

Andrea Germer

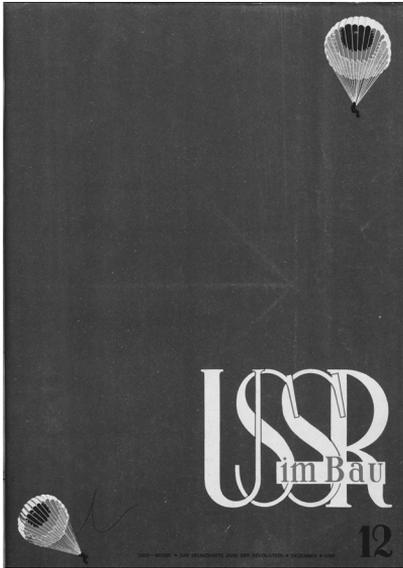
## ADAPTING RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIALIST REALISM

### The Japanese Overseas Propaganda Photo Magazine *FRONT* (1942–1945)

In his theoretical explorations of how photographs convey meaning, John Tagg sums up his radical approach to photography and representation in the sentence: »Photographs are never »evidence« of history, they are themselves the historical.«<sup>1</sup> An understanding of this notion is crucial, as it leads us into the following exploration of photography during the so-called 15-Year War (1931–1945), and particularly during the final phase of all-out war (1941–1945) in Japan. As a case study, I introduce and examine the graphic and photo magazine *FRONT*, published between 1942 and 1945 by the company Tōhōsha (Far East Company), which was established in 1941 specifically to launch the magazine.<sup>2</sup> As a new illustrated overseas magazine, *FRONT* provided the

1 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories*, Minneapolis 1988, p. 65. As is customary in Japanese and other East Asian languages, Japanese names in this article are in the order of surname followed by given name. However, for publications in English, all authors or editors (including Japanese contributors) are cited in the order of given name followed by surname.

2 The facsimile edition of *FRONT* was published in three volumes under the supervision of the former Tōhōsha employee Tagawa Seiichi, with a supplement containing reminiscences, including Tagawa's own (*FRONT Fukkokuban [FRONT Facsimile]*, 3 volumes, editorial supervisor Tagawa Seiichi, Tōkyō 1989–1990; *FRONT Fukkokuban. Kaisetsu [FRONT Facsimile. Commentary]*, Tōkyō 1989–1990). Since 2000, a few books and articles have been published that deal with individual contributors to *FRONT* and with its graphic design: Kawasaki Kenko/Harada Ken'ichi, *Okada Sōzō eizō no seiki. Gurafizumu puropaganda kagaku eiga [Okada Sōzō and the Century of the Image. Graphics, Propaganda, Scientific Film]*, Tōkyō 2002; Inoue Yūko, *Taiheiyō sensōka no hōdō gjijutsusha: Imaizumi Takeji no »Hōdō bijjutsu« to shashin senden [News Experts during the Asia-Pacific War: The Media Aesthetics and Photo Propaganda of Imaizumi Takeji]*, in: *Ritsumeikan Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo Kiyō [Ritsumeikan University Bulletin of the Institute for Humanities]* 75 (2000), pp. 129–155; Kenji Kawamoto, *Taigai senden gurafu zasshi »FRONT« ni okeru »rittaisei«. Nihon no senjika ni okeru hōdō shashin to*



Left: *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in Construction), here the German edition (U[d]SSR im Bau), 1935, no. 12, ›Fearless Soviet Parachutists‹, cover page, original size ca. 412 x 300mm. Designed by Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova.  
 Right: *FRONT*, English edition, 1943, no. 7, ›Japanese Army Paratroop Units‹, cover page, original size A3. Designed by Hara Hiromu.

visual propaganda for the so-called ›Greater East Asia Co-Prospcrity Sphere‹, a concept that was proclaimed in 1940 and served to disguise Japan's quest for hegemony in Asia. The magazine was modeled after a Soviet propaganda magazine, *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in Construction, published 1930–1941, 1949), in its photomontages and

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kōseishugi no hitotsu no tenkai toshite [Cubic Expression in the Propaganda Graphic Magazine ›FRONT‹ as a Development of Photo Reportage and Constructivism During World War II in Japan], in: *Hyōgen Bunka Kenkyū* [Expression and Culture Studies] 10 (2011), pp. 143-169. Some authors compare the magazine with other publications, but not in detail with *SSSR na stroike*: Inoue Yūko, ›Tōa no meishu‹ no gurafikkusu: Ajia-Taihei'yō sensō-ki ni no taigai muke no gurafu zasshi o hikaku to shite [The Graphics of ›The Leader of East Asia‹: A Comparison of Overseas Graphic Magazines during the Asia-Pacific War], in: *Ritsumeikan Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo Kiyō* [Ritsumeikan University Bulletin of the Institute for Humanities] 86 (2006), pp. 129-155; Kameda Masumi, Gurafu-shi ›So Renpō Kensetsu‹ to ›Yūgosurabia‹: Shakaishugi riarizumu no taishō hikaku [The Graphic Magazines ›USSR in Construction‹ and ›Yugoslavia‹: Socialist Realism in Comparison], in: *Roshia-go Roshia-bungaku Kenkyū* [Studies in Russian Language and Russian Literature] 43 (2011), pp. 43-52; Kawamoto, Taigai senden gurafu zasshi ›FRONT‹ ni okeru ›rittaisei‹ (see above). To my knowledge, there is no Western-language analysis of *FRONT*. The magazine is briefly described by Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda*, Honolulu 2006, pp. 73-76, and merely noted in passing in general works on Japanese photography: Anne Wilkes Tucker et al. (eds), *The History of Japanese Photography*, New Haven 2003; Karen Fraser, *Photography and Japan*, London 2011.

dynamic design. *FRONT*'s creative and modernistic use of photography, which in all its artificiality builds on the myth of photography's objective historical veracity and documentary capacity, was a transculturally inspired practice by Japanese photographers, journalists and producers of visual propaganda, some of whom had been left-wing intellectuals or had lived and worked in the Soviet Union.

The Japanese term for a magazine like *FRONT* was *senden-shi*, which can be translated as ›propaganda magazine‹, even though the term *senden* itself can also be rendered as ›advertisement‹. Conceding that after more than seventy years of research in propaganda, we have neither a precise definition of it nor an agreement concerning its effects, Thymian Bussemer distinguishes in his extensive analysis of propaganda theories between ›narrow‹ definitions of propaganda that are associated with totalitarian structures, information control and suppression of public opinion, and ›broad‹ definitions that declare the ubiquitous presence of propaganda techniques across all political formations. He defines propaganda as the media-led formation of opinions and attitudes in social or political groups via symbolic communication to create a public sphere for the benefit of particular interests. Featuring exaggerated or inflated self-images and deprecatory images of the ›other‹, it subordinates truth to the instrumental criterion of efficiency, attempting to naturalize its messages.<sup>3</sup> Photographs used in propaganda production are particularly useful for naturalizing messages as they seem to be reflections of ›reality‹, even though they are encoded with meaning via framing techniques, accompanying texts, or the political affiliation of the publications in which they appear. Many of the photographs in *FRONT* and *SSSR na stroike* are technically manipulated visual products that would fall under the ›narrow‹ definitions of information control within propaganda production, but also the non-staged, non-falsified photographs in these magazines are assembled to convey messages that are – albeit never fully – coded by their specific contexts, and subordinated to specific political interests.

This paper discusses some of the ways in which both the ideological contents and the modernist uses of photography and design ›shape-shift‹<sup>4</sup> within transcultural and transideological flows of modernist aesthetics in wartime productions. It approaches photographs as visual products of dictatorships and fascist regimes that employ photography to stake their claims within a ›visual economy of truth‹<sup>5</sup> that forms the basis for all claims of legitimacy, power and rule. The makers and disseminators of propaganda photography at once operate within this economy while also helping to produce,

3 Thymian Bussemer, *Propaganda. Konzepte und Theorien*, 2nd ed. Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 32-33.

4 I am borrowing this term from the historian Paul Barclay, who employs W.J.T. Mitchell's metaphor for race as a ›shape-shifting joker‹ (W.J.T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, Cambridge 2012, p. 19) in his brilliant exploration of how a certain image travels and is used to different ends in Japanese-governed Taiwan and other colonial and postcolonial contexts: Paul D. Barclay, *Playing the Race Card in Japanese-Governed Taiwan, or: Anthropometric Photographs as ›Shape-Shifting Jokers‹*. Conference Presentation at the 14th European Association for Japanese Studies Conference, Ljubljana, August 28, 2014.

5 Susann Buck-Morss, *Visual Empire*, in: *diacritics* 37 (2007), pp. 171-198, here p. 185.

manufacture and shape it. Exploring the shifting political and contextual backgrounds against which photographs and photographic techniques are enacted, from their avant-garde beginnings to their application in authoritarian regimes, and highlighting their transnational and transcultural dimensions – of which *FRONT* serves as an outstanding example – may contribute to our understanding of the mechanisms of power in dictatorships.

