how Münzenberg abandoned his friendship with Ernest Meyer, her husband and a leading KPD member, after her husband continued to support united front tactics. Leviné-Meyer and Münzenberg were close friends as well and barely spoke after 1924. In her memoirs, she calls him an opportunist who was uncommitted to the communist revolution. Leviné-Meyer, *Memoirs*, 65.
[100] Murray, *Cagliari*, 118.
[101] Gruber, "Empire," 294,
[102] Cuevas-Wolf, "Montage," 186.
[103] Leviné-Meyer, *Memoirs*, 171.

Heartfield even produced several montages in 1930 that suggested the Nazi Party was a more threatening enemy than the SPD. The separate sphere of the IAH can explain this mixture of both anti-SPD and antifascist propaganda. Targeting the Nazis and Social Democrats was a chosen tactic of Heartfield's propaganda, because many of those in the *AIZ*'s broad readership could have easily turned to these parties. The Nazis and Social Democrats were both trying to capture the same group of voters. Heartfield chose to compete with them to affect these readers rather than demonstrate that he was consistently adhering to the party line.

Heartfield made a similar decision in July of 1932 when he created his united front election montage. Thälmann announced on April 25, 1932 that a political agreement between Communists and Social Democrats was a definite possibility. However, both parties were hesitant to move forward with a rapprochement. According to historian Heinrich Winkler, the party had returned to a "social fascist" stance by July 14 after being instructed to by the Comintern.[104] Heartfield's poster appeared in the *AIZ* ten days later. The photomontage proposed a united front between the SPD and the KPD. The only text read "Die Rote Einheit macht euch frei! WÄHLT LISTE 3" (Red Unity Liberates You! VOTE LIST 3) (Figure 9).[105] Another round of Reichstag elections were taking place on July 31, and the viewers were urged to vote Communist with "List 3." The frame contained three arms all grabbing a flag with the symbol for the united front, first

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[104] Kriebel, "Year 1932," 116; Heinrich Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1998), 489.
[105] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 82.

seen in 1922.[106] In addition to Heartfield's montage, the issue contained an account of the

Anti-Fascist Unity Congress in Berlin that year.[107]



Figure 9. *Die Rote Einheit macht euch frei!*, 1932.

Notably, the middle armband with the three downward arrows contained the sign

of the Iron Front, an organization founded by Social Democrats for the sake of fighting

fascism.[108] Heartfield often used non-communist symbols to make derisive statements

about other parties, but there was no sarcasm in this election montage. It proposed a

united front on mutual, rather than Communist, terms. Earlier posters that targeted Social

Democrats were underlined with a call for workers to join the KPD. This poster made no

such plea.

The exact motive that drove the *AIZ* to print this montage is hard to know for

certain. Heartfield might have thought his election poster was acceptable propaganda

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[106] Figure 9. John Heartfield, *Die Rote Einheit macht euch frei!*, *AIZ* 11, no. 30 (1932), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 83.
[107] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 82.
[108] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 82.

because of the very recent debate over the correct course. As recently as a month prior, party leaders had negotiated with SPD officials over united-front tactics.[109] Perhaps, Heartfield had already finalized the montage and merely did not want to work on another.[110] Moreover, Heartfield rarely used the formal symbol of the Communist Party that one sees here. The *AIZ* did not hide that this piece of propaganda was printed in order to aid the KPD in the upcoming election, but the poster still ran counter to the KPD's current stance on the "Social Democrats." Although there were others that opposed Thälmann and the Comintern's return to "social fascism," such as Neumann and Remmele, most of them had been purged from the KPD leadership. The Comintern and the KPD had come to an official consensus against united fronts and taken measures against those who disagreed with it, and yet, Heartfield disregarded these events. He chose to target the SPD-based readership of the *AIZ* to meet the demands of his propaganda, which was more crucial in the creation of this piece than the proper party line. He was willing to undermine short-term changes in KPD policy for the immediate need of a united front between the political factions of his viewership.

