

# CAMERAWORK

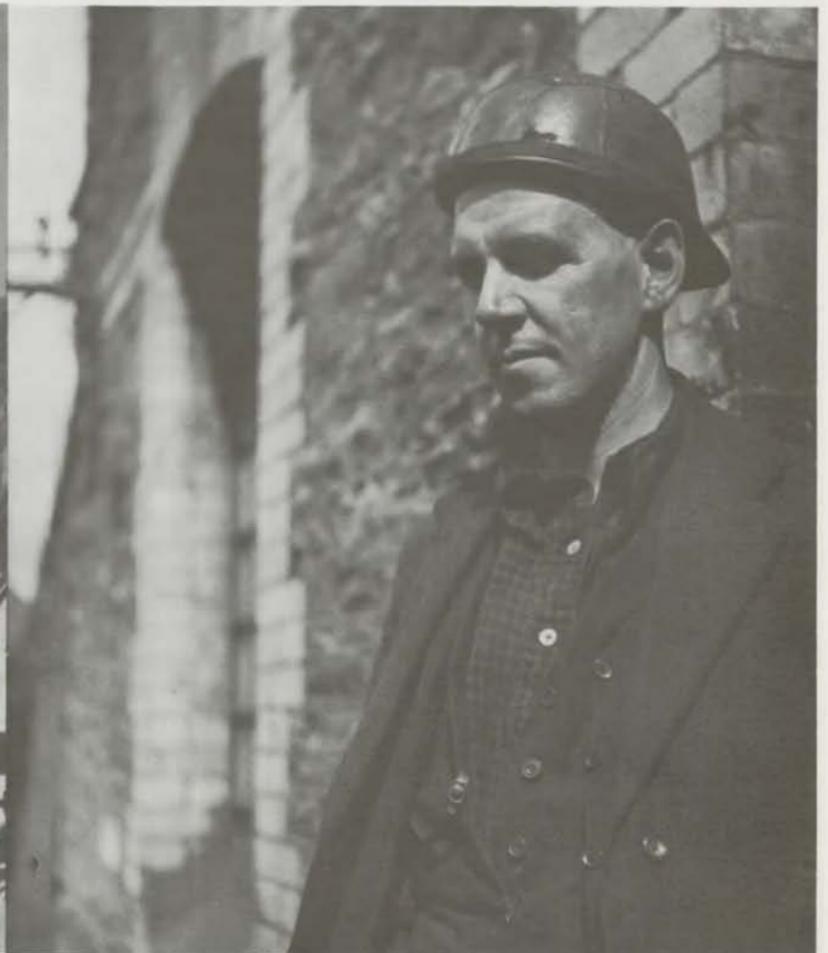
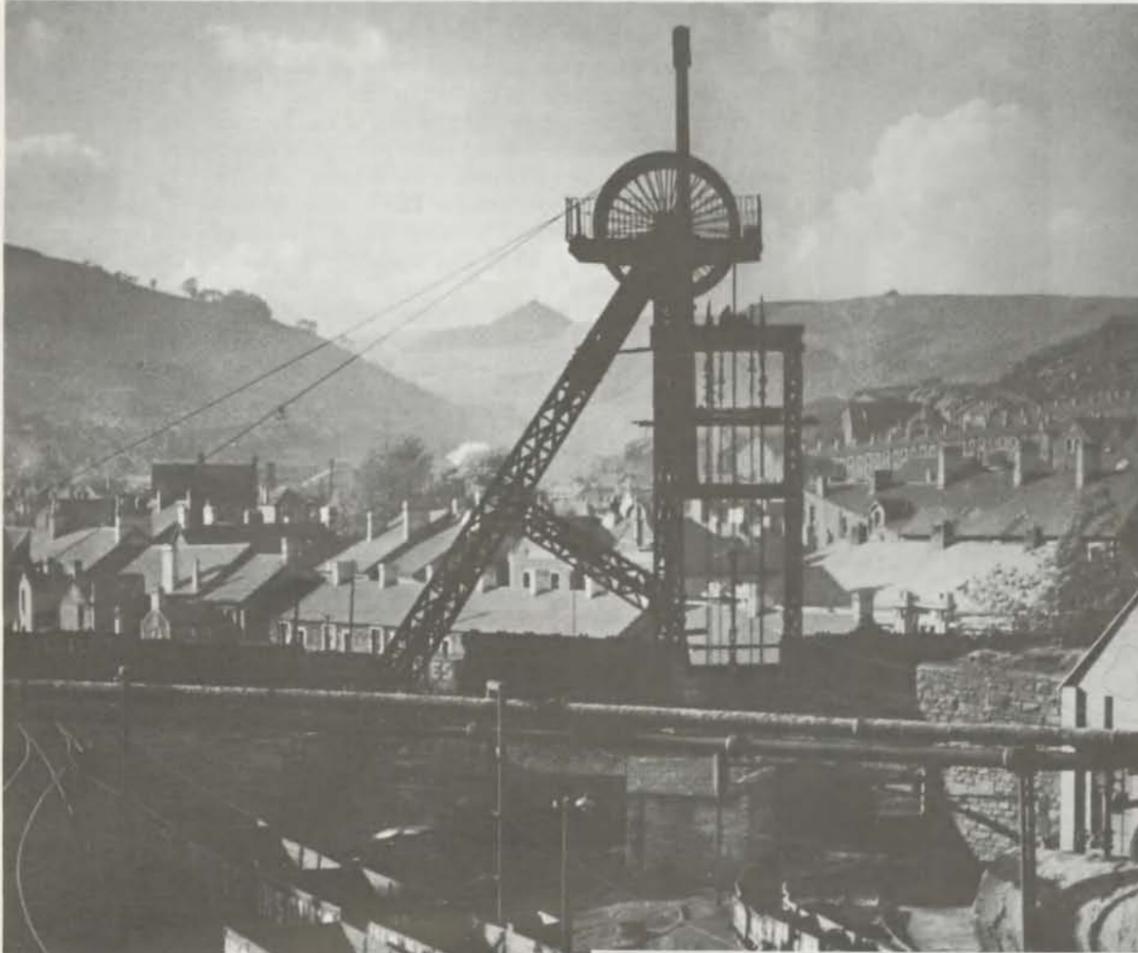


**The State of the Nation – E.P. Thompson  
Photomontages by Peter Kennard  
Edith Tudor-Hart – Working in the Thirties  
Women, History and Photographic Imagery  
Context and Meaning**



# EDITH TUDOR-HART

pictures from  
the Rhondda



## CAMERAWORK

July 1980

is designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, views and information on photography and other forms of communication. By exploring the application, scope and content of photography, we intend to demystify the process. We see this as part of the struggle to learn, describe and share experiences and so contribute to the process by which we control our lives.

Editorial Group: Greg Kahn (co-ordinator), Jenny Matthews, Richard Platt, Don Slater, Shirley Read (co-ordinator).

Emma Diamond, Ingrid Emsden, Marguerite McLaughlin and Rebecca Wilson worked on this issue. Published by Half Moon Photography Workshop, 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. 01-980 8798. Printed by Expression Printers Ltd, London N1. Trade distribution: Full Time Distribution, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. (ISSN 0308 1676)

The Half Moon Photography Workshop acknowledges the financial assistance of the Arts Council of Great Britain

### SUBSCRIBE TO CAMERAWORK:

All subscriptions include posters and invitations to our exhibitions. Prices include VAT (abroad - please send STERLING DRAFT drawn on a London bank).

#### UK

Standard rate £6.76  
Institutional rate £12.26  
Student rate £5.26

## CONTENTS

Edith Tudor-Hart - photographs from the Thirties	Robert Radford	1
Context as a Determinant of Photographic Meaning	John A. Walker	5
Reviewed: <b>Observers of Man</b>	Jenny Matthews	6
The State of the Nation with photomontages by Peter Kennard	E.P. Thompson	7
Women, History and Photographic Imagery	Gen Doy	11
Letters and information		14

Camerawork welcomes letters and comments, and we are glad to look at photographs, articles or synopses for submission.

#### ABROAD

Surface mail  
Standard rate £8.00  
Institutional rate £15.00  
Student rate £7.00

#### Air mail

Standard rate £11.00  
Institutional rate £18.00



## Problems of Hindsight

up in Germany which formed the basis for other worker photography groups internationally. The aim stated in **Tasks and Objectives 1931** was for workers to document for themselves: *'Just as the Soviet workers have learnt to make their own machine tools, to devise inventions and use them in the service of peaceful socialist construction, and just as workers in capitalist countries have learnt to write their own newspapers, in the same way proletarian amateur photographers must learn to master the camera and use it properly in the service of the international class struggle'*.

The activities of the American Film and Photo League and the German Arbeiterfotografie have been well researched, but as yet relatively little has emerged about the Workers Film and Photo League in this country; it is by no means clear how great a role the Workers Film and Photo League played in Britain.

Looking at Edith Tudor-Hart's photographs now raises many problems for us besides those of context and captions. As time passes our understanding of images changes and we cannot expect to use or understand them in the same way as they were originally intended. We have to ask what meaning they can have for us now. Can they still perform a political function? Is their strength as oppositional images lost to us now, swamped by the wash of nostalgia for the period?

One thing is clearly important in the rediscovery of these images – they provide further evidence of oppositional cultural practice excluded from the view of the past perpetuated by dominant ideology. As such, their existence provides a critical reference point for any radical practice today. However, they are already decontextualised by the disappearance of their original function, and the danger is that they will provide material for a growing art market in historical photographs, subsumed into the dominant culture they were produced to fight. It is in the hope of counteracting this possibility, seeking a strand of political consistency in work which has every reason to be disparate, that *Camerawork* publishes these photographs.

*Our grateful thanks to Robert Radford and Wolf Suschitzky for their help and research.*

### Useful further reading

'When Art and Politics seemed to coalesce', Robert Radford *Art Monthly* no 20 and 21, 1978

**Politics/Photography: One**, Photography Workshop 1979.

'The Artists International Association', Tony Rickaby, in **Block 1**.