## 1. Photography and Photojournalism in Japan and the USSR

From the inception of photography, international developments in its technology, its commercial use and its art forms were received almost simultaneously, or at most with only a slight delay, in Japan. Art photography (*geijutsu shashin*), i.e., British-inspired pictorialism, was actively promoted and exhibited in Japan.<sup>6</sup> Taking its own expressions in the form of landscape and portrait pictorialism imbued with romantic lyricism, art photography in Japan reached a peak in the 1910s.<sup>7</sup> In both Europe and Japan, the bulk and mainstream of photography until the 1920s followed traditional pictorial styles and arrangements.<sup>8</sup>

Experiments with photomontage date from the late 1910s, when it was developed by German Dadaists including John Heartfield (1891–1968) and Hannah Höch (1889–1978), and almost simultaneously by the Russian constructivists Alexander Rodchenko (1891–1956) and El Lissitzky (1890–1941), members of an avant-garde that had turned against both traditional arts in general, and art photography in particular. In Japan, over the course of the 1920s, the introduction of Dadaism, Russian Constructivism, German New Objectivity and Bauhaus photography triggered the move towards ›New Photography‹ that signified a decisive break with the romantic pictorialist aesthetic.<sup>9</sup> The emergence of the photo magazines *Fuoto Taimusu* (Photo Times; 1924)

6 Iizawa Kōtarō, *Nihon shashinshi gaisetsu [Outline of a Japanese History of Photography]*, Tōkyō 1999, p. 34.

7 Ryūichi Kaneko, The Origins and Development of Japanese Art Photography, in: Tucker et al., *History of Japanese Photography* (fn. 2), pp. 100–141, here p. 103.

8 Jens Jäger, *Photographie: Bilder der Neuzeit. Einführung in die Historische Bildforschung*, Tübingen 2000, p. 32.

9 Some avant-garde art photographers had already formed what was known as the *Kōsei-ha* (Construction Faction) during the 1920s following the Great Kantō Earthquake, and combined pictorialist soft focus techniques with constructivist patterns – even including such experimental techniques as photomontage and photograms. This group dispersed, however, when its leading member Fuchikami Hakuyō became an associate of the Manchurian Railway and relocated to Dalian in 1928 (Iizawa, *Nihon shashinshi gaisetsu* [fn. 6], p. 45). On Fuchikami's work in the colonial context, see Philip Charrier, Fuchikami Hakuyō and the ›Manchukuo Pastoral‹ in 1930s Japanese Art Photography, in: *Japanese Studies* 34 (2014), pp. 169–192.

and *Asahi Kamera* (Asahi Camera; 1926) during the mid-1920s was a result – and at the same time a vehicle of – a new photography that would engage with the accelerating changes of modern architecture and transportation, particularly after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 and the subsequent reconstruction of the devastated Tokyo metropolis.

Bauhaus ideas had begun to be introduced to Japan during the mid-1920s, but were to gain a wider audience through Moholy-Nagy's influential German Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* (Film and Photo), which was first shown in Stuttgart, Germany in 1929. Just two years later, in 1931, it could be seen in Tokyo and Osaka and had an enormous impact on the Japanese photographic avant-garde.<sup>10</sup> The magazine *Kōga* (a translation of the German term *Lichtbild*, or photographic image) was launched in the wake of these exhibitions, and many of the photographers, designers and intellectuals who went on to establish other photography workshops met at the venues of its editing group. Several of them, including Kimura Ihei (1901–1974), Watanabe Yoshio (1907–2000) and Domon Ken (1909–1990), later worked for or contributed to wartime illustrated propaganda magazines including *NIPPON*, *Shashin Shūhō* (Photographic Weekly Report) and *FRONT*, and remained the leading experts in photography circles of the postwar period.

Specific technological and aesthetic developments in Japanese photojournalism were triggered by publications in Germany and the USSR. For the USSR, Erika Wolf dates the beginning of photojournalism to as early as 1923,<sup>11</sup> as three illustrated magazines were founded or re-established in this year. Of these, *Ogoniok* (Little Flame) notably laid the groundwork for modern photojournalism and the popular illustrated press. *Ogoniok* was edited and published by Mikhail Kolt'sov, who played a major role in the development of photography and the illustrated press in the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> In 1926, the ›Moscow Association of Photo-Reporters‹ was founded by photographers of the country's newspapers and magazines. Following this development, a variety of other illustrated magazines was released across the USSR, though diversity was considerably curbed by an ensuing class war within photography circles – a battle which arose in response to the increased economic and cultural centralization that followed the launch of the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932).<sup>13</sup> At the start of the 1930s, the closure of several magazines indicated the government's aim to centralize the mass press. In the same year, however, the lavishly illustrated *SSSR na stroike* was conceived by Kolt'sov. Indeed, many of *Ogoniok* staff members then worked simultaneously as editors, office managers, translators or photographers for *SSSR na stroike*.

10 Joe Takeba, *The Age of Modernism: From Visualization to Socialization*, in: Tucker et al., *History of Japanese Photography* (fn. 2), pp. 142–183.

11 Erika Wolf, *The Context of Soviet Photojournalism, 1923–1932*, in: *The Zimmerli Journal* 2 (2004), pp. 106–117, here p. 108.

12 Mikhail Kolt'sov (1898–1940 or 1942) was also on the editorial board of *Pravda* and the chief reporter for Joseph Stalin during the Spanish Civil War. In 1938, he fell victim to the Great Purge and was sentenced to death and shot in either 1940 or 1942.

13 Wolf, *Context* (fn. 11), p. 110.

However, due to resource considerations, *SSSR na stroike* became the illustrated supplement of Maxim Gor'kii's literary magazine *Nashi dostizheniia* (Our Achievements, 1929–1937).<sup>14</sup>

Non-utilitarian constructions of the pre-revolutionary period – often in the form of three-dimensional works – provided a formal language for what was to become Russian Constructivism, a term that arose in post-revolutionary Russia around 1920–1921 and referred to works that were conceived with implicit or explicit ideological intent, and with industrial or social commitment by the constructivist creators.<sup>15</sup> As the program of the First Working Group of Constructivists – a group that included artists such as Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova – made clear, the merging of art and life through mass production was henceforth to be in the service of the communist collective that aimed to bring forth the new human being. The Socialist Realism of the 1930s, then, rather than presenting a break, meant a continuation of Russian Constructivism's future-oriented educational and ideological aim of transforming, shaping and ›engineering‹ not only reality but also human beings.<sup>16</sup> The common denominator of various works of Socialist Realism, a term that had first appeared in a Russian literary journal in 1932, was not one particular style but rather a shared narrative and visual presentation of a wished for (but not lived) reality<sup>17</sup> as well as institutional practices that included avant-garde techniques.<sup>18</sup>

Photography, photomontage and photo-collage that were aimed at documenting Soviet progress developed through time into a manipulated documentary photography that staged and created a fiction of Soviet success, and, as Klaus Waschik termed it,

14 This journal was more readily state sponsored and geared towards popularizing the new Soviet state's various achievements. Cf. Erika Wolf, When Photographs Speak, to Whom Do They Talk? The Origins and Audience of *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in Construction), in: *Left History* 6 (1999) issue 2, pp. 53–82, here pp. 54–79. On Gor'kii's role in photography, see Klaus Waschik, Virtual Reality. Sowjetische Bild- und Zensurpolitik als Erinnerungskontrolle in den 1930er-Jahren, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 7 (2010), pp. 30–54.

15 Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven 1983, p. 3.

16 For more information on this position, see Matthew Feldman, A Case Study in Soviet Political Religion: Modernism, The USSR in Construction, and Stalin's Russia, in: *Religion Compass* 5 (2011), pp. 685–697, here pp. 690–692; Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth. The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture*, DeKalb 2009, p. 3; Erika Wolf, *SSSR na stroike: From Constructivist Visions to Construction Sites*, in: Petter Österlund (ed.), *USSR in Construction. An Illustrated Exhibition Magazine*, Sundsvall, Sweden: Fotomuseet Sundsvall 2006; Erika Wolf, The Visual Economy of Forced Labor: Alexander Rodchenko and the White Sea-Baltic Canal, in: Valerie A. Kivelson/Joan Neuberger (eds), *Picturing Russia. Explorations in Visual Culture*, New Haven 2008, pp. 168–174, here p. 168; Boris Groys, Utopian Mass Culture, in: Boris Groys/Max Hollein (eds), *Dream Factory Communism. The Visual Culture of the Stalinist Era*, Ostfildern 2003, pp. 20–37, here pp. 24–25.

17 Thomas Christ, *Der Sozialistische Realismus. Betrachtungen zum Sozialistischen Realismus in der Sowjetzeit*, Basel 1999, pp. 23, 29.