These developments in 1932 again test the notion that German Communists were always in a subordinate position to the Comintern. The KPD briefly experimented with alternate politics in early 1932 but quickly came back in line. The *AIZ*, on the other hand, stayed its course after July. The magazine had autonomy under the IAH and did not have to uphold any obligation to satisfy the Comintern with the messages in its propaganda. None of the seventeen photomontages before the Communist Party ban in 1933 mocked the SPD. Most of them either focused on the corruption of Hitler and his Nazi Party or

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[109] Rosenhaft, *Fascists?*, 82.
[110] The *AIZ* was printed a weekly basis, which makes this explanation less likely.

the inadequacies of the Reichstag government. By this point, the *AIZ* was committed to exposing what it saw as harsh truths behind the Nazi facade or what the future would hold if Hitler's party were to control Germany's leadership.

Antifascism became more of a necessity as the *AIZ* addressed their readers in 1932. The NSDAP came out of the July elections as Weimar Germany's leading party. Their share of the vote had skyrocketed from 18.3 percent in 1930 to 37.4 percent two years later. As well, the SPD continued to lose voters. It came out of the July 1932 elections with only 21.6 percent, a 3.9 percent drop from their percentage in 1930. The Nazi Party was taking working-class voters from Berlin's leftist parties.[111] A month after these elections, Hitler was first offered a cabinet post in the German government.[112] The disproportionate appearance of antifascist propaganda in Heartfield's photomontages was a response to developments in the summer of 1932. The next couple of montages offer examples of this antifascism. In addition, they demonstrate Heartfield's continued use of satirical devices that were part of why he became such an important propagandist in the first place.

The *AIZ* used the news of Hindenburg's cabinet offering in August 1932 to depict what ones sees in the example above: Hitler as a future authoritarian leader who would only exacerbate the economic conditions of the country. The montage was a portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm with a picture of Hitler, and it remains one of Heartfield's most recognizable pieces (Figure 10). The short tagline, "Ich führe Euch herrlichen Pleiten entgegen!" (I lead you toward splendid bankruptcies!) was an altered version of the Kaiser's slogan during World War I: "Ich führe Euch herrlichen Zeiten entgegen! (I lead

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[111] "Elections in the Weimar Republic."
[112] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 84.

you toward splendid times!).[113] Heartfield also called Hitler "S.M. ADOLF" (HIS

MAJESTY ADOLF) to make the authoritarian link more apparent. The images followed

this theme as Heartfield placed Hitler in the Kaiser's wartime dress.[114]



Figure 10. *S.M. ADOLF*, 1932.

There was also an interesting use of hybridization here. The montage of Hitler in

the Kaiser's outfit evokes an immediate sense of contrast. The Nazi leader and the Kaiser

were usually seen as incompatible, but by pasting them together, Heartfield suggested

that they were not. He contended that Hitler was an authoritarian leader not unlike Kaiser

Wilhelm.

As Hitler inched closer to outright political control, Heartfield's *AIZ* montages

began to focus on the future dictator's familiar image more and more. In Heartfield's first

two years at the *AIZ*, he did not set Hitler's face in a single one of his photomontages.

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[113] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 84.
[114] Figure 10. John Heartfield, *S.M ADOLF*, *AIZ* 11, no. 34 (1932), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 85.