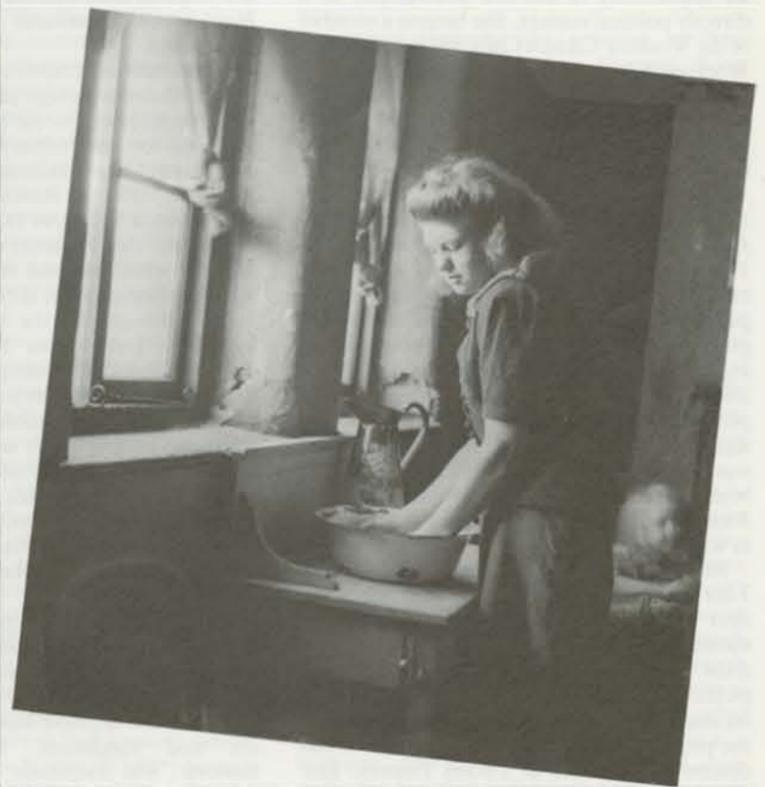
**Culture and Crisis in Britain in the '30s**, ed. Clark, Heinemann, Margolies and Snee, Lawrence and Wishart 1979.

**The Political Artist in Britain**, Robert Radford. To be published shortly.

**The New Sobriety 1917-1933: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period**, John Willett, Thames and Hudson 1978.



Poverty in London





## Edith Tudor-Hart Working in the 30s

Edith Tudor-Hart was born Edith Suschitzky in 1908 in Vienna, where her father was a publisher and bookseller of radical literature. She first came to England in 1925 at the age of 17 to study the Montessori methods of teaching and later worked for a time in England as a teacher. In 1931 she was at the Bauhaus at Dessau for a year and it was there that she first became interested in photography. She worked for a short time in a professional studio in Vienna and her work appeared in pictorial news magazines, a type of periodical which was then much further developed in Germany and Austria than in Britain.

She returned to England in 1933, married Alexander Tudor-Hart in the same year, and was to remain here for the rest of her life. Her brother and mother joined her soon afterwards, fleeing from Nazism. When her husband went to the Spanish Civil War as a member of a medical team she was left to bring up her son and relied on photography to earn her living. They separated after his return and she continued to rely on photography as a source of income.

She achieved some early success with the publication of a number of her pictures for the front cover of *The Listener*. She also soon found an opportunity to use her photography in a directly political context. She became a member of the Workers' Camera Club, which became the Workers' Film and Photo League in 1934. This club was influenced by German and American worker photographer groups who were attempting to make workers aware of the uses they could make of film and photography.

As a member of the Workers' Camera Club, Edith Tudor-Hart took part in the Artists' International Association's first exhibition, held in 1934. Under the title 'The Social Scene', the exhibition provided a didactic programme, with paintings, graphic work, sculpture and photography augmented by posters and books and by lectures and discussions on Marxist art history and the nature of proletarian art. The initial period of the AIA (when it was simply, but significantly, called the Artists' International) was predominantly Marxist, but it was shortly to broaden out to reflect the current of Popular Front support on the twin planks of opposition to war and to fascism.

Along with other members of the Workers' Film and Photo League she also exhibited at the next AIA show in 1935, which followed the theme of 'Artists against Fascism and War'. This show was an altogether bigger venture, better publicised, better attended, and drawing contributions from an impressively broad spectrum of the profession, from such then well-known and diverse personalities as Lucien Pissarro, Eric Gill, Laura Knight and younger modernists like Moore, Hepworth and Nicholson. Work sent in by associated leftist artists' groups on the Continent included paintings and graphic work by Léger and Masareel. As the critic for *Left Review*, Montagu Slater, put it, 'Those whom art politics have put asunder, an exhibition against war and fascism has brought together'.

At this time she was also working on a project with the writer and illustrator Pearl Binder and the graphic designer and cartoonist James Fitton, both founder members of the Artists' International. This promised to be a highly



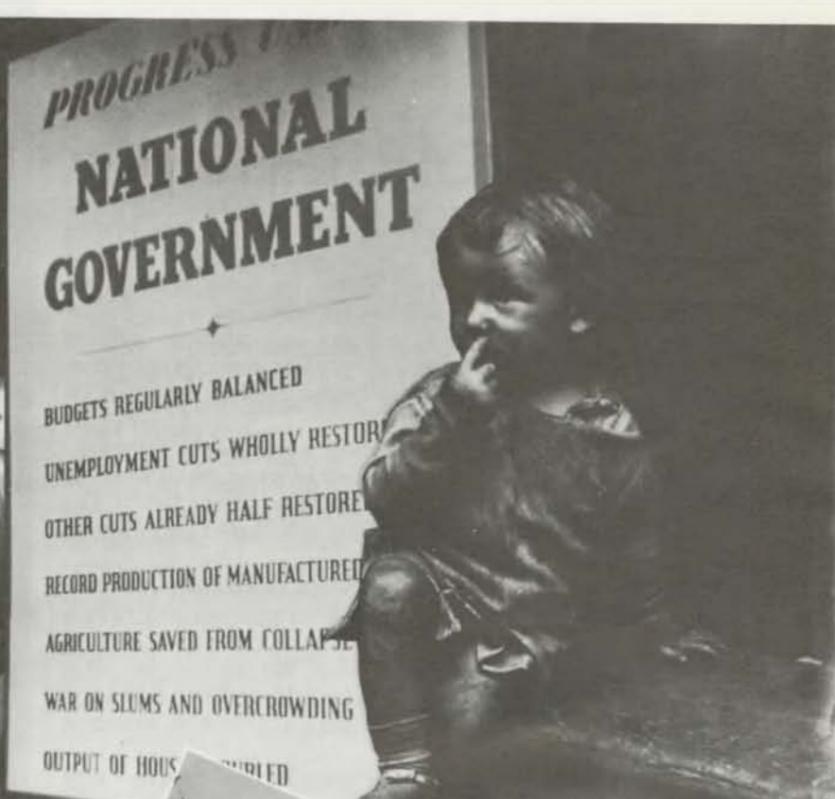
Top left: Ambulance sent to Spanish Civil War. Top right: Photomontage. Bottom left: 'No Work, No Dole'. Bottom right: Demonstration in Hyde Park for the release of Thalmann, leader of the German Communist Party, arrested by the Nazis in March 1933 after the Reichstag fire.

inventive combination of photographic image, drawing and text, with the title 'Rich Man, Poor Man', but regrettably it never reached publication.

Within the constraints of establishing herself as a freelance reportage photographer she took every opportunity to use her photography as a medium for commentary on adverse social conditions. She documented conditions in Whitechapel for an Austrian magazine, and in the Rhondda Valley, in 1936, for *Geographical Magazine*. Unfortunately the way in which her pictures were used did not always reflect her socialist allegiance. In the case of the Rhondda Valley photographs, the accompanying article by Miles Davies was far from polemical, defining the social catastrophe of this area, sunk in endemic unemployment and poverty, as the unfortunate but irresistible logic of the laws of economic geography. It was intent on demonstrating the success of self-help organisations amongst the unemployed, and that morale was still high in the valleys. The *Geographical Magazine* also commissioned her to illustrate an article on Tyneside, another area of poverty and economic decline.

One of the recurrent complaints levelled by Socialist Realist critics of the 1930s against artists who took on the task of social commentary in their work was that too much weight was placed on the negative aspects of working class life and conditions. Edith Tudor-Hart, however, was frequently engaged in projects which achieved definite advances in terms of improved housing and health facilities. For example, she provided the publicity photography for the model working-class flat, built by Maxwell Fry at Kensal House in Ladbrooke Grove. These were an attempt to provide the benefits of modern architectural design and technical services at rents which were manageable for the 380 residents of the slum housing it replaced.

Her work was published in a number of widely read periodicals including the *News Chronicle*, *Picture Post*, *Design for Today* and *Lilliput*.



Working Class Wives (see text) is going to be reprinted in January 1981 by Virago – unfortunately without Edith Tudor-Hart's photographs.

*Lilliput* started in 1937 with a particular policy of encouraging 'feature' photographs. Visual humour was often used for political satire, as is seen in the frequent juxtapositions with portraits of eminent politicians – Neville Chamberlain keeping company with a braying llama, for example, or a photo of a toad juxtaposed with a photo of Pierre Laval, captioned 'Toad in the Hole'. *Lilliput* also used the work of Moholy-Nagy, Brassai and Brandt, and when John Heartfield took refuge in Britain in 1939 a set of his anti-Nazi montages was published. *Lilliput's* convention of the two page contrast was used with Edith Tudor-Hart's photographs in the issue for April 1939, where a picture of a dog enduring a coiffure at a canine beauty parlour, captioned 'Should we have this?', is juxtaposed with a view of an East End slum captioned 'Must we have this?'

At a time when questions of women's oppression and inequalities of opportunity were for the most part overlooked by the left in face of the paramount battle against fascism, there is a clearly discernible current of concern for women's issues in her work. At one level this shows itself in her collaboration on such publications as a booklet appealing for funds to support the South London Hospital for Women and Children, a hospital staffed by women. She also provided the illustrations to a 1939 Pelican publication, *Working Class Wives* by Margery Spring-Rice, which was based on a study of health and domestic conditions of over a thousand working class women.

After the war her work ceases to be identifiable so directly with social and political issues but becomes particularly associated with child health and welfare causes, and with special and progressive education. Her most influential work of this nature was the book *Moving and Growing*, published for the Ministry of Education in 1953. Its illustrations of happily leaping and dancing children brought to life the new 'movement to music' programme for physical education in primary schools.

Edith Tudor-Hart did not achieve any promi-

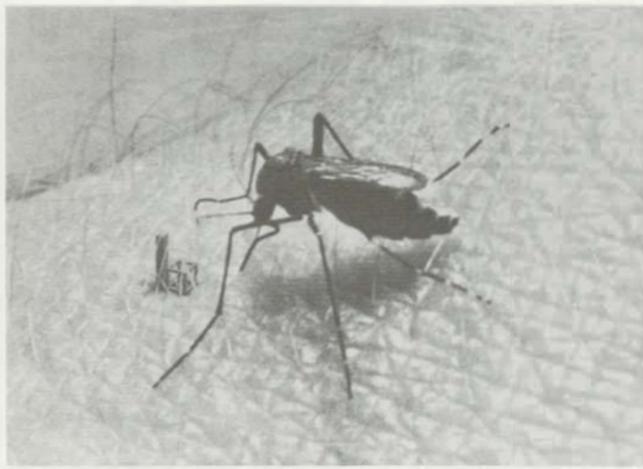
nent professional reputation in her lifetime. Before she died in 1973 she destroyed most of her written records, and so little information is available about her work. However from her article 'Photography as a Profession' we learn that she was clearly aware of the social basis of her style of realism. 'The USSR showed the way both in film and still photography by developing a camera technique expressive of the new life of its people, showing the world the powerful expressive possibilities of the camera which had sprung from the new spirit of an awakening nation. It ceased to be an instrument for recording events and became a means of stimulating and influencing events. It became a living art embracing the people.'