18 Erika Wolf, *SSSR na stroike: From Avant-Garde to Socialist Realist Practice*, Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 1999, pp. 269–271. In 1932, the Central Committee decreed that all independent artist organizations be dissolved and that streamlined organizations for the different creative professions – artists, writers, painters, etc. – be established. Cf. Martin Damus, *Sozialistischer Realismus und Kunst im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt a.M. 1981, p. 12.

a ›virtual reality‹ through extensive image censorship and ›reality design‹.<sup>19</sup> In SSSR *na stroike*, beginning with the support of the German communist Dadaist John Heartfield, who briefly worked in Moscow and designed the final issue of 1931, important artists of the Russian constructivist avant-garde, including Rodchenko, Stepanova, Lissitzky and Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (1891–1978), deployed constructivist photomontage ›to create a fantasy image of the new Soviet state‹.<sup>20</sup> Photomontage as an art form had provided the grounds for the arbitrary use of photographic originals.<sup>21</sup>

In Japan, too, the media and photography profession gradually came to both illustrate and transmit the political directions of the government, and calls for ›documentary‹ photography depicting ›realism‹ in the service of the state were made to professional and amateur photographers alike. Since the Meiji period (1868–1912), organized groups had been playing a formative role in the development of photographic expression, but from the 1930s onward the government took an active role in shaping such groups.<sup>22</sup> With the New Order Movement (*Shin taisei undō*) gaining momentum in the spring of 1940, photojournalism rather than news reporting was expected to fully serve the national interest. In this context of national mobilization for total war, amateur photographers were also asked to contribute.<sup>23</sup> As a 1942 book on photojournalism directed at amateur photographers makes clear, amateurs were asked to leave the old aestheticism behind and put their efforts in photography in the service of the wartime state, ›renew their ideals, embrace the norms and the path of the state and strive for the order that brings us forward‹.<sup>24</sup> The author of this book, photographer Matsugi Fujio (1903–1984), stressed that photography needed to capture the feeling of the viewer and be visually appealing, asserting that ›a reportage photo that is neither interesting nor beautiful is like a bullet not being shot in the battle field‹. However, he cautioned that such photos should not become like the ›art photography of old‹, because this would ›take away the power of realism‹.<sup>25</sup> The visual economy of truth established in these calls to amateur photographers places photography fully in the context of something considered necessary for the war effort and also positions it firmly in the framework of modern technologies and propaganda techniques that base their claims for truth in the power of ›realism‹.

19 Waschik, *Virtual Reality* (fn. 14).

20 See Wolf, *When Photographs Speak* (fn. 14), pp. 73–74. The issue on the Soviet petroleum industry was designed by Heartfield (Wolf, *Constructivist Visions* [fn. 16]). El Lissitzky's first contribution to the magazine (1932, no. 10) was devoted to the large-scale construction of the Dnieper Dam. 6 issues were attributed to El Lissitzky alone, 19 were produced in collaboration with Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers. Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova created 13 issues together; one more edition, the White Sea-Baltic Canal issue (1933, no. 12) was credited to Rodchenko alone (Wolf, *When Photographs Speak* [fn. 14], p. 77).

21 Waschik, *Virtual Reality* (fn. 14).

22 Fraser, *Photography and Japan* (fn. 2), pp. 62–66.

23 See also the call for photos by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (KBS, Society for International Cultural Relations) for the World Fair at San Francisco in 1939: Shibaoka Shin'ichirō, *Hōdō shashin to taigai senden: 15nen sensōki no shashinkai* [*Photojournalism and Overseas Propaganda: Photographic Circles and the 15-Year War*], Tōkyō 2007, p. 111.

24 Matsugi Fujio, *Hōdō shashin e no michi* [*The Road to Photojournalism*], Tōkyō 1942, p. 10.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22.

## 2. Okada Sōzō and the Genealogy of *FRONT*

With regard to the transmission of cultural and aesthetic techniques and the development of photojournalism in Japan, two men in particular, Okada Sōzō (1903–1983) and Natori Yōnosuke (1910–1962), stand out for their transnational travels and trans-cultural experiences. Both men worked or studied in Germany and the USSR and, due to their significant transferences of creative concepts into the Japanese context, they can be considered two of those ›long-distance cultural specialists in the formation of modernities‹<sup>26</sup> who carry visual discourses from one context into another and back again. They each initiated one of the two overseas propaganda magazines that were notable for their technical and aesthetic sophistication and creative application of avant-garde trends and state-of-the-art photography and photojournalism in Japan. The initial ›cultural broker‹ Okada Sōzō eventually became a very influential producer, actor and photographer in Japan. He also became the major player in both the establishment of the publisher Tōhōsha and the production of *FRONT*.

Okada had originally wanted to become a painter and studied in Germany between 1920 and 1923, but on his return to Japan he entered the film company Shōchiku and became an actor under the stage name Yamanouchi Hikaru. He returned to Berlin and also traveled to Moscow in 1929 to learn about new dramatic filmmaking, and he also met Sergei Eisenstein there.<sup>27</sup> He brought back with him a wide range of visual material, including photography and new publications. *SSSR na stroike* had not yet been published, but Russian Constructivism was at its peak. In Germany, Okada saw the original Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* and subsequently proposed to the publisher Asahi Shinbunsha that it host the traveling exhibition in Japan.<sup>28</sup> Eager to introduce to Japan the new photography and illustrated publishing methods from Europe, Okada co-founded the Kokusai Kōga Kyōkai (International Photography Association). He also joined the Sobiēto no Tomo no Kai (Association of Friends of the Soviet Union) that was established in 1931.<sup>29</sup>

Natori Yōnosuke likewise brought new developments in photojournalism to Japan. Natori had studied and worked in Germany between 1928 and 1933, and on returning to Japan he established the first Nippon Kōbō (Nippon Studio) together with Okada Sōzō, photographer Kimura Ihei, designer Hara Hiromu (1903–1986), and art and photography critic Ina Nobuo (1898–1978). This group, however, was to disband within a year. Natori went on to re-establish Nippon Kōbō as a photography and graphic design company together with his German wife Erna Mecklenburg (1901–1979), and eventually

26 John Clark, Asian Artists as Long-distance Cultural Specialists in the Formation of Modernities, in: Fuyubi Nakamura/Morgan Perkins/Olivier Krischer (eds), *Asia through Art and Anthropology. Cultural Translation Across Borders*, London 2013, pp. 19–32, here p. 19.

27 Kawasaki/Harada, *Okada Sōzō eizō no seiki* (fn. 2), p. 147.

28 Tagawa Seiichi, *Sensō no gurafizumu: Kaisō no ›FRONT‹* [*Graphics in War: Looking back on ›FRONT‹*], Tōkyō 1988, pp. 42–43.

29 Inoue, ›Tōa no meishu‹ no gurafikkusu (fn. 2), p. 153.

produced the country's first illustrated overseas propaganda magazine, *NIPPON* (Japan), in 1934.<sup>30</sup> The other former members of the first *Nippon Kōbō*, namely Ina Nobuo, Kimura Ihei, and Hara Hiromu, along with twenty-six supporters including Okada Sōzō, formed a new group called *Chūō Kōbō* (Metropolis Studio).<sup>31</sup> *Chūō Kōbō* dissolved in 1941, after Okada Sōzō, who had ties to the Army General Staff, established the company *Tōhōsha*. Many *Chūō Kōbō* members, including Kimura Ihei, found work in the new company. The Chinese characters for *tōhō* in *Tōhōsha* refer to ›Japan‹, and were intended to indicate the company's main business of publishing overseas propaganda from Japan.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the specific purpose of *Tōhōsha* was to produce *FRONT* as a new illustrated overseas propaganda magazine.

The immediate precursor to the *Tōhōsha* publishing company was an office that had been established in the Kudan area of Tokyo and was called the Soviet Research Institute (Sobieto Kenkyūjo). This facility, usually referred to as the Kudan Office, was secretly run by the Army General Staff Office (Rikugun Sanbō Honbu) since 1938. Not only military staff, but also civilian experts with in-depth, first-hand knowledge of European avant-garde trends were affiliated with the Kudan Office, such as, again, Okada Sōzō, and the composer Yamada Kōsaku (1886–1965), a member of the Japanese musical avant-garde,<sup>33</sup> along with converted communists such as Katsuno Kinmasa (1901–1984). The latter had lived in Moscow in the 1930s, where he was accused of being a spy and spent three and a half years in a forced labor project for the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal before returning to Japan in 1934.<sup>34</sup> Among the staff at the Kudan Office were also other refugees from Stalin's regime, such as the Soviet Union's highest-ranking defector Genrikh Samoilovich Lyushkov (1900–1945), who

30 For analyses of *NIPPON* in Western languages, see Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Touring Japan as Museum: Nippon and other Japanese Imperialist Travelogues*, in: *positions* 8 (2000), pp. 747-793; Andrea Germer, *Visual Propaganda in Wartime East Asia: The Case of Natori Yonosuke*, in: *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, vol. 9, issue 20, no. 3 (May 16, 2011), URL: <<http://japanfocus.org/~Andrea-Germer/3530>>; Andrea Germer, *Artists and Wartime Agency: Natori Yonosuke – A Japanese Riefenstahl?*, in: *Contemporary Japan* 24 (2012), pp. 21-50.

