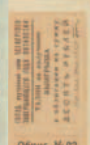
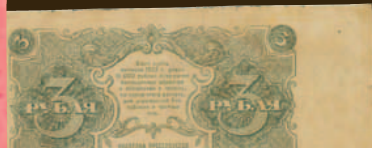


**THE TIME
OF DEFEATED
HOPES**
PETROGRAD - LENINGRAD
1920-1930

**ВРЕМЯ
НЕСБЫВШИХСЯ
НАДЕЖД**
ПЕТРОГРАД - ЛЕНИНГРАД
1920-1930



Fotographers have played a special role among the documents that have helped us to recreate the past, particularly those photographs where the photographer has not tried to intervene in the events that are taking place, but has honestly recorded them. Reporters' photographs are invaluable, a documentary chronicle of days gone by, impartial evidence in which the traces of social change have been fixed. Of course family albums, where portraits of relatives taken by travelling or city-based professional photographers lie alongside amateur snapshots, are equally invaluable.

■ Photographs create a second reality, fixed on light-sensitive paper by the will or perhaps in spite of the wishes of the photographer, telling us about the past in more detail and more convincingly than hundreds of words written by the most attentive observer. As a rule, the latter is not able to rid himself of the partiality of judgement and appraisal that is inherent to any human being, in spite of striving for objectivity.

■ Those who fall into the photographer's field of vision often become carriers of information to the world independently from the photographer's initial idea.

■ In this sense a photograph fills in the gaps, bringing to descendants fragments of the everyday life of preceding generations. The researcher, having set about recreating the image of a past era, is faced with a particular set of difficulties: having to piece together the fixed fragments of a past reality, while trying to preserve a certain union of style and meaning that is able more or less to adequately tell the story of that era.

■ We have tried to show the life of the city and its residents in the 20s and 30s as seen through the eyes of photographic portraits as at that time there were many taken and they were varied widely in nature. Of course very few people came before the cameras of photojournalists and those that did were not necessarily the most typical. We tend, as a rule, to pass by the everyday. This is understandable as journalism (and it is press photographers who have left us the bulk of photo-documents) is in principle oriented towards special events and not towards the description of ordinary everyday life. At the beginning of the 20s, though, there was a strong tendency towards recording social chronicles that were created not for the press, but as a matter of historical record.

■ As well as the works of professional portrait photographers, we have used other photographic documents: amateur photographs, family album snapshots, photographs taken by documentary-photographers of the everyday. Group photographs soon became the most profitable and sustainable contributors to the portrait photographer's income, apart from photographs for the official papers and documents that were so numerous in the new state. It has to be said that group photographs brought significant profits to the owners of photography studios before the Revolution as well, but in the 30s this type of photo became almost

their main breadwinner, so great was the desire to be photographed with one's colleagues. The staff groups of all sorts of companies, small state bodies and enterprises became the frequent clients of photographic studios. Several factors contributed to this aspiration to have a «corporative» photograph.

■ The social status of the unemployed was considerably lower than of people with a regular wage: getting a job, apart from purely financial benefits, brought confidence in the future and made individuals feel increasingly like fully-valued citizens.

Another no less important factor was that the ideology of collectivism was increasingly and noticeably propagated throughout the country. «Private traders, individual peasant-farmers, lone craftsmen» were not only pejorative labels; an economically self-sufficient person risked falling into the «social aliens» category which was not far from the label «enemy of the working people». Group photographs served as evidence of participation in a collective. It was a sort of official document that confirmed membership of the working masses, which was extremely useful in a country where a «dictatorship of the proletariat» had been introduced ...

■ Snapshots from family albums have a special feel to them as the subjects are simple, yet they testify so truly to the spirit of the times that sometimes it seems as if you can hear the voices of the people printed in the snaps or the rustle of the leaves under which they have arranged themselves to pose for the photographer...

■ Our generation is unlucky as very few of these albums are left and those that have survived to our times have been heavily «edited» by grandmothers tearing out snaps of admirers in cadet's uniforms who vanished on the fields of the civil war, or by parents carefully effacing schoolmates, university classmates and neighbours who have suddenly been identified as «enemies of the people» from group photos.