In the same article she also outlined the role that photography might play in education and articulated what it seems she was doing in her own work – that is, using the documentary medium to draw attention to specific issues and thus try to effect social change: 'In my opinion, photography could well be included in most school curricula, to enable children to learn the use of a camera and the essentials of darkroom technique, together with their training in arts and crafts. It would encourage young people to use their cameras for more than just snapshotting the family, to go out and observe life around them, to take a more active part in the life of the nation. In the USSR news reporting is mainly handled by very young people who are quick and alert and whose interest in the quickly-moving events in their country is a very real and live one.'

'In the hands of the person who uses it with feeling and imagination, the camera becomes very much more than a means of earning a living; it becomes a vital factor in recording and influencing the life of the people and promoting human understanding, nationally and internationally.'

**Robert Radford**

Robert Radford is the author of *The Political Artist in Britain* which surveys the work of the Artists' International Association, and is to be published shortly.



from 16 Situations /Derek Boshier

## CONTEXT as a determinant of photographic meaning

Consider a wedding photograph, and then the variety of contexts in which such an image could be encountered: in a family album; framed on the mantelpiece of a living room; in the window of a local commercial photographer's shop; in a local newspaper; in a national newspaper; in a fashion magazine; in a women's journal; in an advertisement on a street hoarding; in an art gallery; in a social history museum; in a television series on photography; inside another photograph . . . With each shift of location the photograph is *recontextualised* and as the context changes so does the meaning. For example, in the family album the wedding photograph is a treasured memento of a particular social ritual, whereas in the local photographer's shop window the 'same' picture is the token of a type, that is, one which represents the whole genre of wedding photographs which the commercial photographer is capable of producing. In the shop window the formal and technical qualities of the photograph are foregrounded in a way they are not in the family album because their purpose is to serve as exemplars of the photographer's aesthetic sensibility and technical competence.

Most critical analyses of photographs concentrate on their *immanent* structure, that is, their internal relations (part to part, parts to whole *within the framing edge*). The frame of the photograph encloses a space, a world, which we can enter (in our imaginations). This space appears self-contained and therefore it is natural for us to mentally place in brackets the context in which the photograph is viewed, even though that context is one important determinant of photographic meaning. Context continues to influence our perception because, although our attention is primarily directed towards the image, we always retain a subsidiary awareness of its/our environment. No figure can be perceived except in relation to a ground.

When the word 'context' is used, it should really be qualified in order to make it clear which of the several different types of possible context is being referred to. For instance, contexts can be architectural, media, mental, socio-historical, etc. Recontextualization does not generally produce a radical transformation of the photographic denotation (its depicted content): a car in a photo does not become a monkey's head simply because the photo is moved from a private house to a public gallery. (However, if the shift involved a photo-montage transposition such an alteration of meaning could be brought about.) In the majority of cases, the result of a context shift is a change of emphasis in the photograph's depicted content: different parts or characteristics of the image appear important in different display contexts. Alternatively, its whole meaning is given a new significance, is enhanced or modified. Indeed when a photograph – considered as a single unit of meaning – enters into a montage relationship with either a caption, text, another picture, or a particularly potent display context, then a 'third-effect' meaning can be generated from that juxtaposition which was not inherent in either of the terms seen in isolation. For example, if a photo of commuters crowding into an underground station entrance is placed next to a photo of sheep crowding into a fold, the third-effect implication is plain: 'these commuters are sheep-like in their behaviour'. And this pictorial insult to commuters would gain in intensity if it were to be displayed inside a tube station.

In the distant past, paintings and sculptures were generally produced for specific locations and were designed as integral parts of architectural structures. As panel paintings in oils supplanted mural paintings in fresco and tempera, and as the capitalist market/gallery system replaced the old patron/artist relationship, the mobility of artworks increased until

they lost all connection with specific places. Their geographic dispersal and mobility was extended by the development of various kinds of reproductive processes, culminating in the invention of photography. The mechanical reproducibility of photographs means that the same image can appear in thousands of settings simultaneously and in a variety of sizes and media.<sup>1</sup> News photographs can now be transmitted by wire with extreme rapidity from country to country, that is, from one cultural context to another. The effect of this phenomenal mobility of the image has been, no doubt, to lessen the importance of architectural or physical display context. Photographs reproduced in a magazine can be studied at home, in a library, on a train, in an aircraft, etc. In this instance, the media context (newspapers, books, magazines) tends to replace architectural setting as a determinant of meaning.

To illustrate the influence media context can have upon the way a photograph is read, consider the difference between encountering a photograph surrounded by text on the front page of a newspaper and encountering that same photograph in the form of a glossy print surrounded by a wide border of white paper in the pages of a 'serious' art photography journal. In the first case we are encouraged to accept the photograph as documentary evidence contributing to a news story; in the second case we are encouraged to regard the photograph as a precious object to be admired for its aesthetic and technical qualities.

### Circulation/currency

As we all know, a photograph captures the visual appearance of a particular place at a specific moment in time. Apparently, therefore, its meaning is determined by its spatio-temporal point of origin. Subsequently the photograph is viewed in other places at other times, that is, in different socio-historical conjunctures. Consideration of a photograph's meaning generally involves a 'blacking-out' of the contemporary situation (as in a lecture) in order to focus attention on the image and to recover (by means of historical research) the original social circumstances in which the photograph was taken. Unfortunately, as a result, a photograph's meaning tends to be regarded as eternally fixed. Obviously, meaning is crucially influenced by moment of production, but it is also subject to changes as the photograph enters into relationships with new circumstances and publics. In other words, there is a need to examine the *life* of an image as well as its birth, to consider its *circulation*, its *currency*, as it moves through time and space from context to context, as it is used by various individuals and groups for different purposes until eventually it is destroyed or lies forgotten in an archive. The terms 'circulation' and 'currency' are borrowed from John Tagg who derived them via an analogy with money.<sup>2</sup> By 'circulation' is meant the distribution/transmission of an image through the communication networks of the world and its movement through various social strata and institutions. While an image circulates it is current – it has a meaning, a use, a value for a particular community. Even after it has been 'withdrawn from circulation' it may enjoy an 'after-life' by being re-used from time to time in, say, exhibitions and history books.

### Jo Spence

**Beyond the Family Album, Private Images, Public Conventions**, a series of photographs of Jo Spence, by Terry Dennett and others from the age of eight-and-a-half months to her forties was displayed recently in the Feminism and Photography section of the **Three perspectives on photography** exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. I had previously encountered some of these images in two different contexts: the

entrance hall of a public library in Finsbury and as a cover/feature article in **Spare Rib** which I purchased from a high street newsagent's shop. Spence's photographs explicitly challenge context conventions by transposing images which are normally found only in family albums (the private realm) into the public sphere. As her title makes clear, the images may be private and personal but the conventions at work are public and social. The frankness of the exposure, combined with the feminist polemic and the transition from private to public, endows the series with considerable *stimmung* or shock value. Especially striking was the conjunction of the black and white **Spare Rib** cover photograph – Spence at her plainest and with a dour expression – with all the other women's magazines in the newsagent's racks with their glamorous, smiling, full-colour, synthetic model girls or optimistic housewives. In this context the feminist aspect of the critique really told, it seemed to me.

Perhaps the most striking images of the series were two showing Spence reclining nude as a baby and as a mature woman. This juxtaposition was extracted from the set as a whole by the art press (they were reproduced on the art page of a London evening newspaper and in **Art & Artists**). Wrenched from their context the images acquired a sensationalist, voyeuristic and prurient gloss.

By including conventionally unflattering photographs of herself in the family album, Spence undermined the norms of perception induced by such albums. 'Putting these photographs in my album', Spence remarks, 'has forced my family to see me in a new way'.<sup>3</sup> In the Hayward Gallery Spence displayed her private images in conjunction with a series of public images (advertisements) featuring secretaries (Spence earned her living as a secretary) which were addressed to specific audiences (e.g. employers, typists as consumers). This device enabled her to make visible the stereotyping of women taking place within various genres of photography, and in particular the way in which the public/private division results in representations of women according to a work/leisure division. She also featured examples of private images used by advertisers when addressing defined, limited, audiences of professionals – for example, photographs of tired, ill, and anxious people appearing in drug adverts addressed to doctors.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the three contexts in which I encountered the images of Spence produced a different emphasis in their reading: in the magazine it was the feminist dimension which was highlighted; in the public library it was the private/public, personal/social contrast; in the Hayward, amongst other socialist and feminist photographic displays, the critical work upon photography itself was foregrounded. It is somewhat difficult to isolate the precise influence of display context because the context is, of course, only one factor amongst many. Furthermore, the difficulty is compounded in Spence's case because her work is self-reflexive; it is specifically about and involves manipulations of changes of context.

It is clear from the above that Spence's exhibit had a didactic aim; the Hayward Gallery became a learning centre. But before we can judge the efficacy of Spence's exhibit we need to know more about the motivations of those who visit art galleries. Do people go to be educated or entertained? Are they receptive to this kind of exposition or would they prefer it in book form? Also, we need to undertake research to discover whether in fact they learn anything from such shows.<sup>5</sup>

If display context can influence the meaning of a photograph, the photograph can influence the meaning of the context. This reasoning lay behind John X Berger's comment at a Hayward

Gallery evening discussion that the socialist and feminist photography 'had radicalized the gallery space'. But the influence is two-way: it could also be argued that the gallery – a High Art cultural institution serving the interests of the bourgeoisie – had de-radicalized radical photography! This issue cannot be settled in the abstract: a survey of visitors would help to establish a typology of responses. With reference to the Agit-Prop photo-montage panels by the Hackney Flashers, it is fairly evident that displaying this work in the Hayward was comparable to exhibiting a piece of engineering equipment in the Science Museum: it is displayed as an example, as a working model, of what happens *outside* the museum.

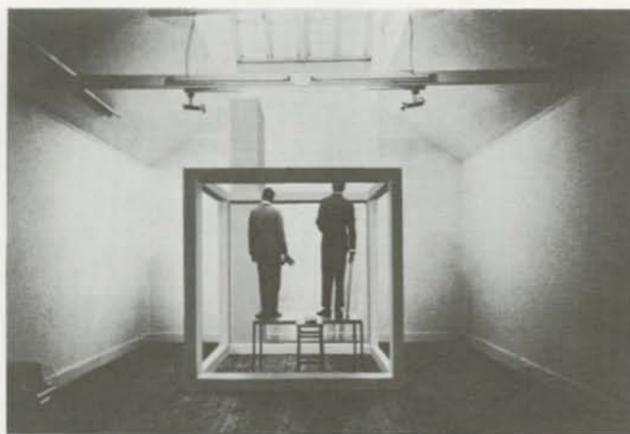
### Mental context or set

So far I have focussed principally upon the display and media contexts in which photos appear, but photographs only exist as meaningful representations for someone; the artefact is only *part* of the work of art, hence we must also take into account what Ernst Gombrich calls 'the beholder's share'. A viewer approaches an image not with a blank mind but with a mind already primed with memories, knowledge, prejudices; there is a *mental set* or context to be taken into account. For example, in John Berger and Jean Mohr's book **A Seventh Man**, a photograph of a young boy is carried by a migrant worker far from home to remind him of his family. Berger remarks: 'Seen in the dark-room when making the print, or seen in this book when reading it, the image conjures up the vivid presence of an unknown boy. To his father it would define the boy's absence'.<sup>6</sup> That is, people have different relations to the same image according to the different places they occupy in society, determined by such factors as gender, race, nationality, class, age, education, kinship, etc.