31 Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 32.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

33 Yamada was one of many Japanese artists who traveled to Europe to study. He lived and studied in Germany from 1910 to 1913 and organized an exhibition with German wood block prints in Tokyo upon his return in 1914. See Thomas Hackner, *Worlds Apart? The Japan-Europe Historical Avant-Garde Relationship*, in: Bäckström and Benedikt Hjartarson (eds), *Decentering the Avant-Garde*, Amsterdam 2014, pp. 197-214, here p. 202; Judith Ann Herd, *Westliche Musik und die Entstehung einer japanischen Avantgarde*, in: Silvain Guignard (ed.), *Musik in Japan. Aufsätze zu Aspekten der Musik im heutigen Japan*, Munich 1996, pp. 219-240.

34 Katsuno was working as secretary of Katayama Sen, the Japanese representative of the Comintern in Moscow, when he was imprisoned. He became one of the first prisoners to bear witness internationally to the Stalinist Gulag system with his account of his escape from the Soviet Union, published upon his return to Japan in 1934 (Katsuno Kinmasa, *Sekiro dasshutsu-ki [An Account of my Escape from Red Russia]*, Tōkyō 1934) and in numerous other publications. For a list compiled by Fujii Ikkō, see Symposium Katsuno Kinmasa (December 15, 2001), URL: <<http://www.ff.ij4u.or.jp/~katote/katunos.html>> (in Japanese).

had escaped to Japan just before Stalin would have had him eliminated.<sup>35</sup> All of them contributed their expertise to the Kudan Office's mission of processing information from the Soviet Union and creating posters for anti-Soviet propaganda.<sup>36</sup>

The leftist Okada Sōzō was interested in developments in the arts movement in the Soviet Union, including the magazine *SSSR na stroike* that was launched around the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan.<sup>37</sup> This magazine was known and studied with great interest by the Kudan Office, and in 1939, Colonel Yamaoka Michitake, then Head of the Russia Chapter of the Army General Staff Office, asked Okada whether it would be possible to produce such an overseas illustrated magazine for Japan.<sup>38</sup> Domestic Japanese propaganda magazines and photo journals were being launched around the same time, including *Shūhō* (Weekly Report) in 1936 and *Shashin Shūhō* (Photographic Weekly Report) in 1938.<sup>39</sup> Discussing the concept of an overseas magazine with Katsuno Kinmasa and receiving assistance from Chūō Kōbō staff, Okada then pushed forward with the plan to launch *FRONT*. As was the case with Natori's launch of the overseas propaganda magazine *NIPPON*, Okada seems to have invested his private money. Indeed, the assistance that came from the military was merely an addition to Okada's financial contribution. As well as indicating that he was not a puppet of the military, this places him even more firmly in the context of the ›privatization of propaganda‹,<sup>40</sup> a notion of private initiative and business interests leading to cooperation with military aims.

35 For a detailed account of Lyushkov's flight and his contribution to Japanese intelligence gathering regarding the Soviet Union, see Maik Hendrik Sprotte, General Genrich Samojlovič Lyuškov in Japan, in: Marie-Luise Legeland et al. (eds), *Von Bauern, Beamten und Banditen. Beiträge zur historischen Japanforschung*, Bonn 2007, pp. 229-247.

36 Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 37.

37 Wolf, *When Photographs Speak* (fn. 14), p. 78, notes that *SSSR na stroike* has been erroneously associated with the end and success of the First Five-Year Plan, an error that is repeated in Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 41.

38 Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 43.

39 *Shashin Shūhō* was in A4 format with 24 pages and was sold at bookstores, stations and photo shops for a low price. By 1941 it had a print run of more than 200,000 copies. Combining photos, photo sequences and text, it was a prominent publication of domestic wartime propaganda. Cf. Ritsumeikan Daigaku Kokusai Heiwa Myūjiamu, *Senjika Nihon no hōdō shashin: Umemoto Tadao to ›Shashin Shūhō‹ [Photojournalism in Wartime Japan: Umemoto Tadao and ›Shashin Shūhō‹]*, Kyōto 1995, p. 4; Kanō Mikiyo, *Shashin Shūhō ni miru jendā to esunishiiti* [Gender and Ethnicity in *Shashin Shūhō*], in: *Image & Gender* 5 (2005) issue 3, pp. 35-41, here p. 35; Kanō Mikiyo, *Nihon no sensō puropaganda to jendā: Shashin Shūhō no ›Dai Tōa kyōeiken‹ ›Kichiku Beiei‹ hyōshō o chūshin ni* [War Propaganda and Gender in Japan: Representations of ›The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere‹ and ›The Brutal American and English‹ in *Shashin Shūhō*], in: *Jinbun Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūjo Nenpō* [Yearbook of the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences] 6 (June 2008), pp. 1-11; David Earhart, *Certain Victory. Images of World War II in Japanese Media*, Armonk 2008; Tamai Kiyoshi (ed.), *Senji Nihon no kokumin ishiki: Kokusaku gurafushi ›Shashin Shūhō‹ to sono jidai* [The People's Awareness in Wartime Japan: The State's Illustrated ›Photographic Weekly Report‹ and its Era], Tōkyō 2008.

40 Michael Kunczik, Public Relations in Kriegszeiten, in: Claudia Glunz/Artur Pelka/Thomas F. Schneider (eds), *Information Warfare. Die Rolle der Medien (Literatur, Kunst, Photographie, Film, Fernsehen, Theater, Presse, Korrespondenz) bei der Kriegsdarstellung und -deutung*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 15-40, here p. 20.

Tōhōsha was founded by Okada with the cooperation of Katsuno Kinmasa. To understand the position of Tōhōsha and its main product *FRONT* in the print market, we need to consider the streamlining and censorship of photography magazines and other publications that occurred at the time. From 1940, with the establishment of the Cabinet Information Bureau, photographers and photojournalists were placed under full government control.<sup>41</sup> By 1941, production and distribution of film, paper and dry plates had been centralized and placed under the control of the Nippon Kankō Zairyō Seizō Kōgyōkai (Japan Photosensitive Material Manufacturers' Association). From this point on, only government- or military-related communication received the necessary materials.<sup>42</sup> In Japan's growing wartime empire of the early 1940s, Japanese propaganda magazines in East and Southeast Asia proliferated. In addition to the major illustrated magazines, *NIPPON* and *FRONT*, at least 12 other magazines were listed in 1943.<sup>43</sup>

In this context, *FRONT* can be seen to have been an absolutely privileged production that was not only co-financed by the army but also by the Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo conglomerates. In his recollections about his time at Tōhōsha, former graphic designer Tagawa Seiichi,<sup>44</sup> whose job had involved processing and altering images provided by photographers, notes the collections of international photo books and art magazines at the office, its financially privileged status, and the ample supply of otherwise very restricted high-quality German or British photographic print and design materials.<sup>45</sup> Hara Hiromu was responsible for Tōhōsha's design section; Kimura Ihei for the photography section. At the end of the war, Tōhōsha's office was destroyed in an air raid along with the last issue on war art. Tōhōsha disbanded, and Kimura Ihei and other staff members subsequently founded the short-lived group Bunkasha (Culture Company).<sup>46</sup>

41 Under the auspices of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA), the Kōa Shashin Hōkokukai (Patriotic Society for the Development of Asian Photography; 1940–1945), an organization for the streamlining of the photographic profession, was established. This organization was succeeded by the Dai-Nippon Shashin Hōkokukai (Greater Japan Photography Patriotic Society) in July 1943. Cf. Takako Matsuda, Major Photography Clubs and Associations, in: Tucker et al., *History of Japanese Photography* (fn. 2), pp. 370–377, here p. 370; Fraser, *Photography and Japan* (fn. 2), pp. 62–63. In 1941, the then existing ten photo magazines that targeted a domestic audience were merged into four.

42 Iizawa, *Nihon shashinshi gaisetsu* (fn. 6), p. 60.

43 Photographer Domon Ken listed these magazines in his harsh critique of the effectiveness of overseas propaganda magazines in an article in 1943, for which he was fired from his post at the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (KBS, Society for International Cultural Relations) affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Domon Ken, Taigai senden zasshi ron [A Discussion of Overseas Propaganda Magazines], in: *Nihon Hyōron* [Japan Review], September 1943, pp. 62–66.

44 His book on *FRONT* appeared in two different versions (1988, 2005) and also contains articles that appeared between 1979 and 1986 in the periodical *E+D+P* published by the Tokyo Editorial Center. Tagawa also oversaw the publication of the facsimile edition of *FRONT* (1989–1990, see fn. 2). His style of writing is just one example of the low level of individual recognition and acceptance of war responsibility, as he bemoans the fact that *FRONT*'s aesthetic accomplishments did not receive the respect they deserved (see Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* [fn. 28], p. 239).

45 Tagawa Seiichi, *Yakeato no gurafizumu. >FRONT< kara >Shūkan San Nyūsu< e* [Graphics of Burnt-out Lands: From >FRONT< to >Shūkan San Nyūsu<], Tōkyō 2005, p. 21.