■ It is no secret that many photographs only become interesting after many years have passed and the viewer again starts to sift through the information packed into the image. Time, conspiring in this process, adds new meaning to the photo quite apart from that which the photographer originally wanted to convey.

■ It was in Leningrad that a school of social photography was formed that is practically unknown today. Its forefathers were Viktor Karlovich Bulla and Yakov Vladimirovich Steinberg and although this school was never formally registered, there are certain general features in which a commonality in the signature style and creative preferences of these master photographers can be detected. A perspicacious reporter's vision and a great interest in events taking place in the city replaced the usual reflection of reality and were demonstrated at an exhibition in 1924. The Leningrad Society of Artistic and Technical Photography whose chairman was Ya. V. Steinberg himself was directly involved in organising the exhibition.



A professional photojournalist and a staff member of a number of pre-Revolutionary illustrated publications, Steinberg also contributed actively to the first Soviet journals while at the same time giving a great deal of energy and strength to the work of the society. He became the first chairman of the Leningrad Society of Artistic and Technical Photography, founded on his initiative in 1923, and which organised the first post-revolution exhibition in Leningrad that opened in the autumn of 1924 after a twelve year interval in exhibiting in the city.

■ The whole exhibit took up 11 halls. The first was divided into two peacefully coexisting sections that appeared in the catalogue as «Lenin's Corner» and «Aviation Photographs». The themes of the next two halls were more interesting, in our view: «Photojournalism» and the «Social Chronicles». Three halls followed where artistic photographs, examples of «painting with light» and photographic collections were exhibited. Models of scientific-technical interest were on display in the final four halls and one last hall was dedicated to a collection from the Muscovite photographic exhibition of 1924 brought from Moscow, organised by the Russian Photography Society and topped up with works by photographers from Kiev and Voronezh.

■ The photographs in the two more interesting halls recorded the changes taking place in the life of the city and its inhabitants. The photographers honestly and impartially registered the details of everyday life, fixing their attention in the first instance on the socially significant and the unusual. It has to be noted that at the beginning of the 1920s they were largely free from all kinds of censorship and could therefore record their surroundings with maximum integrity. This lack of prejudice can be felt in both the choice of subject and the subjects themselves.

■ The opening of the exhibition turned into a real celebration. The speakers at the gala event noted that the aim of the exhibition was to demonstrate the significance and potential of photography which had taken on a new quality: in the new society it was no longer «an object of luxury, nor an amateurish amusement, nor the production of routine portraits for official papers and absolutely not a form of commerce, but an absolutely necessary companion to the life of the people in all their varied activities from the highest examples of politics, science and art to the most ordinary details of the everyday».

■ The name Bulla can be heard to this day among the inhabitants of Petersburg. This dynasty of famous Petersburg photographers is known to all who are interested in the history of the city and/or have even the slightest link to photography. At the beginning of the 20th century this surname was known to almost every inhabitant of the city and there were practically no events taking place in Petersburg that escaped the eagle eye of Karl Karlovich Bulla, the founder of the dynasty. The photographs of this «photographer-illustrator» (as he called himself in advertising leaflets) were published not only in the journals of the capital city, but in publications abroad. It



was through the photographs of K. K. Bulla that the inhabitants of Europe learned of events in the capital of the Russian Empire. His photo-studio, located at the very centre of the city (54 Nevskiy Prospekt), was visited by ordinary citizens as well as those who were famous throughout Russia.

■ Karl Karlovich's sons, Viktor and Alexander, followed in his footsteps. Alexander was more drawn to studio portraiture and Viktor made his reputation from the very beginning as a brilliant reporter. When he was still a boy, his father took him on photography «expeditions» and in 1904 as a 19 year old youth he was posted to the Far East by the editors of the «Niva» journal in order to cover the Russo-Japanese war. In the pre-Revolution years V. K. Bulla worked prolifically and very productively as a photo correspondent for a range of Russian and European publications. He, and his father, formed a sort of photography agency providing current affairs photographs to both the Russian and international press.