Another example: the reaction to Peter Marlow's photograph of a National Front steward (see **Camerawork 8** p.2) is likely to be very different according to whether the viewer is a member of the Front or a member of the Anti Nazi League; and different again if the viewer is an immigrant who has been abused or assaulted by racists. It has often been pointed out that the Front are photogenic, as were the German Nazis before them. Their facial expressions, body language and clothing connote a set of values – toughness, masculine virility, aggression, latent power – which are perceived by the Left as negative values but which may appear positive to Front members. It may, therefore, be politically more valuable for the Left photographer to stress the weak and pathetic aspects of the racists rather than to celebrate their toughness.

Analysis of people's experiences of images is, of course, much more difficult than analysing photographs (the analyst is in fact reflecting upon his or her own experience of the image); after all, what *does* go on inside other people's heads? There is a danger here of lapsing into an ideology of individualism: 'everyone is different, a unique individual, therefore every person's response to an image is different and exclusive to them'. Such a conclusion overlooks what millions of individuals have in common (e.g. a language), how much experience is shared, especially the fact that individuals belong to social groupings – above all social classes – within a particular social formation and therefore it is possible to describe responses to images which are similar for large numbers of the populace. The mass media would simply find communication impossible if there were not common desires, experiences and values to appeal to and to work upon. Pictorial stereotypes do not merely exist externally in the world of the mass media, they inhabit us.

It is, however, problematic to judge the impact of a single image when we are exposed to



from 16 Situations / Derek Boshier

a veritable floodtide of visual imagery daily, in addition to all the other kinds of experience which form us ideologically. To many people it seems that imagery is having no effect at all. But it does serve to affirm and reinforce the existing dominant conceptions of human society so that they appear 'natural'. Only when the social context changes dramatically (as in a revolution) is the oppressive character of pictorial and sculptural representations, serving the ruling élite, revealed; in such moments the icons of power are smashed by the people. For example, in Paris during the 1871 Commune, the Vendôme column, symbol of Napoleonic imperialism, was destroyed by the Communards. To cite a contemporary example: ever since the advent of the women's movement we have seen a guerrilla campaign of defacements, slogans and stickers waged against sexist advertising. This example reminds us that although our freedom to decode or read images is highly restricted – the structure of the 'text' structures the way we experience it – we can still make an oppositional response (this has been called 'aberrant

decoding' or 'oppositional consumption'). In 1933 a statue commemorating Poland's fallen war heroes was unveiled in Warsaw; it represented a gladiator stricken to death in the arena raising himself on his elbow to draw his last breath. The populace of Warsaw understood its official meaning by declaring that it represented the Polish people expiring under the burden of taxation!

Context is a troublesome determinant of meaning for artists because so often it lies outside their control. Left-wing theatre, film and community photography groups are usually keen to exercise control in this area in order to ensure the most favourable and appropriate conditions for the reception of their work. They are also concerned with mental context in the sense that their work is generally produced with the needs of specific audiences in mind or is adapted to suit local circumstances. Recent film theory has addressed itself to problems of the subject's relationship to the film text and also the more general relationship between film and audience.' This appears to be one area in which

practice is further advanced than theory.

## John A. Walker

*John A. Walker teaches art history and theory at Middlesex Polytechnic. He is the author of Art Since Pop (1975) and A Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design since 1945 (2nd ed. 1977) and an editor of Block.*

### Notes and references

- (1) Andy Warhol's silk-screen paintings are exemplary in the way they insist upon the reproducibility of images in the age of mechanical reproduction.
- (2) See John Tagg's article 'The Currency of the Photograph' *Screen Education* (28) Autumn 1978 pp 45-67.
- (3) J. Spence 'Facing up to Myself' *Spare Rib* (68) March 1978 pp 6-9 plus front cover.
- (4) See *Three critical perspectives on photography* (catalogue) (Hayward Gallery/Arts Council, 1979) pp 60-63.

(5) Many exhibitions are mounted with an educational aim in mind, for example, the mammoth *Dada & Surrealism* show at the Hayward Gallery was organized on this basis; however, a sociological study of this exhibition – Christopher Wilson *Dada & Surrealism reviewed: audience to audience* (Arts Council, 1978) – revealed that despite the fact that most people attended the show to learn about Dada and Surrealism they learnt very little.

(6) J. Berger & Jean Mohr *A seventh man* (Penguin Books, 1975) p 17.

(7) For a summary of this area see R. Coward & J. Ellis *Language and materialism: developments in semiology and the theory of the subject* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). See also M. McLoone 'Report of BFI summer school 1978' *Screen education* (28) Autumn 1979 pp 86-88.

*I would like to thank Richard Platt and Terry Smith for their comments upon earlier drafts of this article.*

## Community Arts under Attack

The devolution of responsibility for community arts from the Arts Council to Regional Arts Associations means community arts policy is more uneven throughout the country – and in some areas its support is distinctly precarious. Without any national guiding policy, local authorities who do not wish to see social and environmental improvements in their areas will use any power they can exert over RAAs to stifle effective work by community groups.

Bootle Arts & Action is a community group who work in an area of desperate housing conditions, high unemployment and pitifully inadequate provision for the cultural and social life of

adults and children. There is no shortage of voluntary workers, but Sefton Borough Council has not encouraged groups who seek change. In this context Arts & Action produced a pictorial study of the community which brings home the urban decay in Bootle and contrasts it with the disregard shown by the council.

Since this booklet was published (and before), the Tory-controlled council have engaged in a prolonged series of attacks on the group designed to starve it out of existence by delaying payment of its Arts Association grant. In a confrontation which, in Sefton's words, is 'of a political nature', it has made allegations to the Merseyside Arts Association that Arts & Action's work is not artistic, but *political*. These allegations are based on 'information' which Sefton refuses to make public.

Although Sefton is contributing only £10,800

to MAA's 1980/81 revenue of £½m, it now seeks to quash the £9,328 grant recommended by the Merseyside Community Arts Assembly (an advisory panel comprising all organisations and individuals involved in community arts in the region).

Sefton's representatives on the Arts Association want to overturn this recommendation, refusing to recognise not only the judgements of the MAA arts officers – they also reject the verdict of Liverpool City Council's auditor, who concluded that Arts & Action's funds have in the past been used only for artistic activities. The question of whether their work is artistic or political is now being referred to an arbitrator – in the meanwhile the group is unable to function adequately without funds.

Any distinction between art and politics is clearly irrelevant to this kind of community

work. As community photographers Arts & Action must confront the living and working conditions around them. Their success in bringing together every community group in the area is seen by Sefton as something to be stopped at all costs.

Not only community arts, but also the autonomy of the Arts Associations themselves are under attack from one of the country's most reactionary local authorities. The paranoia towards any socially-orientated activity by voluntary groups which Sefton has displayed is of course akin to that of Roy Shaw in the Arts Council, who manages to describe community arts workers as people 'working to overthrow the state' (ACGB report 1978/79). Within and without the Arts Council, community arts are increasingly vulnerable to this politically motivated onslaught.

Greg Kahn

## REVIEWED

The approach to a Buddhist monastery in Northern India is marked by a series of white stone stuppas, and increasingly by a tell-tale trail of film packaging.

Numerous other examples could be given to give credence to Susan Sontag's sweeping generalisation that 'Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs'. It is useful to bear in mind such examples and Sontag's cynicism when considering the exhibition *Observers of Man*, recently held at the Photographers' Gallery, London. Much has been written of the work done to preserve the decaying negatives and prints of the Royal Anthropological Institute (from whose collection the exhibition is drawn), but there has been little emphasis on how and why these pictures came into being, and how the early photographers-explorers established traditions and attitudes which are followed by travellers/tourists today.

Anthropology goes hand in hand with colonialism – three of the eight 'observers' were themselves colonial administrators. The photographs in the exhibition were made between 1860 and 1920, the same time as Europe was actively consolidating its ownership of the world. It was also during this period that London's monolithic museums were built as a showcase for the treasures of the Empire. It was an age of science and discoveries – Darwin's *Origin of the Species* appeared in 1858 and Victorian intellectual man was forced to reassess the world and his position in it.

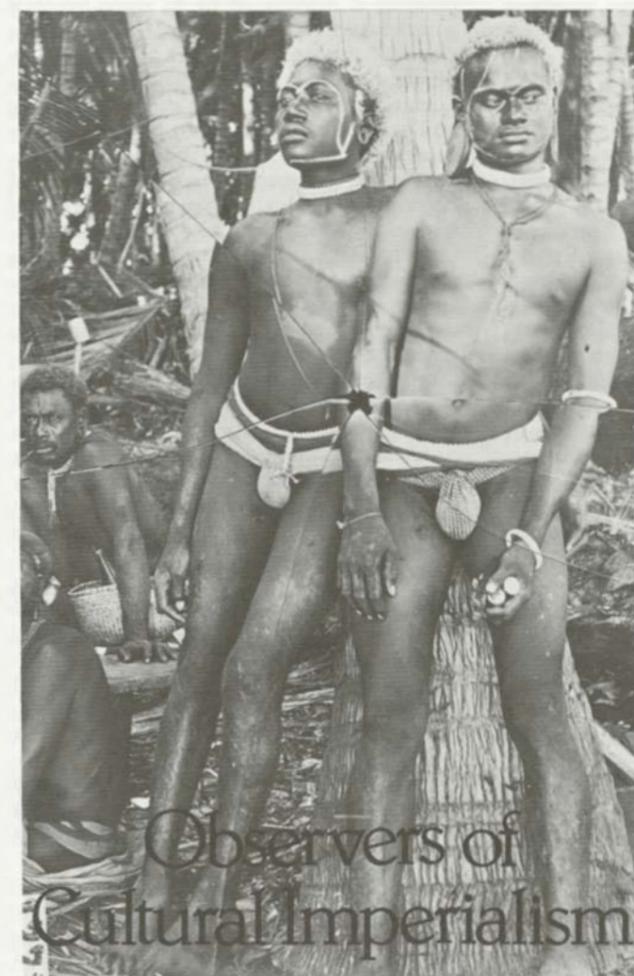
Unfortunately images of 'noble savages' were more than likely to convince him of his superiority and the necessity for the white man to take control and 'civilise'. In the preface to the catalogue Sue Davies takes a very charitable view: 'Their immediate interest may have been to collect the best "specimens" available . . . but the general paternalistic view current at the time undoubtedly involved the best of them in a caring

interest in their subjects' welfare.' One dreads to think what the worst of them got up to.