46 Matsuda, Major Photography Clubs (fn. 41), p. 376.

### 3. *FRONT* and *SSSR na stroike*

*FRONT* was published in large format (42cm x 28cm) and printed in full color gravure, a quality that was unthinkable for other productions at the time. The first issue was printed in Japanese and 15 other languages, but this number gradually dwindled to just a few or only one other language in the last issues. According to Okada, the first edition, a double issue (nos. 1-2), had a print run of 69,000, though publication numbers

No.	Theme	Size	Pages	Overseas editions	Published
1-2	Marines	A3	64	15 languages (and Japanese version)	1942
3-4	Army	A3	64	15 languages	1942
5-6	Manchuria	A3	64	Chinese, English, Russian, Japanese	1943
7	Parachutes	A3	36	Chinese, English, Russian, Japanese	1943
8-9	Air Force	A3	64	Chinese, English, Russian	1943
10-11	Iron (Nippon's Mighty Production)	A3	64	Chinese and English (in the same issue)	1943
12-13	North China	A3	64	Chinese and Japanese (in the same issue)	1944
14	Philippines	A3	48	Chinese and English (in the same issue)	1944
Special	India	B4	48	English (partly in Chinese)	1944
Special	Wartime Tokyo	B4	48	Chinese (photo captions in Japanese)	1945
Special	War Art	B4	–	Chinese (Japanese proofs completed, but not printed because of the end of the war); destroyed in air raid	

(Adapted from Tagawa Seiichi, *Sensō no gurafizumu: Kaisō no ›FRONT‹* [Graphics in War: Looking back on ›FRONT‹], Tōkyō 1988, p. 87)

for later issues are unknown.<sup>47</sup> All issues of *FRONT* were themed and – as the magazine mainly consisted of large-format or full-page format graphics – captions and articles were kept to a minimum.

*FRONT* was initially supposed to carry the title *Tōa Kensetsu* (East Asia in Construction). As this title suggests, *FRONT* was deeply influenced by the technical and propagandistic format of *SSSR na stroike*, if not conceived as its copycat. *SSSR na stroike* had also been published as themed issues in Russian, English, German, French and, from 1938, Spanish editions to illustrate the developments and changes taking place in the Soviet Union. Its themes in the first years were export-economy-oriented and only later included military prowess, whereas *FRONT* overwhelmingly presented themes on war and expansion. The target audiences of the two magazines were markedly different. While it has generally been assumed that *SSSR na stroike* was principally intended to present the Soviet Union to an international audience, Erika Wolf has convincingly argued that from 1934 onwards, foreign consumption was of decreasing importance, and the new Stalinist elite became the intended primary readership of *SSSR na stroike*, a circumstance reflected in the steady decline of international versions.<sup>48</sup> The variety of foreign languages in which *FRONT* appeared would also drastically decrease: from 15 to 3 in 1943, and to one (either Chinese or English) from 1944 onwards. This, however, seems rather to have been the result of the acute scarcity of resources in wartime.<sup>49</sup> *FRONT*'s intended audience was mainly the countries of East and Southeast Asia under Japanese rule,<sup>50</sup> which used the publication as a means of justifying and propagating the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere‹.

The non-utilitarian, experimental phase of constructivist photography had been in decline since the Russian Revolution, and its avant-garde techniques had been domesticated in the 1920s in an attempt to put them into the service of the new communist collective. This endeavor culminated in the establishment of Socialist Realism as the state doctrine for the arts from the early 1930s, the time when *SSSR na stroike* was conceived. When *SSSR na stroike* ceased publication in 1941 (notwithstanding one brief revival in 1949), it had for a decade functioned as the photojournalistic mouthpiece

47 Cited in Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 86. However, even the print run of the first double issue about the Marine Forces cannot be verified. In another publication, Tagawa estimates the print run of this issue to ›more than one hundred thousand‹, without referring to Okada. Cf. Tagawa, *Yakeato no gurafizumu* (fn. 45), p. 31.

48 This argument is supported not only by the luxurious editions of some of the Russian issues but also by the overall print run of Russian issues, which far exceeded the combined number of the international editions, which steadily declined (Wolf, *When Photographs Speak* [fn. 14], pp. 71-72).

49 As publication numbers for *FRONT* are unknown, we cannot ascertain whether the issues of the Japanese version steadily increased as compared to the other languages. However, as people in the colonies and occupied territories of the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere‹ were increasingly taught and expected to read Japanese, language may not be such a strong indicator of whether a Japanese or an international audience was the main target.

50 See also Kawamoto, *Taigai senden gurafu zasshi ›FRONT‹ ni okeru ›rittasei‹* (fn. 2), p. 155, who notes the difference here to *NIPPON*, which mainly targeted a European and American audience.

and producer of an ever-growing fantasy image of the Soviet Union and of a personal cult around its dictator Stalin. Notably, 1941 was the year in which *FRONT* was conceived in Japan, before going to press in the following year. *FRONT* picked up, so to speak, where *SSSR na stroike* left off: a combination of fully domesticated constructivist photomontage and Socialist Realism in photography that now served to create a fantasy image of the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere‹.

#### 4. Chronopolitics, Military Masculinity, and State Violence

International comparisons of *SSSR na stroike* with other journals and photographic practices have recently been undertaken by Kameda Masumi and Timothy Nunan.<sup>51</sup> Kameda places *SSSR na stroike* in the context of other international illustrated propaganda magazines, the German *Signal* (1940–1945)<sup>52</sup> and, indeed, *FRONT* (1942–1945), but chooses to compare the Soviet publication with its postwar Yugoslavian adaptation, *Yugoslavia* (1949–1959). He focuses on the chronopolitics in both journals, i.e., the way in which ›history‹ is employed to make statements concerning national and political identity for both countries. While the narrative of *SSSR na stroike* portrayed the distinction between a backward past and a new Soviet modernity, one which everyone was invited to join,<sup>53</sup> *Yugoslavia* created a narrative that connected an imagined medieval identity with the modern Yugoslavia and stressed historical continuity. As Kameda writes, ›what brought about this difference of topics and methods of visual rhetoric in both graphic magazines was the ideological necessity to obscure, in the case of former Yugoslavia, the newness, and – in the Soviet case – the continuity of a past that was filled with images of the state and national identities.‹<sup>54</sup>

51 Kameda, Gurafu-shi ›So Rempō Kensetsu‹ to ›Yūgosurabia‹ (fn. 2); Timothy A. Nunan, Soviet Nationalities Policy, *SSSR na stroike*, and Soviet Documentary Photography in Comparative Context, 1931–1937, in: *Ab Imperio* 2/2010, pp. 47–92.

52 On *Signal*, see Martin Moll, ›Signal‹: Die NS-Auslandsillustrierte und ihre Propaganda für Hitler's ›Neues Europa‹, in: *Publizistik. Vierteljahreshefte für Kommunikationsforschung* 31 (1986), pp. 357–400; Rainer Rutz, *Signal: Eine deutsche Auslandsillustrierte als Propagandainstrument im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Essen 2007; and as linked in a transnational framework to the propaganda magazine *NIPPON*, see Andrea Germer, Shared Origins, Shared Outcomes? Transcultural Trajectories of Germany and Japan During the Asia-Pacific War, in: Carolien Stolte/Yoshi Kikuchi (eds), *Eurasian Encounters. Intellectual and Cultural Exchanges, 1900–1950*, Amsterdam 2015 (forthcoming). Inoue, Tōa no meishu' no gurafikkusu (fn. 2), compares *FRONT* with two other Japanese overseas propaganda magazines published by the newspaper companies Mainichi Shinbunsha and Asahi Shinbunsha respectively. Kawamoto, Taigai senden gurafu zasshi ›FRONT‹ ni okeru ›rittaisei‹ (fn. 2), compares *FRONT* to the other major Japanese illustrated magazine *NIPPON*.

53 See also Nunan, Soviet Nationalities Policy (fn. 51).

54 Kameda, Gurafu-shi ›So Rempō Kensetsu‹ to ›Yūgosurabia‹ (fn. 2), p. 50.

What connected *FRONT* and *SSSR na stroike* were important common and yet specific aspects of time politics that their fantasy images produced: for the new Soviet State, it was an image of modernity characterized by equality and technology pitted against a backward and feudalistic Czarist past; for wartime Japan, *FRONT* featured a modernity that was consistently centered around the display of modern technology, military masculinity, and the technological and cultural blessings Japan brought to the rest of Asia. In contrast to a past characterized by Western oppression, *FRONT* painted an image of a future Asia, brought about by the benevolent, modern and mighty Japanese Empire, the guarantor of Asian liberation.

Initiated by the army and launched in the middle of the ongoing and escalating war, *FRONT*'s display of military might was stocked almost exclusively with images of male soldiers and technicians. The airbrushed photomontage of tanks by photographer Hamaya Hiroshi creates the impression of an unstoppable force, and is one of several similar combinations of ›men and machines‹ that are celebrated in *FRONT*.<sup>55</sup> This combination may seem self-evident, but it had deep implications: military technology and masculinity became synonymous with the modernity that Japan had fully embraced. *The Gender of Modernity*, as Rita Felski phrased the problem in the title of her book,<sup>56</sup> was decidedly masculine in *FRONT*'s representation of Japan, produced by an all-male staff at Tōhōsha. In *SSSR na stroike*, women as Soviet workers and the topic of equality featured strongly because of the policy to show the equality of women and men but also, one would imagine, due to the cooperation of female artists such as Varvara Stepanova and Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, among others. Nevertheless, a male bias is likewise evident in the Russian representation of construction and the growing cult of male leaders. Both magazines emphasized productivity, technology and modernity as central pillars of the present and the envisioned Empire. The propagandistic portrayal of rational economic reform and growth had very similar features under Soviet rule (in *SSSR na stroike*) and under Japanese imperial rule (in *FRONT*).