■ The famous photograph «Shooting into a peaceful demonstration on the corner of Nevskiy and Sadovaya», for example, taken by V. K. Bulla during the July events of 1917 was not published in the national press initially due to censorship. Only after it was printed in the French «Illustration» did it appear in the pages of the weekly «Iskri» (1917, №41). This image subsequently entered many photographic anthologies as an example of journalistic photo-reporting.

■ Prior to World War I, V. K. Bulla was seriously involved in film-making and in 1909 he founded the company «Apollon» in order to make newsreels and travelogues. «The output of this firm», wrote a national cinema-photography historian «was not great, up to 1911 it did not make more than 40 pictures. However the legacy of «Apollon» was the creation of two great sporting films. One was about the international speed-skating championship at Viborg in 1910, the other was about the international car rally Petersburg–Rome–Petersburg». A unique diary which Viktor Karlovich had kept during this journey was

preserved for many years by the photographer's family, but unfortunately it has not survived.

■ In 1917 Bulla worked mainly as a cinema reporter, although he gradually returned again to photojournalism. In the only article he ever published he recalled that: «A series of interesting mass scenes during the time of the February Revolution were first caught by me on film reels and later entered the archives of the Cinema Committee. If it hadn't been for the stormy events of revolutionary life then I probably would have always remained working in cinema as I was interested in this new form of work at the time. But the heavy and barely portable filming equipment of those times hampered me.

The events of revolutionary life unfolded with unbelievable speed and one had to keep up with everything, so I returned once again to my portable «mirror», which was light and convenient hanging on a strap».

In 1917 Karl Karlovich Bulla retired and moved to Estonia and his sons became the owners of the photography studio on Nevskiy Prospekt. Soon after the revolution the studio was nationalized as an enterprise using hired labour (more than 10 people were employed there). Bulla's photography studio, one of the most technically advanced for its time and staffed by highly qualified professionals, began to work for the new authorities having been renamed as the «Photograph Studio of the Presidium of Lenoisveti». It was managed by Viktor Bulla who also continued to actively work as a photographer. The studio had to carry out a considerable amount of routine work, including servicing the everyday needs of the city Soviet and party organisations. At first portraits were taken only by Alexander Karlovich, who was a reasonably good portraitist, but he was later joined by other photographers.

■ Viktor Karlovich and a whole range of other current affairs photographers were constantly «in the field» fulfilling orders from a whole variety of organisations

and enterprises. In the 20s–30s, «Lenoisvet Photography» continued to uphold the traditions established by its founder and continued to be a sort of photo-information agency representing the life of the big city. The main piece of work occupying V. Bulla and the other Lenoisvet photographers during the first few post-Revolutionary years was the creation of a social chronicle for the historical archive of the Leningrad Gubispolkom (provincial executive committee). Permission orders authorizing such photography by workers from Lenoisvet Photography A. Shishmarev, V. Krasavtsev have survived and the signature of the then head of Leningrad G. Zinoviyev can be seen on a similar pass for V. K. Bulla. It was this very concentrated work that has allowed the image of Petrograd–Leningrad of those times to be preserved for descendants.



■ Photographers were always aware of the latest significant events in the city and were able to record the changes taking place in the lives of the townspeople. Instead of a rigid capital city lifestyle, the tone of which was set by the Imperial Court and other social institutions of the former Russia, there were now endless rallies and meetings being captured by the photographers' lens, organisational conferences, mass processions and demonstrations all of which were conscientiously recorded by the reporters.

■ Towards the mid thirties the situation changed dramatically upon the death of the influential party leader S. M. Kirov who had been so understanding of the important work being carried out by V. K. Bulla and his colleagues and who had lent a great deal of support to the project. Photography as a professional activity was left without financial support and the profession was forced into carrying out simply routine everyday photographs simply to make ends meet. In 1936 Bulla had to leave the post of director of «Lenoisvet Photography» and the studio with a long-standing and glorious tradition became an ordinary everyday enterprise. The new director, a certain Bortkevich, did everything he could to expunge the spirit of his predecessors. The main measure of success became the notorious financial plan which had to immediately be fulfilled and exceeded.

