

Cover designs and the MALIK publishing house

Heartfield established the Malik publishing house in 1917. He designed the book covers and advertising material himself, while his brother Wieland took over the business side. Collectors were very interested in their graphic art editions, particularly their George Grosz portfolios, and their special limited editions. The brothers used sales of these publications to fund large print runs of books by leftwing writers intended for the masses. Their bestselling authors included Upton Sinclair, Ilya Ehrenburg and Maxim Gorki.

On the tenth anniversary of the start of the First World War Heartfield displayed the photomontage *10 Years On: Fathers and Sons* in Malik's window, among the announcements, illegal pamphlets and food coupons. Curious members of the public formed long queues to see it. Eventually, the police intervened and dispersed the crowd 'in view of road safety'.

Heartfield came up with an ingenious concept for Malik's cover designs. He would position press photographs that he received from several agencies at right angles on the front and back covers. The juxtaposition prompted the public to think about what an image was actually saying. Heartfield also used striking combinations of images and typography, which referenced the content of the book, and created critical works of great graphic quality that drew attention when displayed in book store windows. The publishing house was a success. The books of bestselling American author Upton Sinclair were soon selling in editions of more than 150,000 in Germany.

In 1932 Kurt Tucholsky wrote in the weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne*: 'If I were not Peter Panther I would want to be a Malik book cover. That John Heartfield is truly a wonder of the world. He is endlessly inventive, and what enchanting things he makes!'.