Further commonalities in the imagery of *SSSR na stroike* and *FRONT* can be found in the aim of covering up the victims of state violence. *SSSR na stroike* was used to deny forced labor, one famous early example being the themed issue ›The White Sea-Baltic Canal‹ (1933, no. 12) designed by Alexander Rodchenko. This canal played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Gulag system, as it was the first massive infrastructure project that served as a testing ground for the use of forced labor. Rodchenko's new photomontage and the technically modern graphic design carried the ideological content of turning criminals into new Soviet citizens through their labor for society.

55 In *FRONT*, the coordination of ›men and machines‹ is repeatedly cited as the clue to Japan's success (see e.g. *FRONT* 1943, nos. 8-9, unpaginated). Hamaya joined Tōhōsha in 1941 and left again after only one year because he refused to conduct photo shoots at the front line. He is notable for his postwar acknowledgment and problematization of his earlier wartime propaganda activities and of Tōhōsha's continued manipulation and use of his photographs after he had left the company. Cf. Hamaya Hiroshi, *Senzō zanzō. Shashin taiken 60nen* [Hidden Images, Remaining Images. 60 Years of Experiencing Photography], Tōkyō 1991.

56 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Cambridge 1995.



Photomontage in *FRONT* 1942, nos. 3-4 (Army special), size: A3, unpaginated.  
 Photographer: Hamaya Hiroshi.

In reality, however, these prisoners served primarily as a substitute for equipment and animals. The death rate from malnutrition was enormous, and there is evidence to suggest that people were arrested in order to provide skilled and unskilled labor for the project.<sup>57</sup> As noted above, Katsuno Kinmasa, who was later involved in the production of *FRONT*, had been a prisoner in this project.<sup>58</sup> In earlier issues of *SSSR na stroike*, such as the issue on the timber industry (1931, no. 6, pp. 2, 4), forced labor was mentioned in the text and repeatedly and vehemently denied and decried as ›bourgeois‹ lies and the ›foolish, malicious slanders [sic]‹ of Western propaganda against the Soviet Union. At the same time, forced labor was depicted as a particular phenomenon of capitalist exploitation by Western countries in their colonies.<sup>59</sup> In fact, however, as Wolf notes, it was in the penal colony of the White Sea-Baltic Canal that the ›prisoners became machines, the industrial capital behind this engineering project.‹<sup>60</sup>

57 Mikhail Morukov, The White Sea-Baltic Canal, in: Paul R. Gregory (ed.), *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*, Stanford 2003, pp. 151-162, here pp. 158-160.

58 Katsuno, *Sekiro dasshutsu-ki* (fn. 34).

59 To quote *SSSR na stroike* (1931, no. 6, p. 2): ›It transpires that over a distance of 90 kilometers, built by forced Negro labor, 17,000 Negro workers have perished as a result of the inhuman conditions under which they were compelled to work. Every five meters of railroad cost one thousand francs plus the life of one worker. This is the capitalist method of calculating the cost of an undertaking.‹

60 Wolf, *Visual Economy* (fn. 16), p. 172.

Linguistically and visually effective, *FRONT* also covered up certain realities by denouncing the West. The magazine denied Japan's aggressive warfare in Asia and instead presented the West as the sole culprit, from whose yoke Japan was to free Asia. In the representative issue ›The Imperial Army, The Cornerstone of Asia‹ (1942, nos. 3-4),<sup>61</sup> the rhetorical question whether the Japanese are the ›Aggressors of Asia‹ appears repeatedly and on double-page spreads presenting the history of Euro-American aggression and hegemony over Asia, beginning with the Opium Wars. The significance of the Russo-Japanese War is attributed to its having seen Japan curb Western imperialism in Asia. The rhetorical question whether Japan is the aggressor is answered on the last inside page, where it is asserted that Japan's presence on the continent means ›[j]oint defense [...] and joint construction‹ (1942, nos. 3-4, pp. 68-69). The way in which ›history‹ is presented, the order, composition and layout, show the greatest resemblance to *SSSR na stroike's* issue in commemoration of the October Revolution, titled ›The Stalin Constitution‹ (1937, nos. 9-12). Yet not only the visual design, but also the choice of vocabulary seem like copies of the Soviet version of state propaganda transported into the Asian context to justify different contents but similar assertions of paternalist hegemony. As historian Oguma Eiji, among others, has shown,<sup>62</sup> the ideology of Japan as the leader of its so-called Co-Prosperity Sphere rested on a concept of ethnic diversity in the Japanese Empire in which the Japanese ›race‹ was seen as having multi-ethnic origins from which it had evolved to become the superior cultural and political leader in Asia.

In terms of aesthetics, *SSSR na stroike* was clearly the model that was followed closely by the makers of *FRONT*. Strikingly similar examples abound in terms of the graphic design, the close-up pictures of military personnel and the design and layout of double-page spreads, as can be seen in the featured images of a Soviet Cossack and a Japanese pilot respectively. Other visual themes, such as the famous parachute issue by Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova entitled ›Fearless Soviet Parachutists‹ (*SSSR na stroike*, 1935, no. 12), find their equivalent in the parachute issue of *FRONT* (1943, no. 7; see above, p. 237). In their issue, Rodchenko and Stepanova included a pop-out parachute and other three-dimensional constructions, one of which unfolded to reveal Stalin's photograph shot from a worm's eye view and placed within an image of descending parachutes (see below, p. 256). Tagawa notes that for the parachute issue of *FRONT*, graphic designer Hara Hiromu also attempted three-dimensional constructions.<sup>63</sup> Production had to be sped up, however, and resulted in a single issue that instead aimed to create the impression of film through photomontages that looked like stills.

61 This issue had originally been planned as the inaugural issue but was delayed and later became a double issue following the Marines issue (nos. 1-2).

62 Eiji Oguma, *A Genealogy of ›Japanese‹ Self-Images*, Melbourne 2002.

63 Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), p. 14.



SSSR na stroike, English edition, 1939, no. 1 (January), ›Soviet Cossacks‹, unpaginated.  
The three-tiered background relates to the profession of the male Cossack in the front.



FRONT, Mongolian edition, 1942, nos. 1-2, Marines issue, unpaginated.  
A three-tiered assembly of airplane images forms the background to the pilot in the front.



FRONT, English edition, 1943, no. 7, ›Japanese Army Paratroop Units‹, unpaginated.  
Two photographs were used in this montage created by Ogawa Toraji using an airbrush.  
It was not possible at the time to take such wide angles in one shot.

Following the Japanese use of paratroopers in the Battle of Palembang in Dutch-controlled Sumatra in February 1942, such soldiers came to be the subjects of songs and artistic renderings in Japan.<sup>64</sup> Paratroopers had also featured prominently in the June 1940 issue (no. 5) of the popular Nazi publication *Signal* that first appeared as an extra overseas edition of the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.<sup>65</sup> *Signal* was the most successful illustrated overseas propaganda magazine of Europe in the first half of the 1940s, and, according to Inoue Yūko, was also known to Tōhōsha staff.<sup>66</sup> The parachute images are illustrative of how certain visual tropes cross genres and intertextually reference each other within and across borders of time, space and nation.

64 One famous example is an oil painting by Tsuruta Gorō of the same year. The painting's title is *Shinpei Parenban ni kōka su* (Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang; 194cm x 255cm; permanent loan to Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art). See Hariu Ichirō et al. (eds), *Sensō to bijutsu 1937–1945 [Art in Wartime Japan, 1937–1945]*, Tōkyō 2008, p. 30.