■ The relations between the new director and his predecessor were even more complicated because V. K. Bulla continued to work as a photographer and his apartment was located in the same stairwell as the studio. He also continued to use the photographic laboratory as he essentially viewed the equipment as his property.

■ 1937 was an unfortunately notorious year when several denunciations of V. K. Bulla were submitted by the new director. At first they received little attention as Viktor Karlovich was too well known in the city, but the director was not put off by this and, as if out of spite, two rifles were then spotted in one of the partitions of the photo-laboratory during repair works...

■ Viktor Karlovich's family was informed that he had received the traditional 10 years without rights to correspondence. For a long time very little was known about his fate; it was thought that he had died in a camp in 1942. Bulla's name was not mentioned for more than 20 years and his photographs of the revolution period - his other works were considered irrelevant - were published anonymously or under the names of more fortunate colleagues.

■ In the summer of 1958 V. K. Bulla's widow received a document stating that «the case has been closed due to corpus delicti. Citizen Bulla has been posthumously pardoned».

The thirties were a time of intense public interest in photography. The journal «Soviet Photo» was first published in 1926 on the initiative of Mikhail Koltsov. The magazine was very different from its predecessors which as a rule had mainly published material about the technical aspects of photography, about new cameras, had described in detail the most popular latest developments and acquainted photographers with the achievements photography products from foreign firms. Only a few magazines published photographs that had been sent in to the editors and when they did it was usually

as an insert. The famous Russian magazine «Amateur Photographer», edited at the beginning of the century by S. M. Prokudin-Gorsky, was the only journal that published editorials which touched on the aesthetic problems of «painting with light» and tried to engage readers in a discussion about the place of photography in contemporary society.

■ From the very beginning, «Soviet Photo» initiated a discussion about photography as a powerful information and propaganda weapon. Over a number of years a strong team of specialist photography writers gathered at the magazine: L. Mezhericher, S. Evgenov, G. Boltyanskiy, V. Grishanin and S. Morozov to name a few. Their articles not only critiqued photographs that had been sent to the editors, but also raised questions of contemporary importance: about the role of photography «in the business of building socialism»; the potential of photography as a means of propaganda was declared; instructions were given, at times in no uncertain terms on how and of what to take photographs «at this stage of contemporary developments». Numerous topics were debated in the pages of the magazine. Workers from the magazine also tended to play an active role in the organisation of exhibitions and were often members of all sorts of exhibition committees and juries, so they were not only following the developments taking place in the photographic movement, but were actively involved in them. The editors

«provoked» debates on several occasions, inviting a diverse range of public figures from artists to party workers to take part. At the same time «Soviet Photo» also ran an ongoing review of illustrated journals which analysed the more interesting publications, reportage and essays. Some materials became the subject of serious and quite heated debate, for example a whole edition was devoted to material that was to later become famous as «One day in the life of the Filippov family», that had been published in the German working weekly «AIZ». The edition «USSR on the building sites» excited no less interest with a photo-essay by M. Albert called «The Giant and the Builders».

■ It is necessary to say straight of that the editors were only so intensely interested in the press of the capital city. Serious publications like this devoted to regional or to Petersburg photojournalism did not exist, a fact which had its pros and cons. The cons are obvious – St Petersburg photography from those years has remained little known to the wider public. On the other hand Leningrad photographers were exempt from all the various discussions and «slatings» that distracted other photographers

from their creative work, drew them into unnecessary rows that clearly tried the nerves and which in the climate of the thirties inevitably led to confrontation and simply to informing on opponents. The absence of «a pointing finger» also allowed regional and Petersburg photographers to work honestly, without falling under the influence of all manner of noisy declarative trends from formalism through to naturalism.

To a large degree it is this which makes the thirties Leningrad school of photojournalism distinctive, as it always placed documentary accuracy of events it was portraying above formal experimentation. Form never became an end in itself, although the spirit of the times can also be felt in unusual camera angles and a daring foreshortening of perspective.