Although the camera has been a very valuable tool for the anthropologist its destructiveness must not be underestimated. As soon as a primitive society is confronted with a camera it is also confronted with a completely different set of cultural rules. A camera is usually the only piece of technology that travellers carry around with them, but it well represents the structure of Western society – an obsession with appearances and a market based on that obsession, a complex division of labour, a continual need to gather information, importance of individuality and acquisition, etc. In his book *Oh, What a Blow That Phantom Gave me!*, Edmund Carpenter describes how, as an anthropologist, he was appointed to investigate the introduction of media to Papua and New Guinea, but now ultimately he could only see them as destructive. 'I had been asked to find more effective uses for electronic media, yet I viewed these media with distrust. I had been employed by government administrators who, however well-intentioned, sought to use these media for human control. They viewed media as neutral tools and they viewed themselves as men who could be trusted to use them humanely. I saw the problem otherwise. I think media are so powerful they swallow cultures.'

In the exhibition there are some pictures that could be of interest to the specialist, and others to the public in general; what is not clear is why they are of interest. The work is categorised according to photographers, but no more analysis is provided. There is a danger of the images being viewed as spectacle, people as objects, and this is little better than the Victorian exhibitions which had live native tableaux, or the sad situation in many tribal areas where a few natives have a carefully marked out location and set poses, and people pay to take photographs.

Colour supplements, Wonders of the World



**Observers of Man** at St Paul's Jarrow Development Trust, Jarrow Hall, Church Bank, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear. September 6 to October 4. At the School of English, University of Exeter, October 18 to November 1.

New Georgian youths with lime-bleached hair, Solomon Islands, 1893-4. Henry B.T. Somerville. The catalogue comments: 'Somerville believed that, unless the British (who had established a Protectorate in 1893) prevented headhunting, the New Georgians would be wiped out. He concluded that, if this happened, 'the elimination of the race would be of no great loss to the world'. It is difficult to reconcile his racist sentiments with these striking images, but such ideas were sometimes put forward in anthropological circles in the 19th century'.

programmes and a general cultural nostalgia bolstered up by years of Empire-based history have convinced us that primitive societies are the thing to photograph – the exotic is what makes it. Given the availability of cameras and tourism, 20th century man/woman has little difficulty in

playing at the 19th century explorer, with all the power implications still intact. Unfortunately *Observers of Man* only encourages such activity.

Jenny Matthews

# THE STATE OF THE NATION

by E.P. Thompson: Photomontage by Peter Kennard



I have been admiring the new issue of stamps, a series on the British police. There they are, our splendid public servants, sitting on horses, directing traffic, messing about in boats, and, most touching of all, there is the one of the handsome young constable bending solicitously over a little blonde girl with a doll, a jolly darkie toddler in between.

The occasion for this new issue is not made evident on the stamps. Of course, since our police are a matter for continuous celebration, year in, year out, in most of the media, there is no need for any particular occasion. But perhaps this series was designed to commemorate the inquest on the body of Mr Blair Peach.

Dr Burton, the coroner at Blair Peach's inquest, said that there were good reasons for not having a jury, 'not least because it would present problems about its selection' (Guardian, 12 October 1979). The problems in the 'selection' of a jury which may have come to his mind were perhaps those of finding a true verdict, in a sensitive case in which the police are involved, at a time when the minds of potential jurors are exposed to massive propaganda as to the superlative merits of the police, the alien habits of Asians, and the 'strident hatred of the extreme left' (Observer, 7 October 1979); and when the officer responsible for empanelling a coroner's jury is an officer of the police.

The difficulty is one to which the British people have become habituated. It is to be expected that authority, by means of proclamations, assize sermons, homilies at the scaffold, manipulation of the press, and TV chat shows, will always seek to present approving images of the forces of order. But this has not prevented juries from fulfilling their difficult duties. The gross manipulation of opinion will always militate against the truth, but, in a democracy, I think we must take our chance.

These extracts from 'The State of the Nation' are reproduced from *Writing by Candlelight*, published by Merlin Press. Courtesy of New Society and the New Statesman.

It is historically observable that police, as defenders of 'law and order', have a vested interest in the status quo, whether the status be capitalist or communist, and whether the quo be that of Somoza's Nicaragua or of Rakosi's Hungary: that is, the occupation is one which is supportive of statist and authoritarian ideologies. And, more simply, in whatever kind of society, the police will always have good reasons for pressing for more resources, more powers, and more pay.

Sir Robert Mark's *In the Office of Constable* tells us that in 1973 the Metropolitan Police were under serious strain, 'having to deal with 72,750 burglaries, 2,680 robberies and 450 demonstrations'. Football crowds and traffic accidents go unmentioned. The point is the sequence: burglaries – robberies – demonstrations, and to associate in the readers' minds popular democratic manifestations with crime.

There is nothing new about Sir Robert Mark's illiberal and impatient notions. What is new is the very powerful public relations operation which disseminates these notions as an authorised, consensual view; which presses its spokespeople forward on every occasion upon the media; which announces unashamedly that the police are in the regular practice of breaking judges' rules when interrogating suspects; and which justifies the invasion of the citizen's privacy and the accumulation of prejudicial and inaccurate records.

This is new. This is formidable. As a historian, I can say that I know of no period in which the police have had such a loud and didactic public presence, and when they have offered themselves as a distinct interest, as one of the great 'institutions'. And I know of no period in which politicians and editors have submitted so abjectly or ardently to their persuasions.

Last October James Anderton, chief constable of Manchester, was asked what was the greatest threat to 'law and order' today. He reassured us that the threat to 'law and order' today comes from 'seditionists', interested groups who do not have the well-being of this country at heart, and who mean to 'undermine democracy'. The undermining of democracy is certainly going on, and at an inflationary rate. And it is becoming clear from which quarter the wind is blowing. It is blowing from the quarters of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the police pressure group, and from the barracks of the law-and-order brigade. And conservatives of all parties, some of whom are proud to think of themselves as reactionaries, are all for tearing down the structures of the past, modernising the 'machinery' of government.

They wish to push us into a managed society, whose managing director is money, and whose production manager is the police. They have got us halfway inside already.



*There has never been an age, however rude,  
the love of landscape has not*



*ude or uncultivated, in which  
in some way been manifested.*

John Constable, 1836

*When the Government bring forward their proposals for Cruise missiles MPs will put forward the views of our constituents. We shall not be led astray by all kinds of populist comments . . . the people of Suffolk are proud to help in the defence of Britain . . . we respect the integrity of this nation. We would assert our desire to play our part in the defence of a nation for which we care.*

John Selwyn Gummer, MP for Eye, Suffolk, 2.4.80

*The Cruise missile makes no noise and the only inconvenience the local population will experience is the occasional sight of the missile launchers on the roads.*

Daily Telegraph 31.10.79

**P**resent NATO strategic thinking supposes a 'limited' nuclear war, with 'theatre' weapons localised to a small area from the Urals to the Western coast of Ireland. The decision that 160 or more United States Cruise missiles should be based on British soil was taken by NATO (without consultation with the British parliament) on December 12, 1979 at Brussels. These missiles are not especially large. They can be dragged around our country lanes on transporters carrying three at a time. They are not to be kept together, but will be dotted individually around the place. The enemy might not be permitted to knock out 40 or 50 of them with one lucky shot, but must obliterate all East Anglia and south and central England to find them out.

So, far from 'detering' the 'enemy', the presence of these missiles here will provoke and draw down upon us these strikes.





**C**ivil liberties and Cruise missiles cannot coexist in this island together. East Anglia is not the Nevada desert. You cannot put ten million persons out of their homes nor surround them with twelve foot barbed wire.

A Cruise missile is quite small. It is not likely to stay put submissively in the hands of law and order. It could be attacked by terrorists. It could even be carried off by persons unknown. This will be a great argument for the security services and police.

Motorists will be stopped at road blocks, canteen staff will be positively vetted, all of us will carry identity cards. Not only pacifists, anarchists and marxists, but all those thought susceptible to moral objections must be vigilantly watched; their letters opened and their telephones tapped; their moral temperature monitored, charted, computed and filed.

# Women, History and Photographic Imagery

Photography is inseparable from history. Whether used to ephemeral and immediate ends, or used in the construction of a culture's memory, photographs are embedded in social time. The ideological position in that constructed history into which people are placed is central to understanding both photography and the social groups and classes so placed. Camerawork therefore has a continuing commitment to carrying out historical research in and through photography.

Gen Doy's article, developed from a lecture, is a useful presentation of ways of thinking and using history and of understanding the relationships between documentation and the lives of women within history. Camerawork felt it would be of interest to the many photographers who have little experience of studying history or want a better understanding of their role in constructing history. It should also help those using or teaching photography in the context of historical research.

In addition, the final paragraphs of the article point to the question of the political limits of any cultural or intellectual practice, an area of debate in which photographers have yet to make their presence felt.

The following article attempts to introduce some of the key issues concerning the social role of women, and the way the historical evolution of this role relates to the production and consumption of photographic imagery. Since this is a large and complex area, not all the points raised here can be fully discussed, but some indication of further projects and reading is given at the end of the article.

It is important first of all to emphasise that the evolution of women's social role is of concern to all of us, men and women, gay and heterosexual. For, as I will argue, we need an understanding of notions of history and historical processes before we can adequately come to terms with the position of any particular group within historical developments. This is particularly important where the group in question has not been assigned a significant role in the dominant view of history – groups such as gays, women, blacks, unemployed. Also, our present position must be understood from a historical perspective. This obviously enhances our understanding of contemporary events, and can help to give us

an awareness of means to act upon and change our lives. The final part of this article will suggest some ways in which such activity might proceed.

## What is history and what use is it?

The way we (and professional historians) interpret the past and the material which we use for evidence in such a study is influenced by various factors, including our class position, our gender, our aim in investigating the historical material and the use to which we will put it. Some historians believe they are investigating history 'for its own sake'. Others, with varying degrees of conscious or unconscious collaboration, offer particular perspectives on history in tune with the dominant views of cultural and educational establishments. We can find several different ways of writing and interpreting history, including the following.

### History as 'one damn thing after another'

This is usually a list of dates and events which give no explanation as to why some things happen and not others, nor why they happen at certain times and not at other times. It presents us with a confusing mass of information, none of which, apparently, is more or less important than anything else.

### History as a succession of achievements of great individuals

e.g. Kings, Queens, great statesmen, explorers. A similar kind of history of photography sees the development of the medium through history as the products of great individual photographers. This approach is commonly found in the writings of both 'conservative' and 'liberal' humanist scholars. We should consider what is left out in such an approach, and why certain individuals are selected. What criteria are used to define 'greatness' or 'significance'? Also what are the implications of such an approach for a study of women in history? For example, would we, as some feminists have done, merely seek to replace a history of the great men of the past with a history of 'great' women?