65 Germer, *Shared Origins, Shared Outcomes?* (fn. 52).

66 Inoue, ›Tōa no meishu‹ no gurafikkusu (fn. 2), p. 134.

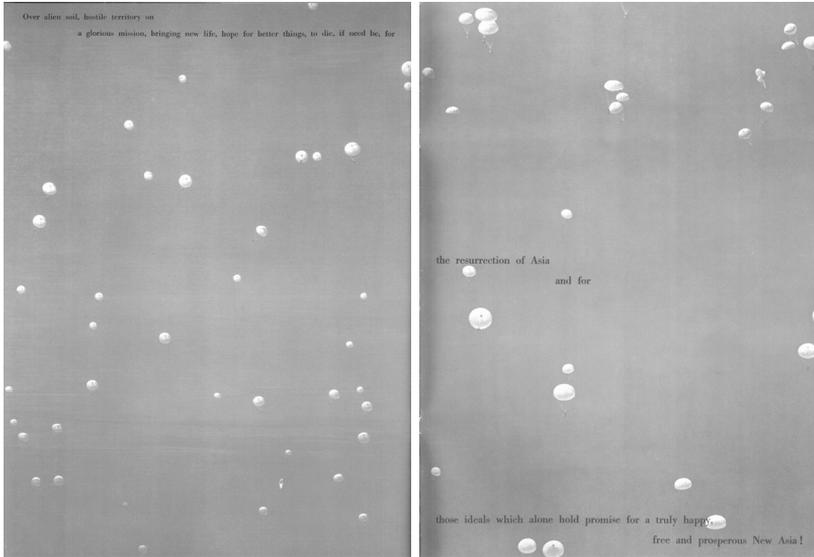
The parachute issues of both *SSSR na stroike* and *FRONT* present some of their most sophisticated photomontages. In the *FRONT* issue, the photographs were taken by Kikuchi Shunkichi and Seguchi Mitsunori – not at Palembang, Sumatra, as the magazine asserts, but at a paratroopers' exercise camp in Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan. The technique of photomontage is perfected in the sense that wide angles that could not be shot with the camera equipment of the time were created through very skilful montage and the use of an airbrush, making it hard even today to discern that the original picture of the paratroopers was not produced in one shot. The graphic design and layout were done by Hara Hiromu and Ogawa Toraji. The text was written by Hayashi Tatsuo (1896–1984), a professor for Western philosophy, aesthetics and culture and a literature critic who was known as a liberal intellectual, expounding neither left-wing nor ultra-nationalist positions.<sup>67</sup> Like Okada, Hayashi had been a member of the *Sobiëto no Tomo no Kai* (Association of Friends of the Soviet Union) and served on the Board of *Tōhōsha*.

## 5. Political Religion and Chauvinistic Ethnophilia

The parachute issues of *SSSR na stroike* and *FRONT* also serve to show differences in the way the two magazines created images of political religion. In *FRONT*, the image of a sky unevenly dotted with parachutes, evocative of seeds carried by the wind gliding downwards from the sky, is, I would argue, even more daring than *SSSR na stroike* in its minimalism, style and aesthetic of ›reality‹ and war. The text in the Japanese image reads: ›Over alien soil, hostile territory on a glorious mission, bringing new life, hope for better things, to die, if need be, for the resurrection of Asia and for those ideals which alone hold promise for a truly happy, free and prosperous New Asia!‹ (*FRONT* 1943, no. 7, unpaginated; see next page).

Phrased and graphically presented like a poem or a prayer, the text transforms the political and geostrategic idea of ›Greater East Asia‹ into a religious one, combining and giving meaning to the themes of life and death, ideals, hope and resurrection. Moreover, the text connects the image of the sky with the parachutes metaphorically descending like seedlings onto a soil that will become fecund with the advance of the troopers. The preceding photomontage of male troopers supports the association of these seedlings with male sperm that impregnates the fertile female soil. What is interesting here is that there is no central focal point in the image comparable to what we can see in the skilful design of its predecessor, *SSSR na stroike*, where Stalin was placed in the center of the descending parachutes. Rodchenko's and Stepanova's graphic

67 Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu* (fn. 28), pp. 114, 107.



FRONT, English edition, 1943, no. 7, ›Japanese Army Paratroop Units‹, the last inside double page, featuring descending paratroopers like seedlings carried by the wind. Text by Hayashi Tatsuo.



SSSR na stroike, German edition, 1935, no. 12, ›Fearless Soviet Parachutists‹, unpaginated. Designed by Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. Unfolded photo collage; Joseph Stalin in the center of a sky full of parachutes.

design, the play with sharp photographic angles, worm's eye views towards people and the sky, as well as symmetry and construction in the three-dimensional fold-out, are highly innovative, playful and aesthetically pleasing. At the same time, they represent domesticated constructivist techniques insofar as they have a purpose and a center around which all construction gravitates – and this center is visually filled with the image of Joseph Stalin.

This peculiar lack in the case of *FRONT*, as well as the explicit existence in the case of *SSSR na stroike*, of a clear center occupied by charismatic figures can be found in further, otherwise very similar photomontages and photocollages of both magazines. Two images from 1937 (*SSSR na stroike*) and 1943 (*FRONT*) serve for comparison. Almost identical constructivist strategies of featuring the people and ethnic diversity through photo collage can be seen here. Moreover, where *SSSR na stroike* created an image of the new Soviet man and woman, no matter what their ethnicity, *FRONT* employed a similar strategy extolling the ›racial‹ diversity of the new ›Asian‹ people that were to prosper within the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹. Within this propagandistic scheme, both magazines featured ethnic diversity as a distinct quality of the new Empire (see the next two pages).

Focusing on the question of how nationalities and modernization were negotiated within the ›documentary‹ photography presented in *SSSR na stroike*, Timothy Nunan observes an overall tendency of ›chauvinistic ethnophilia‹.<sup>68</sup> The same can be said about the way in which *FRONT* depicted the ethnic and national groups in Japan's wartime empire. Featuring ethnic symbols and Japanese promises of independence, again in ways that very much resemble the aesthetics of Socialist Realism, the different ethnic groups were depicted within the same scopic regime of construction and heavy industry on the one hand, and even more so as happy farming peoples on the other. Whereas all the issues on Japan, except the last one on wartime Tokyo, feature almost no women at all and thereby construct an entirely homosocial representation of Japan, the issues on Southeast Asia present women and civilians quite prominently. This representation obviously feminizes nations within the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹ but it does so to varying degrees. The Philippines are overwhelmingly represented by women and civilians, in contrast to the predominantly male images of farmers and construction workers in Manchuria and Northern China, the two systems that were arguably more closely in the orbit of Japan's political and cultural influence and control. In *FRONT*, the new order that Japan proclaimed for what it called the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹ was visually produced, conceptually supported and naturalized, as it were, as a gendered order in Asia (see below, p. 261).

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68 Nunan, *Soviet Nationalities Policy* (fn. 51), p. 71. He also provides a comparative perspective with US documentary photography during the New Deal era, which ›like many photographs for *SSSR na stroike*, staged photographic constructions of rural poverty, ignorance, and backwardness‹ (ibid., p. 86). Nevertheless, he claims that none of the Soviet photographs produced enduring individual artistic images as in the US-American case.



SSSR na stroike, German edition, 1937, nos. 9-12, »The Stalin Constitution«, unpaginated. In this photo collage, Stalin forms the center between two rows of dignitaries and in front of the ethnically diverse people of the Soviet Union. Lenin is mentioned and quoted but not visually represented.

Manchuria, in particular, was presented as the exemplary model for the modernization and anti-colonial liberation of Asia under Japanese guidance (*FRONT* 1943, nos. 5-6, pp. 4-5): »China was the last chapter of »the Colonization of Asia by the guidance of the Anglo-Saxons«, Manchuria being its last page. But this last one, on the eve when it was being closed forever by the Russian Imperialists, was unfolded by Japan as the first page of the Emancipation of Asia.«

In *Planning for Empire*, Janis Mimura elaborates on the crucial role of Japanese reform bureaucrats stationed in Manchuria and their »vision of ultramodern Japan in Manchuria«. Likewise, in another recent study, *Constructing East Asia*, Aaron Moore examines the Japanese planning and constructing of massive colonial infrastructure projects as an important strategy of national policy and part of the fascist »technological imaginary« that served to rally people to support the expanding Empire.<sup>69</sup> For Japanese intellectuals, engineers and bureaucrats (among whom was the later postwar

69 Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire. Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State*, Ithaca 2011, p. 1; Aaron Stephen Moore, *Constructing East Asia. Technology, Ideology, and Empire in Japan's Wartime Era, 1931-1945*, Stanford 2013.



FRONT, English edition, 1943, nos. 5-6, Manchuria special, unpaginated.  
 This photo collage evokes the concept of the ›Harmony of the five races‹.  
 No leader or charismatic figure is used to underwrite this ›harmony‹.

Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke), the Manchurian Occupation was the pivotal event and opportunity to realize their technocratic agenda, which formed the basis of their techno-fascist visions for Japan. By pushing for a fascist vision of Japan and promoting the concept of the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹, they were the primary agents of Japanese hegemony in Asia. As the visual and textual strategies in *FRONT* exemplify, Japanese artists and media producers collaborated in presenting and distributing this technocratic form of fascist ideology. This image of technology was not only deeply gendered but also staged as a prime signifier of racial and social harmony, progress and innovation.<sup>70</sup>

70 The long-standing debate over whether wartime Japan can be called fascist without a revolution from below and without a charismatic and military leader has, in English-language monographs and essay collections since the 2000s, concluded with the view that Japan's political system during the so-called 15-Year War was one of several cultural and political variants of generic fascism. See E. Bruce Reynolds (ed.), *Japan in the Fascist Era*, New York 2004; Allan Tansman (ed.), *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, Durham 2009; Mimura, *Planning for Empire* (fn. 69); Roy Starrs, *Modernism and Japanese Culture*, London 2011; Moore, *Constructing East Asia* (fn. 69).