■ The overwhelming majority of photographers included in this album have never been published before which is both strange and completely understandable. It is strange if only because Soviet photography of the 20s–30s was sufficiently well-known throughout the world and not only here in our country. The name of the «avant-garde photographers» Alexander Rodchenko was known worldwide and many had heard of Ignatovich and Shaikhet; photography lovers could talk of Langman and Petrusov, Debabov and Fridlyand. Their works appear in album after album and they were constantly being exhibited at all sorts of exhibitions. Numerous articles were written about their work and whole monographs about some of them. The Petersburg photographers were quite another matter: by the will of the fates they found themselves on the edge of fame. Photography was firstly a branch of journalism in the USSR and on the strength of this Moscow photojournalists were known throughout the country but Petersburg photographers were known only to a few Leningrad admirers.

■ In addition, Moscow was essentially self-sufficient and was in fact never particularly interested in events in the regions. Moscow always found her own heroes and her own subjects whether in politics, sport or art. «The lack of interest» in Petersburg photojournalism was only typical of the capital's reaction to all that took place outside the limits of her sphere of interests. Such was the logic of the totalitarian

government, with its stricter than strict hierarchy of values in all areas of activity, with its subordination and vertical inter-relations.

■ The mid-thirties were a turning point when the totalitarian regime was finally confirmed in its place and when the illusions by which certain parts of society had still lived until a few years previously were shattered. The most obvious expression of this was the all-pervasive cult of the personality of Stalin whose image people used feverishly to fill the emptiness of their surroundings: on covers of magazines, in the offices of official institutions, on display stands at exhibitions and hanging on the walls of houses. His portrait dominated the banners at demonstrations; his huge image became an integral part of city, village and town furnishings in even the most far flung outposts of the USSR.

■ Fear gradually seeped into the consciousness of Leningrad residents who got used to black cars drawing up the entrance of a block of flats here one night and then there and where later there was always a shortage in the headcount of neighbours. Everyone feared for their lives and as we now know, not without reason.

Careful analysis of the huge mass of photographs that have been left to us reveal the social changes that were taking place, although in reality none of the above could be reflected in photographs, not only because of auto-censorship but because everything that the party said or did was already accepted by the ordinary citizen as the only possible way, absolutely right and correct. Such was the strength of the fantastical hypnosis of the country and its millions of inhabitants by its master.



■ Visible changes could also be seen in our city, or rather in its population – «the palaces and canals are all in place, but the former city is no longer». During the First World War Russia bore significant losses of life and this could not but be

felt in Petrograd, which gave a large part of its officers to the Russian army. Then the revolution and civil war came in which the city also bore major losses. Purges took place in the city after the revolution, on more than one occasion, when large numbers of officers from the Tsarist army and similar «declassés» suspected of lack of loyalty to the new authorities were simply physically destroyed. Following this was the expulsion of the intelligentsia, the emigration and natural expiration of the older generation of aristocratic families which had remained in Russia for various reasons – all this changed the aura of Petersburg. Thousands of people disappeared in the course of the repressions that had only just begun and the never ending arrests first and foremost affected people who were engaged one way or another in intellectual activity as well as the destruction of all kinds of «oppositiōners», «trotskists» and «zinovyevists» and so on and so forth that have already been mentioned above. A huge number of «class aliens» were expelled from the city after the death of Kirov and then came the unfortunately notorious year 1937...

■ The ceremonial, functionary Petersburg of the «silver age» had disappeared, melting before one's very eyes and socialist Leningrad arrived in its place – «a city of communal apartments and new workers» districts, rabfaks (worker's schools) and likbez (campaigns against illiteracy), party activists, «promoted workers» and «declassés» without rights.

All this could not but make a difference to the social and intellectual make up of the population. After all from 1926 to 1939, in spite of the purges, expulsions and repressions the population of the city almost doubled in size. If Moscow, while losing people all the time, constantly restored its intellectual potential by «draining» the best people from all over the country, then Petersburg could rely only on

replenishing the ranks of the proletariat with the peasants arriving at an industrial centre in constant need of reinforcements for its workforce. Of course the city also strengthened its ranks with the «new intelligentsia» – the graduates of all the various rabfaks and Leningrad higher education establishments. This was, however, an unequal exchange.