Then from the beginning of 1932 to January of 1933, when Heartfield contributed his last piece to the magazine before it relocated to Prague, Hitler's face appeared five times out of a total of twenty-two montages.[115] This statistical number is small yet significant. Hitler became a regular feature of the magazine and its photomontages as *AIZ* readers abandoned the SPD or the KPD for the Nazi Party. Heartfield wanted to stop this trend. Another difference in 1932 was that the Social Democrats could not be found intermingled among this propaganda. Communists could no longer afford to exert their political energy on the SPD, which had lost many of the Reichstag seats it had. This change was noticeable in the *AIZ* photomontage patterns.
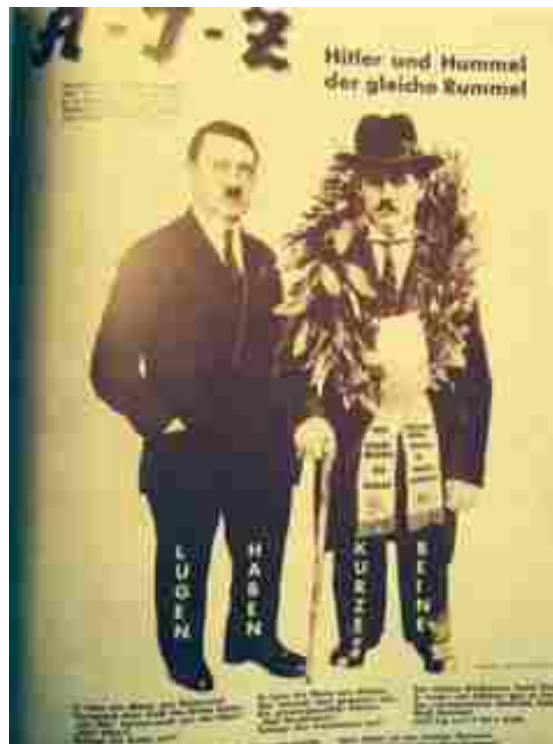


Figure 11. *Hitler und Hummel der gleiche Rummel*, 1932.

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[115] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 44-116.

Although not as well-known as the previous work, Heartfield placed Hitler next to

Ignaz Karl Hummel, aka Oskar Daubmann, for a photomontage just three months later

(Figure 11). Hummel was a con man who was celebrated as a nationalist hero by the

radical right due to his experiences as a French prisoner of war in World War I.[116] The

poem and the side-by-side images of Hitler and Hummel established a historical parallel

between the two men. The stanzas of the poem switched between the two figures,

suggesting that Hitler was no better than the famous German criminal.[117] The title of the

piece equated the two men: "Hitler und Hummel der gleiche Rummel. (Hitler and

Hummel, the same racket).[118] The shortened legs in the montage were a less obvious

example of metaphors of scale, another satirical device that Heartfield regularly used.[119]

The size contrast between the top of the men's' bodies and their short legs drew an

immediate connection to the well-known German phrase, "Lügen haben kurze Beine"

(Lies have short legs). The depiction of this popular German phrase attempted to discredit

Hitler by suggesting that his popularity, similar to that of the criminal Hummel, rested on

a history of lies and deceit.

Heartfield's final montage for the Berlin-based *AIZ* is worth considering because

of the political events that surrounded it and the appearance, yet again, of the

*Einheitsfront*. Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30, 1933, and three weeks

later, the *AIZ* printed an issue that focused on the Reichstag and Prussian Landstag

elections.[120] Heartfield put together a montage for that issue that deviated from most of

[116] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 98.
[117] Figure 11. John Heartfield, *Hitler und Hummel der gleiche Rummel* (Hitler and Rummel the same racket), *AIZ* 11, no. 45 (1932), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 99.
[118] Heartfield, *Rummel*, 99.
[119] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 17.
[120] Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 116.

his contributions to the *AIZ* in its aesthetic and lack of visual mockery. It resembled a movie poster or an advertisement more than any of his radical photomontages. There were no metaphors of scale or hybridization. Instead, it contained a basic photograph and noticeably more text than usual. The theme of the montage was explicitly spelled out in the words. Two men stood facing each other, one of them with his back turned (Figure 12). The one the viewer could see had a distressed look on his face and was grabbing the other man by his shoulders, suggesting that he was trying to persuade the other man of something essential.[121] The text superimposed over the image confirmed this notion. It said, "Vereint kämpfen! Schließt die Reihen gegen Faschismus und Reaktion! WÄHLT KOMMUNISTEN LISTE 3" (Fight united! Close ranks against fascism and reaction! Vote Communist List 3).[122] Moreover, in the fine print at the top of the page, the words "Einheitsfront gegen Faschimsus" (united front against fascism) appeared. The *AIZ* proposed a united front when there was virtually no chance of one. Hitler was already chancellor and close to criminalizing all other parties.