### History seen as different periods

e.g. the Elizabethan age, the Victorian age. While this claims to give us an idea of 'the spirit of the age', as opposed to the lives of a few great individuals, does this approach really tell us what all the people did during these periods or only about some of them? Which people are allocated the most space in this survey? Even short answers to these questions show the selectivity of this approach, which is close to the 'social history' type of historical book. In so-called social histories, the ideas and events of certain societies are studied e.g. Modern British society. This approach assumes that everyone is part of the same society, that they have certain problems in common, share the same views, lead the same lives. Their differences are seen as insignificant in comparison with their shared social links. They are assumed to share common goals, to which end they all collaborate. Their particular society is seen as a coherent entity and a 'natural' way of organizing human activity. By way of comment on this one might ask if a woman part-time cleaner shares much in common with the Queen, or if a low-caste Indian peasant identifies her needs in the same way as, say, Mrs Gandhi.

### History as a history of class struggle: the Marxist view of history.

While there is no abstract historical 'truth' magically waiting to be discovered, independent of human perceptions and activities, there is certainly a view of history which gives a far better explanation for what actually happened in history than any of the others mentioned briefly so far. Marx believed that his view of history was scientific, that it could be tested, to see whether in fact it works and makes sense. In so far as a Marxist view of history helps us to understand why, and how, we got to where we are now, it makes far better sense than the others. Marxists view history as the evolution of human development of the 'means of production' (ie. land, agriculture and livestock, tools, machinery, technology, natural resources etc.), and the struggle of various groups (classes) to gain control of these sources of potential wealth at the expense of one another. The class controlling these means of production (and the labour power of those who do not control them) is regarded as the dominant class, and its ideas are the dominant ideas of that particular time and place. (There are other ideas and forms of culture in other classes, but these are mostly ignored by the majority of 'professional' historians, whether male or female.) These dominant ideas, which seem 'natural' and unconsciously accepted, serve to maintain the status of the ruling class, and are termed 'ideology' e.g. a woman's role in life is to be a mother, blacks are 'different' from whites, if you're unemployed it's because you don't want to



1 Women workers at an iron works in South Wales 1865



2 Courvoisier advertisement



3 Nazi women saluting the flag

1

Women workers at an iron works in South Wales, 1865 (original black and white). Various issues are raised by this photo. Do we consider it primarily as a 'documentary record' or as a 'work of art'? Is this supposed alternative a valid one? How do we know these women are really workers, and what makes us believe that they are? Are we prompted to ask their names, and could we find out? How would we date this photograph without any other information? (Note that dating by dress works for those subjects which show trends in fashion, but that working-class dress varies far less.) How would we relate this photograph to stereotypes of women and of workers? Do we, for example, find this appealing because it destroys stereotypes of women as gentle, mild, soft, etc, or should we rather be asking if anyone should be obliged to do this sort of work at all, whether men or women? If we take this as a documentary photograph, why does it look so posed? The image is in fact very carefully composed, and the women are arranged so as to have direct eye contact with the spectator. At the time, only black and white photography was available for this sort of work, but it is worth considering what difference the use of colour in a subject like this makes. Could you make use of a photo like this now and how?

2

Courvoisier advert from a Sunday colour supplement (original in colour). A comparison with the previous image is instructive, considering, for example, use of colour, text, supposedly 'natural' and 'unposed' spontaneity, but actually carefully acted. The photographic image, rather than a drawing, conveys a realistic and materialistic density of texture, luxury and abundance. Specially complex, inviting our eyes to wander around consuming various parts of the scene e.g. the woman behind the partition, the bottle nearer to us, reflecting glasses, depth in the painting behind the couple, space cut off by the band at the bottom of the page. How would you compare the status and activities of the women in this image with those of photo 1? Can we say if this image is 'documentary' in any sense? Why is this particular period chosen for photographic reconstruction? What is the purpose of this image and why does it use history to accomplish it? What function does the women's role have in this? Who would produce such a photo and how would it be used?

3

Nazi women saluting the flag before beginning work as unpaid volunteers, mid 1930s. Photographer unknown, taken from History of the Twentieth Century, no.50, a series of weekly magazines published by Purnell (original black and white). This photograph should be related to both no.1 and no.4. If you felt sympathy for, and identified in any way with the women in no.1, do you also with the Nazi women in this photo? How can the additional information about these women and their activities affect our response to the photo? The idea that a certain image e.g. of a working woman, a black woman etc. is in itself progressive or reactionary must be considered false. Only by knowing the historical context of the image can we assess its political significance. The photo in itself cannot give clear political answers or judgements. The composition, point of view, rhythm of the arms, position of the women near the barracks-like building under the flag and dominated by it give us a definite image of the women, which is far from delicate and 'feminine'. This material activity of women ready to toil without pay in hard manual work in order to help solve the problems of the Nazi economy is in fact in contradiction to the ideology fostered by the Nazi state, which presented women as mothers, homemakers, child-bearers and educators of Nazi manhood. What do you think the function of this photo in the mid 1930s in Germany might have been? Has it any use for us now?



4 World War Two recruiting poster



5 Portrait of Margaret Thatcher for the Sunday Times/Eve Arnold



6 Montage of photographs taken at Mme Tussaud's © Realart

work. Marxist historians believe that this approach gives the best explanation and understanding of history, but they also believe that it helps us to understand how to act in a practical way in the present with a view to *changing* it. Marxists do not study history for its own sake, but to learn lessons from it to inform their actions in the present, and their aims for the future. This is not considered important by other approaches to history.

### How do we study history?

Usually history is studied in schools or colleges. For those who do not attend educational establishments, books, newspapers, films, photographs, TV and radio programmes are the main ways in which we 'learn' what happened in the past and what is happening now. There are several problems raised by an investigation of the ways in which history is presented to us. By whom and for what purpose are we taught history? What views of history are we encouraged to have? Who has access to important information? For example, many documents are not accessible to the public for decades due to state restrictions, and controversial material is withdrawn. Police files on the Hunger Marches during the 1930s

4

Recruiting poster, photolithograph by J. Foss, ca.1939 (original in colour). Originally with a male figure, this version includes a female figure who takes a more prominent position than the man. In terms of composition, the function of the low view-point, the relation of text and image, and the use of a photographic image rather than a painted or drawn one are important. Why should the woman here be presented as tough, determined, resolute etc. if this is not usually the case? Are women sometimes shown by the state to be capable of men's work and if so why? Do you think it is desirable for women to have the 'equal opportunity' to fight and die in a World War? Many American feminists have welcomed recent recruiting drives of women to the US armed forces.

5

Photograph from the Sunday Times, 20.8.1978, from a feature article entitled 'A Portrait of Margaret Thatcher'. Photographer is Eve Arnold (original colour). The dominant colour in the original is blue and Thatcher wears a blue dress. The composition places the three heads on the same level, and records a sitting given by Thatcher to a sculptor who was making a bust of her. Why should she want a bust, rather than say a photo? Could we say from the photograph why she wished to commission the bust and what it shows about her? Does she see her history linked to the history of women? Does it in fact tell us anything about her as a woman?

6

Photographic montage taken at Mme Tussaud's, 1978, showing scenes from the part of the museum which displays famous political figures and also a woman who works as a cleaner at Mme Tussaud's (original black and white). There are three main areas of interest here. What does this composition of four images represent in terms of a) Thatcher's relation to a low-paid woman cleaner? b) The cleaner's relation to 'famous' figures of contemporary history, both male and female? c) The way we have looked at all the preceding photos? The last point is important. We need to question the 'form' of images, as well as their 'content', and therefore the way in which we are expected to look at them. Most photos present themselves as 'real' and 'natural', with ordered space, free from manipulation by hand or brain. Actually we learn to look at photos in a certain way and come to think that they are natural representations of the world we experience. Children obviously don't understand photographic images when they are very young. The photographer here has tried to make us think about this and to question our position as active or passive readers of photographic space and compositions. If the photo wants us to be critical of a 'natural', 'true' relation of privileged and non-privileged people in Britain, then we should also question the supposedly 'natural' and 'true' images of class society presented to us by the press, TV etc. TV especially uses photographic imagery extensively in this way. How does this and the Sunday Times picture of Margaret Thatcher support the view that a) all women are 'sisters', b) women are oppressed and exploited by men?

have been removed from access in the Public Record Office (see the *Guardian*, 24.2.1979). Are women, blacks, political dissidents, presented often in history books? What or who is not mentioned? Education can, on the one hand, give us a very restricted perspective on history, but if we are not capable of reading, writing and mastering the tools which are used at present to our disadvantage, we cannot present our own view of history, nor preserve our work and experience so that others can make use of it, by writing or through photography, film etc. For example oral cultures and illiterates etc. tend not to appear in history books giving their own testimonies, since documentation and records of these do not exist. So it is necessary to master the methods of historical research and argument, but to put them to use in different ways from those we tend to learn in schools, colleges, and from TV. For example a study of Britain's imperialist past could enable blacks in Britain to take action on unemployment and racism, or an investigation of women's historical role to show how they are currently employed in low-paid jobs could form the basis for a campaign in trade union branches in favour of positive discrimination for women members.

### Women and history

Much history is written from a class, gender and race biased viewpoint – not necessarily as a conscious attempt to falsify information, but because of the ideological position of the writers. How can this affect our understanding of women's role in history, and their position in contemporary Britain?

Not all women have the same problems in all classes and in all countries, and this should always be borne in mind. Also while we could say that all women are *oppressed* because of their physical/biological sex, not all women are *exploited* as wage labourers or unpaid housewives or even both of these. At first, some feminist historians thought that the answer to the problem of women's omission from history was simply to say that women had not often been mentioned in history books, and that the answer was to write more books about women. (Any woman would do, whether Florence Nightingale or a woman working down a coal-mine. In practice, though, it was more the 'great' women variety.) This was valuable in some ways, but very limited as a long-term strategy. It quickly became yet another growth area for commercial publishers, film-makers etc. It is more useful as a first step to understand the implications of what Engels and other Marxists said about women and history.

Engels argued that women were not 'naturally' subordinate to men (just as coloured peoples are not 'naturally' inferior to white peoples), and he explained that the belief that women were inferior had developed over a long period of time. It was, he argued, linked to the development of private property, wealth, the family unit and the state. He writes that social groupings were originally organized round women, since it was always possible to tell who the mother of a child was, but not the father. In these early societies, labour was divided according to sex – men hunting, looking after animals; women cooking – but these different sorts of socially necessary labour were all equally valued by the community. Gradually, with wars, the development of specialized tools and trades, agricultural settlements, capture of enemies later used as slaves by the warriors of the tribe (who mostly happened to be men), social groups accumulated a surplus of possessions and wealth. The men did not want to 'lose' their slaves, cattle etc. to another man's child and so gradually the notion of individual ownership took over from group possessions, and a woman was forced to have sexual relations with only one man, to ensure that any children born to her were definitely his. Gradually the larger communities broke up into family units where the woman was attached to one man, and women's domestic labour was thought inferior, since it did not directly produce wealth or surplus. With this came the division of rich possessors of wealth from poorer people and slaves. In order to preserve the functioning of this arrangement the powerful ruling classes devised codes of behaviour and an administrative mechanism known as the state.