How noticeable these changes are brought out in photographs, in this «second reality» that has come down to us preserved in yellowing prints or in rolls of film! If in the twenties the enthusiasm of the masses, the genuine desire to change things, to build and create spills out externally then the images of the mid-thirties, with the same mass scenes gradually begin to depress with their endless columns of marching bodies in whose faces a diminishment of happiness and fervour is already noticeable. People more and more remind one of the notorious «screws» in the gigantic mechanism of the totalitarian machine. Perhaps it is exactly because of this that instead of simply recording events it became increasingly common for photographers to stage photographs and to consciously organise the reality surrounding them.

■ Approaches to photojournalism also changed at this time. If heated debates had recently been taking place about creative methods of working and the pages of the professional publications had been discussing the best way to portray the socialist competition or «new methods of shock-workings», then «the leading lights» now, the examples to be imitated, became individual photographers from Moscow who were allowed to photograph the party leaders during all manner of conferences, congresses and meetings of leading factory workers. Any image of Stalin was immediately called an «exemplary work of Soviet photographic art».

■ The mid-thirties in Petersburg photojournalism were a time of changing generations, the recognised masters of the older generation left their reporting work as a result of various factors and were replaced by a completely new younger generation of photojournalists who had grown up under Soviet authority. They were considerably more daring than the «olds», having got used to working with the heavy large-format «SLRs» (single lens reflex cameras), they quickly learned to

work with the small-format cameras that were only just appearing and that undoubtedly transformed their creative possibilities. Photography became more dynamic, although at first its technical quality perhaps worsened a bit.

It was at this time, against a background of quite outstanding professional photographers in Petersburg photojournalism, that several famous figures appeared whose significance has still not been fully understood. One of these masters was undoubtedly Vasily Gavrilovich Fedoseyev (1913–1973). He was a typical representative of the younger generation of photojournalists who replaced the leading lights of Petersburg photography in the mid-thirties. Straight after leaving school, Fedoseyev began to work for «Press Cliches» a division of TASS where he trod the path from lab technician to one of the leading photographers of the Leningrad branch of the newly founded organisation «Soyuzfoto».

■ The young photojournalist had a surprising flair for situation, a fine sense of composition and the ability to instinctively sense the more characteristic elements of the world around him. It is not quite right in his case to speak of some sort of critical view of reality – he simply recorded the more typical aspects of life around him, although a certain unconscious surprise at what he has seen undoubtedly shows through his choice of subject and shot.

Looking at these images today, we are not only looking at an exact recording of events at that time, but also at a certain «diagnosis» of the political situation that is clearly emerges from an analysis of his works.

Fedoseyeva's mastery was never fully appreciated, but his talent attracted attention to his work even during his lifetime. He is regularly mentioned in the rare «Soviet Photo» articles that were devoted to the works of Petersburg photographers, his works were exhibited on several occasions at various exhibitions and he was awarded photography prizes. It was generally, however, only the decorative aspect of his works that were appreciated, which is not surprising given that much of what today can be read from his photographs looks like stills from the film of an anti-utopian novel, at that time was merely a reflection of reality. In order to truly see the grotesqueness of this clumsy and often poverty-stricken reality, one has to be able to «stand back» and view his photographs objectively otherwise it is not possible to understand the whole tragedy (and comedy) of what took place at that time. Of course none of Fedoseyev's contemporaries (Thank God!) could see in his photographs then what we today can see with the benefit of hindsight.

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■ Fedoseyev's documentarily accurate, honest photographs, taken without any critical standpoint of his contemporary reality, have acquired new meaning over



time. Our knowledge of the past is unbelievably enriched by these extremely expressive documents from the thirties. Their narrative content has expanded to transform a simple reporter's photographs into a publicist's documents of rare force. It is like using a modern computer programme in order to work on an image where you can divide the image into layers, edit each layer and then mix them back into an «enhanced» totality of information. In this case a new layer has appeared – the layer of our hindsight, which allows us to distinguish some meaning which might not have been noticeable to the undiscerning observer at first glance. This meaning is very individual and is determined by the subjective «qualities» of a specific person: his ability to interpret visual information, his degree of knowledge about what has happened in the past, his ability to work in a creative partnership and finally his «emotional reserves» as an individual.