This montage was not necessarily in agreement with the KPD party line either. There were local initiatives between Social Democrats and Communists to combat against Nazi repression, but the KPD leadership never pursued a united-front alliance between the parties.[123] Again, Heartfield created a united-front montage that defied the current party policy on the issue. The situation in early 1933, however, was overshadowed by the immediate danger Communist Berliners were in. Heartfield knew the severity of the situation and probably understood that his time at the *AIZ* was coming to an end.

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[121] Figure 12. John Heartfield, *Vereint kämpfen!*, *AIZ* 12, no. 8 (1933), in Heartfield, *Heartfield*, 117.
[122] Heartfield, *Vereint*, 117.
[123] Weitz, *Creating*, 293.

Figure 12. *Vereint kämpfen!*, 1933.

In these years leading up to Hitler's chancellorship, Leon Trotsky had an almost

obsessive fascination with Germany and the fate of communism within its borders.

However, his commentary on it was not laudatory. He first voiced his distress in 1930 in

an essay titled "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany."

In this piece, written while he was in exile, he claimed that the ultra-left platform of the

KPD would "ruin the German revolution."[124] He faulted the leadership of the party with a

lack of ambition and blind disregard of Nazi power. Citing *Die Rote Fahne*, he stated that

the Communists were convinced that fascism had entered the political scene at the wrong

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[124] Leon Trotsky, "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany," trans. Morris Lewitt, *Bulletin of Opposition*, no. 17-8 (November-December 1930): 11, accessed February 10, 2014, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1930/300926.htm.

time and would soon disappear. Trotsky demanded that the KPD disregard Moscow and pursue a true united front with the Social Democrats to defeat the NSDAP.[125]

Then, in an article that he wrote for *The Militant* in 1932, he censured the KPD for its failure to form a united front in the last two years of the Weimar Republic. In an explicitly critical statement, Trotsky wrote, "There is no greater crime in politics than that of hoping for stupidities on the part of a strong enemy."[126] He was implying that the KPD's continued theory of "social fascism" was wishful thinking. He was again warning the KPD of the increasing danger of a Nazi takeover and, in turn, urging the Communists to form a coalition with the leftist Social Democrats. Trotsky's written rants might not have been extremely popular among German Communists in 1932 due to his exile from the Soviet Union and the KPD's loyalty to Stalin, but he was an astute observer of the problems that plagued the KPD in the Weimar Republic's last phase. Despite his exile, Trotsky verbalized something that few German Communists were willing to say. Putting aside the few fleeting attempts, the KPD failed to commit to this political approach that might have saved them from suffering at the hands of the Nazis in 1933.

Trotsky's warnings eerily foreshadowed the Nazi seizure of power, but more importantly, they alluded to the political discrepancy between the KPD and the IAH that emerged in 1932. He was right to accuse the KPD of failing to form a united-front alliance against fascism, but the IAH could not be faulted with the same oversight. The united front appeared twice in Heartfield photomontages in 1932, and both times it

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[125] Trotsky, "Situation," 11.
[126] Leon Trotsky, "The Impending Danger of Fascism in Germany," trans. Einde O'Callaghan, *The Militant* 5, no. 2 (January 1932): 2, accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/12/danger.htm.

challenged the KPD party line. Moreover, anti-SPD propaganda all but disappeared from his work in the *AIZ* in 1932.

There remains potential for this project to serve as a starting aid for research and new methodological approaches. A social analysis and statistical breakdown of this diverse group of readers or an in-depth study of the commercial foundations of the illustrated press in Berlin could strengthen the contemporary understanding of this "mass medium." As well, there is still room for the voice of Heartfield in the research. By tracking down the John Heartfield papers, this study could gain a new perspective of its most central historical character. Until then, this examination will continue to function as it was first conceptualized. That is as an original contribution to the young historiography on this niche of Communist propaganda, and more generally, to a discourse on the relationship between art and politics in a modernizing society.