Various points follow from this. Women's inferior position is not 'natural', but socially evolved through historical developments. Women (and other oppressed groups) can never really be free unless private property and the state are done away with, since their oppression arose in conjunction with these other factors. Women's position can be changed, says Engels, but only changed radically if exploited women realise that their struggle is bound up with class struggle, which seeks to smash capitalist property relations and the state which administers them. Only by ensuring the disappearance of women's economic exploitation can oppression for all women be finally ended. Thus it is important to see that the prime 'oppressor' of women is *not* men, but an unjust system founded on the ownership of private property in which men and women are exploited, so that a few (both men and women) may live luxuriously. (Many feminists who do not understand or accept this view are confused in their admiration for Mrs Thatcher as a woman, on the one hand, and their distress at seeing her vicious policies drastically erode the rights and living standards of her working-class 'sisters'.) However we should not forget that in order to maintain this state of affairs, we are encouraged to think of women as weak, stupid, fickle, emotional, motherly, 'soft', etc. This ideological view does mean that all women in societies based on the ownership of private property are *oppressed*, and many men and women believe this oppression to be 'natural' and unchangeable.

Many factors, not only economic, contribute to women's position in contemporary Britain. However Marxists would argue that, finally, economic factors are the most crucial. For example, recent state initiatives such as the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality, and legislation such as the Equal Pay Act, are now being rendered completely inadequate by cuts and inflation. Even if we believe that the state *can* change the situation of women, blacks etc. given the long-term interests of the system it represents, can this be done simply by passing laws and setting up various official bodies? Even if the economic system in this country were drastically changed, we could not expect people to change their views about women overnight. The various images of women that we see in the popular press, TV and the cinema are part of a long-established ideology which cannot simply be legislated away with a stroke of the pen.

## Historical material and documentation

Even with a different perspective on oppressed groups in history, especially women, we still have problems discovering the material we need for our investigations and arguments because for example no-one bothered to record what the people were doing, no photographs were taken of them or they did not possess the technology themselves to do it, they could not write, they were thought insignificant, the state denies us access to records. However, we can often overcome most of these difficulties if we know what we want to do. We can make a different interpretation, and use, of the material already available. For example, we can draw different conclusions about a photograph of the Queen than, say, those of a university professor. If we use photography as historical documentation in this way, we can soon see that it does not magically give us some 'objective' truth, free from all human manipulation. In the first place, the photograph can only show us certain things. It cannot explain things which are not in the photograph, ideas or concepts e.g. profit, class, although some photomontages have tried fairly effectively to overcome this problem. Also the photograph, like historical writing, reflects the attitudes of the person who produced it and the purpose for which it was made.

We can therefore do several things with photographic documentation of history, past and present. We can view the photograph from a different perspective and for different ends than the photographer, if this will be more useful to us. We can take photographs of things we think are more useful to see than, say, photos of flowers, pets, the Queen etc. We can try to think critically about photographic images, instead of accepting that all photographs show things as they really are. We can use photography to argue for *changing* views about what goes on in women's lives, not just recording what goes on in the supermarket, in the home and at work. We can attempt to subvert imagery that maintains ideas about the inferiority of women, and seeks to prevent working-class women from becoming aware of their situation. Consciously or unconsciously, such imagery works to maintain them in this exploited role. It is a good start to understand the position of women in contemporary Britain and to realize how it came about, but the next step is to go on from this and do something practical which will help to bring about changes. Of course, as we have already seen, not all women have an equal interest in changing their way of life, and from this point on, we cannot proceed without both class and political perspectives.

For, although it is certainly of crucial importance to become conscious of processes and representations which we previously took for granted, changes in consciousness will not in themselves alter the material situation in which we live out our thinking existence. The long-term goals and the immediate strategies of necessary action have to be carefully prepared and politically organized. A consideration of visual representations of history can lead many people to this conclusion, but this does not mean that a growth in historical or class consciousness is to be equated with politics, or that it can replace political programme and leadership. In fact an 'over-politicization' of cultural and ideological practices can ultimately imply that we do not need any other type of political intervention such as revolutionary action. What is true is that without the historical perspective of class consciousness, which can be fostered by the photographer, journalist, teacher, work mates etc, social discontent can easily be dispersed into areas of self-help community projects (run by unpaid voluntary workers) and anarchistic rejections of 'uncaring' society such as communes. Of course we should not underestimate informed cultural intervention but we should not accept it as an alternative to organised political action.

## Gen Doy

### Projects for group work

1. Select some photographic images by a) men and b) women which depict women and write notes on them. Can you see any differences? Do men see differently from women? How and why were the images produced and used?
2. Select some daily papers and analyse the photographs in them, paying particular attention to any images of women, and watching the way captions are used. Try covering up the captions to see what happens. Try to find a wide range of papers from 'right-wing' to 'left-wing'.
3. Take a copy of your union newspaper. How does it compare in its treatment of women's issues and images of women with 'commercial' papers?
4. Take any women's/girls' magazine and write notes on the way the photographs are used e.g. on adverts, feature articles, in photo-novels. What class of readership are the various magazines directed at, and what difference, if any, does this make to the imagery used? (You may not think this is to do with 'history', but history is taking place.)
5. Go to your school/college or local library and find any illustrated book on history. Write notes on how (if?) women are discussed in the text and how (if?) they are presented in the illustrations. If you are not satisfied, think of how you would improve the book and what text and photographs you would ideally like to see in it. Why was the particular book produced?

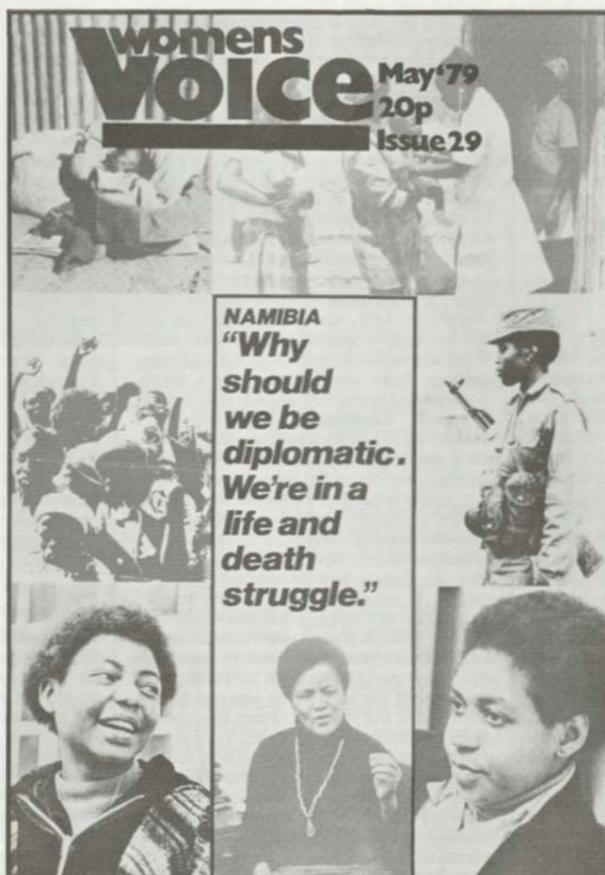
### Suggestions for further reading

Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 years of women's oppression and the fight against it*, Pluto Press 1977.  
 Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, introduced by Eleanor Leacock, Lawrence & Wishart 1977. Basic information on a Marxist view of women in history, and how women came to be in the situation they are in today. Although Engels' book was written about 100 years ago, and needs reconsideration in such areas as gayness and sexuality, his main arguments still hold good. A good summary is in the pamphlet *Women, Oppression and Liberation*, pp 1-14, Education Department of the Communist Party 1976.  
 Crisis Special Report: *Women under Attack* Counter Information Services.  
 Jo Spence, 'What do people do all day? Class and Gender in Images of Women', *Screen Education* 29 Winter 1978/79, pp.29-45.



7

Ovahimba tribeswomen in Namibia (South West Africa) in ritual mourning for a (male) elder of the tribe, colour photo from the Observer Sunday Supplement 29.4.1979, from an article 'The Struggle for Namibia'. This photograph is technically of a very high quality, with great attention to detail, focus and textures. The colour is very simple and striking, showing the dark brown bodies of the women against the lighter brown earth and green trees. The viewpoint accentuates the impression of stateliness and impressive dignity of the three women. However, does it actually convey any information about their status and role in the tribe or indeed about Namibia in the late 1970's? In a contradictory way, it shows at one and the same time a cultural heritage and history to be proud of, but as presented to middle-class Western European readers it contrives to show timeless majesty, nobility of poverty and submission, the photogenic qualities of wearing no shoes and carrying burdens of grief (and heavy loads on the head). Other photos of shanty towns etc were given much less space in the article, and more space was devoted to this image which avoids any comment on the contemporary situation of Namibia. Technically perfect, beautifully focussed and composed and presented as a 'consumer' image to go beside the adverts for gold watches, rings etc in other parts of the colour magazine. Much of the gold in these products comes from Southern Africa, mined by workers who are forced to live separated from their women and children. These women here do not wear gold, but keys and cheap metal chains are used as jewellery by the women in the centre.



8

Cover of *Women's Voice*, May 1979. Bottom photos show Martha Ford, head of Women's Council of South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) (original black and white, with various tones of pink on white ground). In comparison to the previous photo, this uses a very different approach. The idea of a dominant image has gone, pictures relate to the text in a more lively manner, and the presentation of African women in both examples is worlds apart. Instead of the colour supplement, heavily subsidized through advertising, *Women's Voice* is a low budget publication of the Socialist Workers Party. The form and function of these two images is not only to do with their views on the situation of women in Namibia, but concerns also the financial resources available to them and the different constraints which both economic positions involve. How do the two newspaper images influence how we see Namibia and the women who live there, and what do they prompt us to ask about the newspapers?

# The Arts Council and Photography

The dismissal of the Arts Council's Photography Sub-Committee is now an accomplished fact, and any assessment of the new system is depressing in the extreme – not only for photographers receiving grants from the Arts Council, but for anyone interested in the future of photography in Great Britain. This is because the Arts Council is certain to be the only source of funding for work outside the different categories of financially viable photography, whether aesthetic or commercial. Private and business sponsorship is unlikely to take an initiating role.

However one might assess the ultimate role of state funding, within the existing situation the consolidation of new cultural and artistic directions must be supported by the Arts Council. It is wrong to maintain, as the Arts Council does, that it does not play a major role affecting the direction of British photography.

In place of its own sub-committee, photography is now represented by three members of the Art Panel with an 'interest' in photography. As the Art Panel is primarily concerned with fine art, and has had three sub-committees in addition to photography collapsed into it, discussion of this medium will hardly be exhaustive: it has been estimated at two hours per year. This scant attention falls far short of Roy Shaw's ideal: 'Discriminating patronage calls for the advice of many experts in the different art forms' (ACGB report 1978/79).

Effectively, then, all public policy and funding of photography now emanates from one Art Officer, Barry Lane. Policy papers will be drawn up by him and discussed among the arts officers before being put to the Art Panel, which will have little time and possibly less familiarity with photography to discuss it. As to allocation, applications will be made to Barry Lane and discussed at monthly internal meetings of the art officers, Art Director and Assistant Art Director, of whom only Barry Lane has substantial background in photography. The Art Panel will 'scrutinize' this process.