Of course, the general visual context created by the authors of the album is no less important. It is exactly this coming together: of the photographer with his interpretation of reality and ability to convey it adequately; Time, adding new meaning; the author's choices and the way in which the photographic materials are presented in the album; and the reader's ability to interpret visual information and his readiness for creative partnership – it is all these factors that determine the degree of influence of each photograph and of the album as a whole.

■ There were many interesting master photographers, who unfortunately are not known to a wider public, amongst those who photographed Petrograd-Leningrad in the period between the October Revolution and the Great Patriotic War. Each of them naturally lived his own unique life; however they also had several common uniting factors. First of all there was the under-use of their talent and lack of adequate appreciation of their activities by their contemporaries. By all accounts this was damaging to the creative pride of many of them. Unfortunately we know very little about many of the masters of the older generation. The last years of the life of such an interesting photographer as Ya. V. Steinberg, who died in the Siege of Leningrad, remain a mystery to me. There is catastrophically little known about the life and work of S. Magaziner and N. Olshanskiy and we know practically nothing about many of the others. We know more about the biographies of the photojournalists of the following generation somewhat better, though still not enough. One hopes that other researchers will sooner or later become interested and write about what happened to them. There are, however, two authors whose fates are more or less well known amongst the photographers whose works have been included in this album. They are Viktor Karlovich Bulla and Vasily Gavrilovich Fedoseyev and although their histories do not appear to resemble each other and their creative signatures were absolutely unlike, it still seems to me that they had something in common in the way their life stories were so tragically played out.

The first was, as has already been discussed, one of the pioneers of Russian photojournalism and, having begun his work at the beginning of the 20th century, he worked through to the mid-thirties leaving behind a wonderful collection of photographic documents that reflected the chronicler's style so typical of that generation which was based both on the technical specifics of equipment and the approaches to photojournalism that were worked out at the dawn of the profession.

The large-format camera did a lot to predetermine the traditional decorative approaches of a shot and the high quality of the image.

Fedoseyev was born exactly 30 years after Bulla and belonged to a completely different generation, but in spite of the difference in age one can sense a certain commonality in their fates. Although the name of Fedoseyev is mentioned repeatedly amongst the best of the Petersburg photographers of his day, in reality he was not truly appreciated during his lifetime. His unaccommodating character by all accounts caused an irritation that built up over the years from ongoing misunderstandings and as a result he experienced constant spiritual discomfort.

It has to be noted that his work outstripped that of his contemporaries as he intuitively and accurately understood the natural possibilities and particularities of the language of photography. A born reporter, he could not create staged photographs, understanding only too well that this went against the very nature of photographic journalism. This was at a time when reporters were being asked to create poster-like, single-message images and consequently they were effectively organising the representation of reality and blatantly became directors of the subject at hand.

So the discord piled up through the years. The same also happened later when, having remained in the besieged city of Leningrad, and having recorded the tragic existence of Leningraders under siege in spite of all adversity and with astonishing sharpness and integrity, he ended up in the post war years endlessly fighting with the editors of photo-chronicles at LenTASS. In the end he had to leave LenTASS even though his works were always considered to be amongst the best – such was the appreciation given to those photographs however, that didn't give him any pleasure because they were too traditional and taken to order. Such is the fate of innovators who are ahead of their times, they constantly risk being misunderstood. Those works which actually reflected his level of talent were neither appreciated nor published at the

time and it is a great good fortune that some have survived because of the smooth running TASS systems and were not lost in the archives.

■ It seems to me that if my heroes had not been Leningraders, their fates would have been different. The city during the totalitarian era was too small for them and the level of appreciation they were shown did not match their greatness.

One wants to hope that this album will not become simply a reminder of their work, but will also, to a certain degree, serve as an exhibition stand in which their works as well as the works of other Leningrad photographers will be properly noticed and appreciated.

Vladimir NIKITIN



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ЛИМБУС ПРЕСС
САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ · МОСКВА