Heartfield's experiences after World War I and throughout the 1920s radicalized his art and politics. It was during these years that he invented the aesthetic of the photomontage that would overtake the diverse readership of the *AIZ*. Heartfield's popular propaganda in this illustrated magazine was unrivalled by any formal propaganda that the KPD controlled. The photomontage transcended political posters and the party organ press through its aesthetic tradition, satirical devices, and broad appeal. This widespread appeal of the *AIZ* photomontage reached its apex in 1932, the same year that the KPD clashed with the Comintern over a renewal of the united front. Heartfield's striking election montage in July of that year undermined the KPD's position once it had already come back in line with the Comintern.

Heartfield's photomontage was, therefore, exemplary of a political clash among German Communists as the Weimar Republic approached its conclusion. The IAH had established an expansive leftist readership for the *AIZ* and found the perfect artist to reach it in Heartfield. The ability of his photomontage to creatively combine text and images in a new aesthetic allowed him to fit right into the IAH's propaganda campaign starting in 1929. Yet, Heartfield did not robotically promote Communist doctrine. Rather, he created propaganda that would satisfy the expansive audience of this independent organization. He prioritized the practical role of his artistic propaganda over following the party line at every turn. He had found the audience he sought out as a self-proclaimed political artist, and through an attempt to inspire that audience, he undermined the party line of the political organization he had belonged to for over a decade. Despite the IAH's independent sphere, Heartfield had become a true propagandist and a cultural leader among German Communists. Therefore, his separation from party line could have exacerbated the internal conflict in the KPD.

The Comintern was not behind the scenes, controlling the decisions of German Communists, as some historians have suggested, and it certainly did not restrain the work of Heartfield. He was a KPD member but still an independent radical artist and propagandist, who became most evident in July of 1932 when, of his own volition, he disregarded the party line and made what he thought was the right political decision.

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# JUSTIN PIERCE KAUFFMAN

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## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts                                                                 Graduated May 2013
*Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA*                                      (Summa Cum Laude)

- Undergraduate GPA: 3.82
- Major: history
- Minor: business
- Related course work: European, Latin American, and U.S. history, finance, accounting, marketing
- Member of Phi Alpha Theta, National History Honor Society
- CIEE Language and Culture Study Abroad Program in Berlin (Spring 2012)

Master of Arts in History                                                    Expected September 2014
*Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA*

- Graduate GPA: 3.82
- Concentration: Modern German history
- President's Scholarship to fund M.A. program

## WORK EXPERIENCE (REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST)

Bartender and server | Glasbern Inn| Fogelsville, PA | Summer 2013 to
Winter 2014

- Bartender and server in fine dining, farm-to-table restaurant
- Handled additional responsibilities, including bartending and hosting
- Managed restaurant and inn when required

Intern | Historic Bethlehem Partnership| Bethlehem, PA | Fall 2012

- Assisted in the preliminary planning for educational and outreach programs
- Worked on-site at these same programs and coordinated efficiency of the events
- Regularly handled office work, focused primarily on outreach to local schools

Intern | UMass Memorial Managed Care| Worcester, MA | Summer
2011 and 2012

- Maintained and organized important digital documents on a weekly basis for the hospital
- Assisted in communications between hospital and health insurance companies
- Coordinated miscellaneous projects within the Managed Care office

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

High Iota | Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity | 2010-11 Academic Year

- Held a valued leadership position in the fraternity, which consisted of primarily risk management

Captain | Wellesley High School Varsity Basketball Team and Varsity
Lacrosse Team | Winter 2008 and Spring 2009

## SKILLS

- Leadership - organizational, customer service, and instructional
- Computer - Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Language - German