Returning to the question of the prominent visual presentation of charismatic figures – or lack thereof – Stalin (and Lenin) feature regularly in *SSSR na stroike* as the guarantors of the changes underway. However, the Japanese Emperor – who was also the constitutionally instituted military high command of Japan – appears only once in *FRONT*, and in a rather inconspicuous position within the magazine.<sup>71</sup> This phenomenon of the relative invisibility of the Emperor has been noted before and is related to the sacred nature and stance ›above politics‹ that had been assigned to him in the Meiji period (1868–1912). During that period of rapid modernization, Japan converted the animistic and plural Shinto traditions into centralized State Shinto and instituted the Emperor as the direct descendant of the Gods and as *arahitogami*, literally a ›god that appeared as human‹. As Roy Starrs argues for the period from the 1930s onwards, the ›Japanese did not have to look for a god-like national leader in a Hitler or a Mussolini – they already had one in the Emperor, who could just as easily be turned to the uses of a fascist ideology‹.<sup>72</sup> That Emperor Hirohito (1901–1989) was indeed a state-religious figure and not just one embodying a ›civic‹ or ›political religion‹<sup>73</sup> surely accounts for the caution exercised in his visual representation in *FRONT* and elsewhere. Several scholars<sup>74</sup> have analyzed *SSSR na stroike* within Emilio Gentile's framework of ›political religion‹ and as an expression of a ›sacralization of politics‹.<sup>75</sup> While Lenin and Stalin feature throughout the magazine's publication, a growing cult of Stalin is discernable from 1936 when a double issue (nos. 4-5) was devoted to his birthplace, Georgia. In contrast to the *arahitogami* Hirohito, Stalin needed to be visually represented as a god-like figure in order for the political religion to work.

71 A good example of this strategy is the double issue on the Imperial Army (nos. 3-4). The first photograph inside the magazine is a full-page feature of the bridge leading to the Imperial Palace, and it is only in the middle of the magazine that one photograph of the Emperor on horseback appears together with similar photographs of Japanese and German military personnel. As Inui and Atkins demonstrate in their collections of Japanese wartime textiles that sometimes featured graphic depictions of weaponry and battle scenes, the Imperial Family was never shown directly but instead referenced through images such as crests, children bowing, or the bridge leading to the Imperial Palace. See Yoshiko Inui, *Zusetsu. Kimonogara ni miru sensō [Images of War, Kimono]*, Tōkyō 2007; Jacqueline M. Atkins (ed.), *Wearing Propaganda. Textiles on the Homefront, in Japan, Britain and the United States, 1931–1945*, New Haven 2005.

72 Starrs, *Modernism* (fn. 70), p. 133.

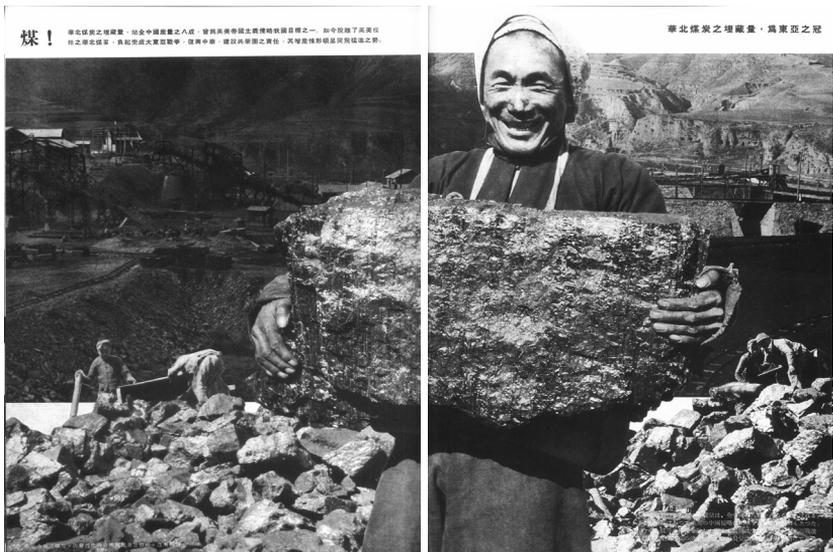
73 See Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, London 2005. In a similar vein to Emilio Gentile, Fascism as Political Religion, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1990), pp. 229-251, George L. Mosse's characterization of fascism as a kind of civic religion sets out the importance of cultural forms: George L. Mosse, Fascist Aesthetics and Society, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996), pp. 245-252.

74 Hayley Card, The Tate Modern's USSR in Construction, in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8 (2007), pp. 149-152; Feldman, A Case Study (fn. 16).

75 Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, Princeton 2006.



FRONT, English edition, 1944, no. 14, Philippines special, unpaginated. This double page most closely resembles Socialist Realism's heroic pose of the ›new human being‹ and simultaneously constructs the Philippines as feminine through a visual combination of the flag and the female farmer.



FRONT, Chinese/Japanese edition, 1944, nos. 12-13, North China special, unpaginated. The layout and image of the Chinese laborer in the mining industry is very similar to a feature in SSSR na stroike's special issue ›Industrializing the North, Yakutia‹ from 1932, no. 11, unpaginated.

## 6. Conclusions: Shape-shifting Dis/continuities

The layout and photographic practice of *FRONT* may be seen as a prime example of what Caroline Brothers observed with reference to John Tagg's theoretical explorations: ›Chameleon-like, the camera adopts the ideological perspective of the institutions which employ it.‹<sup>76</sup> Some of the photographers and makers of *FRONT* had been leftists or activists in the Communist Party with experiences of living abroad and in the USSR, but worked in the service of Japanese fascism later on. This phenomenon is rather common for Japan's intellectual trajectory during the 1930s and 40s and is referred to as *tenkō* (political conversion). In postwar Japan, *FRONT*'s former and major contributors, Okada Sōzō (film, science documentary), Kimura Ihei (photography) and Hara Hiromu (graphic design), became the leading experts in their respective fields in the newly reorganized media industry. At the end of the 1940s, under US occupation, Okada would become instrumental in establishing the image of Emperor Hirohito as a peaceful civilian and scientist,<sup>77</sup> thereby helping to obscure the Emperor's wartime role and responsibility.

Okada's wartime propaganda production, *FRONT*, is an exemplary showcase for the ›shape-shifting‹ and chameleon-like quality of photography and photojournalistic expertise, considering that Russian constructivist photography, in shapes it took in Socialist Realism, was creatively employed in the propaganda for the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹ of Japanese fascism. Other scholars have identified a continuum of avant-garde utopias within totalitarianism and fascism, particularly National Socialism.<sup>78</sup> The significance of the formal similarities between Socialist Realism and the art produced under National Socialism has long been debated in studies of totalitarianism. An early comparison of the formal utilitarian aspects of Socialist Realism and National Socialist art was undertaken by Martin Damus, who argued that the same formal expressions intended to affirm and ensure power can be found despite partially different content due to different legitimizations by the respective systems.<sup>79</sup> Another ›shape-shifting‹ quality can be discerned when we consider Bussemer's typology of propaganda,<sup>80</sup> in which ›sociological propaganda‹, a term coined by Jacques Ellul, is seen as typical of totalitarian, i.e., both National Socialist and Soviet Communist, regimes that aimed at creating a ›new human being‹. Exemplified in *SSSR na stroike*, this type of propaganda production was, however, also utilized in the ›war propaganda‹ (or psychological warfare), and the ›overseas propaganda‹ (or public diplomacy) of *FRONT*.

76 Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography. A Cultural History*, London 1997, p. 17.

77 Kawasaki/Harada, *Okada Sōzō eizō no seiki* (fn. 2), pp. 337-346.

78 Peter Fritzsche, Nazi Modern, in: *Modernism/Modernity* 3 (1996) issue 1, pp. 1-22.

79 Damus, *Sozialistischer Realismus* (fn. 18), esp. p. 13

80 Bussemer, *Propaganda* (fn. 3), pp. 35-37, discerns the following four types: war propaganda, overseas propaganda, sociological propaganda, and political propaganda in democracies.

John Tagg reminds us that ›[p]hotography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations that invest it.‹<sup>81</sup> Much as ›an imagined future triumph of Communism was presented as documentary, historical fact: as objective truth‹ in Stalin's Soviet Union,<sup>82</sup> Japanese photographers and graphic designers presented and ›documented‹ the imagined realization of the ›Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere‹ in a style that could be termed Co-Prosperty Realism. As in the Soviet Union, documentary became fiction, and art's critical function was completely banished, even if a variety of art forms were tolerated in wartime Japan. Photography and photomontage and the altering and processing of photographs became instruments in manufacturing an affirmative illusion of state power. Like *SSSR na stroike*, *FRONT* sought to aestheticize politics and war. In this regard, the internationally trained Japanese avant-garde employed their expertise to the highest level, creatively engaging in and profiting from the ideological and factual perpetuation of the devastating Japanese wars of invasion in East and Southeast Asia.

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**Prof. Dr. Andrea Germer**

Kyushu University | Graduate School of Integrated Sciences for Global Society

744 Motoooka, Nishi-ku, Fukuoka 819-0395 | Japan

E-mail: [germer@scs.kyushu-u.ac.jp](mailto:germer@scs.kyushu-u.ac.jp)

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81 Tagg, *Burden of Representation* (fn. 1), p. 63.

82 Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth* (fn. 16), p. 19.