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| Die Aktion |
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| *Die Aktion* was a review of radical politics and culture published by Franz Pfemfert (1879-1954) in Berlin from 1911 to 1932. During the period of its greatest influence before World War I, *Die Aktion* offered a home to the Expressionist movement and had a weekly circulation of 7000. The journal functioned as a locus of pacifist opposition during the war but lost its earlier status when Pfemfert renounced Expressionism and turned *Die Aktion* into a vehicle of anarchist socialism in the twenties. |
| *Die Aktion* was a review of radical politics and culture published by Franz Pfemfert (1879-1954) in Berlin from 1911 to 1932. During the period of its greatest influence before World War I, *Die Aktion* offered a home to the Expressionist movement and had a weekly circulation of 7000. The journal functioned as a locus of pacifist opposition during the war but lost its earlier status when Pfemfert renounced Expressionism and turned *Die Aktion* into a vehicle of anarchist socialism in the twenties.  File: Aktion\_Image1.jpg  Aktion\_Image1 1  Source: Early issue of *Die Aktion*. Cannot find link to image online.  Early issues of *Die Aktion* announced ‘A Magazine for Liberal Politics and Culture’ and promised to be ‘an organ of honest radicalism’. The format of two columns across sixteen tabloid-sized sheets of newsprint mimicked the layout of a daily paper. Overnight the journal established itself as the rival of *Der Sturm* as a forum for the coalition of young artists and poets that became Expressionism. As Pfemfert’s unwavering commitment to revolutionary politics drew writers from the less-politicized *Sturm*, *Die Aktion* assumed a unique role introducing new poetry in German. The apocalyptic imagery of the poem ‘End of the World’ by Jakob von Hoddis and the radical literary criticism exemplified by Ludwig Rubiner’s manifesto ‘The Poet Intervenes in Politics’ typify this chapter in the journal’s life.  When Pfemfert enlisted Rubiner in April 1914 to write an apology for politicized art, ‘Painters Build Barricades’, and began running graphic art on the cover, the timing proved fortuitous. The onset in August of European war forced him to forego the political commentary that had only recently led to his prosecution for inciting rebellion and a court decision requiring that *Die Aktion* be submitted to censors before going to press. This constraint encouraged Pfemfert to continue giving space to Expressionist art, such as the drawing ‘Battlefield’ by Ludwig Meidner, and forced him to develop covert strategies for expressing opposition. The most creative of these was the rubric ‘I Cut out the Times’, which reproduced war boosterism with no commentary other than an introduction that identified the source and expressed ironic ridicule. The most characteristic feature of the war-time period was ‘Poetry from the Battlefield’, which presented anti-heroic verse by troops that contrasted with the hurrah poetry in the popular press.  File: Aktion\_Image2.jpg  Aktion\_Image2 1  Source: *Die Aktion* page with the Expressionist drawing ‘Battlefield’ by Ludwig Meidner. Permission to use this image is included in this file under a PDF Invoice titled ‘Aktion\_Permission\_Request\_Image2’, and dated 06 January 2010. Cannot find link to image online.  When a naval mutiny led to a socialist revolution and the end of the war in November 1918, it became known that Pfemfert had organized a clandestine group called the Antinational Socialist Party and secretly printed a banned tract by Rosa Luxemburg during her imprisonment. After attempting to promote proletarian literature in the immediate postwar period, Pfemfert renounced all interest in poetry and turned *Die Aktion* into a vehicle for anarchist socialism at odds with Moscow and the German communist party. When Hitler took power in 1933 Pfemfert emigrated to Paris and then Mexico City, where he died in 1941. |
| Further reading:  (Raabe)  (Rietzschel) |