

Title: Performing the New Soviet Holidays: Visual Language of the Soviet Periodical Press, 1928-1938

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Cultural transformations taking place in post-Soviet society persistently return scholarly attention to the 1930s – a time marked by the Soviet government’s intention to engage culture in strengthening the political consciousness of the “masses.” However, the ways in which the prescribed culture reached the Soviet society remain an understudied subject in the current research. For a majority of the Soviet people the periodical press (newspapers and magazines) was the main and in some cases the only agent of cultural information. This paper will analyze the popular Soviet magazines in attempts to reveal the ways the official cultural policies were transmitted to the population. Specifically, it will study two illustrated magazines for women – *Rabotnitsa* (female-worker) and *Krestianka* (female-peasant) with the focus on the holiday issues of these publications.

Soviet holidays played an important role in shaping the socio-cultural discourse. Celebration discourse, in which the magazines actively participated, helps to reveal the aims and ideas of the Soviet regime. Popular and widely distributed, *Rabotnitsa* and *Krestianka* provide representative examples of the methods used to present and promote desired cultural norms to the respective audiences throughout Russia. New Soviet holidays were “performed” as state-wide rituals, with Moscow as a central stage. The magazines illuminated these performances by visualizing holiday rituals in the form of photo-reportages, publication of thematic posters and illustrations, special cover designs, and, especially, elaborate central-spread photomontages. This paper will trace the iconographic and stylistic developments in the holidays’ representation, emphasizing how ideological climate, editorial preferences, budget, and availability of the professional designers affected the visual character of the magazines, and by extension their audiences’ experience of the holidays. It will suggest that photography’s documentary quality made it a preferred medium enabling physical identification with the representation, leading to the experience of a unified Soviet body sharing the celebration.