

Original photomontages

John Heartfield's photomontages are made of a bewildering variety of materials pasted over one another, with retouching using a spray can or brush, and sensitive photographic layers. They are therefore exceptionally fragile, and these days they require special conservation. Which makes it all the more astounding that there are some 300 originals in the art collection of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Of these, 88 are political photomontages that were published in AIZ; 81 of the photomontages are from the period after April 1933, when the editors of AIZ fled to Prague. The first photomontage to be published there was *Hitler's Programme*, on 18 May 1933.

Heartfield often used photographs that had been used in AIZ reports, carefully cutting out elements and placing them in a new context in his montages. A comparison with the copper intaglio prints of the original images in the AIZ reveals Heartfield's attention to detail and the care with which he created his photomontages.