The implications of this new procedure are far-reaching:

1. It represents a complete down-grading of photography within the Arts Council. In policy terms, it is now a minor adjunct to fine art.
2. A separate sub-committee is essential to push for an expansion of spending on photography. The axe of spending cuts is only beginning to fall, and photography now has no adequate representation. In bureaucratic terms, this means that at best, photography can be expected to stand still.
3. Established galleries will be safe, as they fit into the fine art brief of the Art Panel. However, community photography, archive work and educational work cannot possibly get adequate attention, and their future is thus bleak.
4. As Barry Lane readily admits, no one officer can keep in touch with all developments within the practice of photography, one of the most disparate fields of work dealt with by the Arts Council. Further, to have one officer managing national policy on photography, according to their assessment of quality, for years to come, will clearly not encourage fresh perspectives. That this is undemocratic is hardly a new criticism, but there is now the added danger that photography will be petrified in its present form indefinitely.
5. The sub-committee acted as a channel for representing many photographic interests. Beyond that, it had built up a large body of experience, and channels of communication, as well as a singular reputation within the Arts Council; unless it is reinstated all these will be lost.
6. The Arts Council's decision forms part of a wider reversal of past gestures towards democracy and open debate, in favour of a new closed-door policy of administered art. The regression of the Arts Council, as a self-perpetuating civil service bureaucracy, unresponsive and with little accountability, where questions of policy are debated behind closed doors, emerging to the public only through the 'detail' of decisions as to the 'quality' and 'validity' of art, would seem to be the order of the eighties.

A campaign is underway to achieve the reinstatement of the committee and the promotion of photography to Panel status. The campaign urgently needs your support. There are four areas of action.

#### 1 Petition the Arts Council

A petition has been drawn up, displayed at galleries across Britain. Copies are available on request, and we would like it to be made available in as many galleries, colleges, schools and public places as possible. Signed petitions should be returned to HMPW, to be presented to the Arts Council later this year. The petition reads: *We, the undersigned, protest at the dissolution of the photography sub-committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and strongly urge the establishment of a Photography Panel as soon as possible.*

#### 2 Lobby the Art Advisory Panel

As many letters as possible should be sent to members of the Art Advisory Panel, which is now responsible for photography. They should be convinced that the present system does no justice to the enormous extent and diversity of photographic work in Britain. Please write to members of the panel, stating why the photography sub-committee is important to you.

#### 3 Lobby the Finance and Policy Committee

The Finance and Policy Committee is reviewing the committee's dismissal later this year. Influencing this committee is therefore crucial to achieving our aims. On the back cover of *Camerawork* is a coupon to cut out and send.

#### 4 MPs and the Press

As there is no democratic access to the decision-making process, it is imperative that the debate be widely publicised in order to generate public interest. It is important to write to newspapers and magazines, and also to make MPs and the public aware of the issues.

# LETTERS

## Open letter to Simon Guttman of Report

Dear Simon Guttman,

A friend sent me the catalogue of the **Three Perspectives on Photography** exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London in June 1979. In this catalogue, the 'Secretary, Report', as you sign yourself, wrote an introduction to the Report and IFL photos shown in the exhibition.

In order to document that the following statements may not be construed as founded on personal pique, I take the liberty of quoting your words at the opening of my exhibition **In The Thirties** in September 1976 at the Photographers' Gallery in London. On this occasion you said to the director of the gallery: 'This is the most important historical exhibition you ever had.' Turning to Colin Osman, you said: 'You must make a special issue of this exhibition in **Creative Camera**, and I am willing to make the selection.' Colin Osman, as is his way, smiled benignly. To me you conferred a very high accolade: 'The others were photographers in the Thirties, you were the photographer of the Thirties.'

Compliments out of the way, here is my statement:

You say that Report and IFL (which have a strong leftist political orientation), 'continue the work of Dephot (Deutscher Photo Dienst - German Photo Service), which you headed and directed from 1928 to 1932. By no stretch of the imagination can Dephot be said to have had even the slightest similarity to Report and IFL and their politically and socially oriented policy - or

vice versa. Dephot, of which you were the guiding spirit and directing production manager, worked almost exclusively for the **Münchener Illustrierte Presse**, the **Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung**, **Die Dame** (The Lady) and other bourgeois though liberal 'general interest weeklies, richly illustrated' (your quote), which you now comment on with distaste.

While you also produced a few social reports during Dephot's existence (they were gladly commissioned or accepted and printed in these liberal magazines), the mainstream of your production was picture reports like 'Wellenbad Lunapark' (a model in a newly opened fashionable swimming pool), 'Festschele in Heidelberg' (festivals), 'Schwarzwaldmaedel' (beautiful peasant girls in the Black Forest), 'Katholikentag' (meeting of Catholics), 'Modetheater' (fashion theatre), 'Hofjagd in Ungarn' (court hunting party in Hungary), 'Oberammergau Festspiele' (Oberammergau passion play), 'Mussolini Hochschule für Bier' (university for beer brewers), and similar themes. None of these, by any stretch of the imagination, were produced with either a socially oriented dialectical purpose in mind or with a tongue in cheek.

You rarely if at all produced photoreports for the communist **Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung**, quite in contrast to independent photoreports like Seldow, Comeriner, Georg Gidal, myself, and Neudin and Balkin of the 'Weltrundschau' Agency (which indeed was a forerunner of Magnum, with its eight or ten associates sharing the assignments in a cooperative way and spirit). Neudin, for example, in danger of prison, smuggled himself into a prison and brought out a photo report showing the conditions there. He also, in danger of life, photographed (and published in the liberal **Berliner Illustrierte**) the

camouflaged war preparations of the Deutsche Wehrmacht. Weber published, amongst other social reports, his scandal-rousing story on the workers on the dole. My brother, together with the writer Egon Erwin Kisch, published a report on the sub-standard living conditions of the hop pickers in Bavaria. I published, for instance, a picture report on the conditions in the red light district in Hamburg. Eisenstaedt of Associated Press published in the **Münchener Illustrierte Presse** a three page report on the slums of London.

Many photoreports in the **AIZ**, like the hop pickers and my Hamburg story, were not made by Arbeiterphotografen, but by photoreporters, who belonged to no political party and despised, as a rule, the extreme left wing parties as much as the extreme right wing parties. My brother and I ceased to publish in the **AIZ** after the editors consciously or dialectically falsified our stories and captions, to the point of faking so as to fit their dialectical shoes. You, by contrast, not only 'never went around to thoroughly survey the rapidly growing Nazism', as you so freely confess, but continued working for the **Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung** for at least two years after Hitler came to power, and the magazine became, apart from your co-operation, completely 'judenrein'.

May I correct another misconception, which has crept into other publications lately: Dephot, one of the five or six bigger photo agencies in Berlin which produced photoreports, in no way can be said to have been a forerunner of Magnum. Magnum, as you know, was founded as a cooperative of friends and colleagues, who had to buy shares in equal amounts, and who shared in the profit and/or loss. No such conditions existed at Dephot. It was directed by you in a rather patriarchal way, with Hübschmann-

Hutton, Man and Umbo as its main photographers. They were given a certain percentage of the fees the magazines paid per story. Dephot was run on a purely capitalistic profit-and-loss basis, with no cooperative or common interest shared by anyone, if I am not very much mistaken.

Hutton, Man, Umbo, the first two directed by your unerring eye, great visual imagination and incorruptible photographic honesty which knows no compromise, were great photoreporters. And so were Munkasci, Weber, Neudin, Seldow, Casparius, Eisenstaedt, Bosshard, Lechenberg, Georg Gidal and a few others, who, with the exception of Eisenstaedt, produced true and/or great photoreports before Dephot published its first photoreport.

Of Robert Capa you say he 'started photography with Dephot'. Robert Capa started indeed in the darkroom of Dephot. For reasons which you and I know, he took those famous photos of Trotsky in 1931. Neither before nor after this did he ever get an assignment from you to do a photoreport. If I am mistaken in this, please correct me.

Robert Capa, with a few friends did not start Magnum on the Dephot model, as you say, but in outspoken contrast to the Dephot model. Magnum was, as I said before, a cooperative in spirit and methods. To you personally he remained deeply attached, for reasons you and I know well.

I admire the singlemindedness of purpose with which you go your very personal way with Report in the face of adversity. A politico-cosmetical face-lifting of Dephot in the spirit and as a forerunner of Report, however, seems to me to do justice to neither.

Dr Nachum Tim Gidal

Dear Camerawork,

## Bringing it all Back Home

Steven Delsol's letter (**Camerawork** 18) is very interesting: it indicates to me a whole range of new perceptions about your poster. I had always thought the photograph curiously ambiguous but not quite in the way Mr Delsol suggests. Only its association with an exhibition on N. Ireland gives any clue to what the selectors had in mind: but to me the black soldier/white woman composition has a clear historical symbolism quite independent of Ulster, but linked to it.

The soldier's position in relation to the bush, the walls, us (the photographer) show him as defending something. What? Clearly it is the white woman behind him, fortified by her walls, her garden and her technology. Casually (with one hand) she is using a modern, electric grass-cutter. The soldier shares the technology - though his rifle is more dated than her lawnmower! The scene, though obviously urban, spells 'Rhodesia' - or any colonial situation, N. Ireland included. And the fact that the soldier is black reminds us of the crucial element in British Imperialism - the coercion of the subject races, not just to accept white superiority, but actively to defend it. Ever since the earliest years of the British Empire the indigenous populations, whether Indian, African or Irish, have taken an active share in pushing outwards and then maintaining the boundaries of conquest.

The development of the Indian Empire was only made possible, until the Mutiny put a bloody stop to it, by the native soldiers of 'John Company'; right up until the last war Indian and African regiments were a crucial part of the British Army - two African divisions took part in the reconquest of Burma in 1945. Today there are still the Gurkhas, while every British regiment has its quota of men from the North of Ireland...

In all this, I am not, of course, talking about the actual reality of the photograph you chose: only the way its image can be read. For Steven Delsol it means one thing; for me something else. Both are valid.

Philip Donnellan

## Camerawork 16

Dear Camerawork,

The tone of Bob Long's article in **Camerawork** 16 implies that he is lecturing us from a firm position, from within coherent theory and towards some point. It is not until his conclusion - which emptily returns to the question we have all started from: 'What are you taking pictures for?' - that he gives the game away: he could not actually conclude his interminable tirade at all because it was simply another restatement - a montage of clichés drawn from a decade of semiology and left cultural critique - of the same old dilemmas which trap him, **Camerawork** and any socialist cultural worker. Why it should take the form of an attack on **Camerawork** for being stuck in the same objective conditions as himself is not clear, especially as he is unable to offer any advances on the theory and analysis which inform **Camerawork** in the first place.

The basic dilemma which Long restates can be formulated: how can we produce oppositional images which will not be read through and hence absorbed by the dominant ideologies of representation and political discourse? Our ability to make socialist images effective within a bourgeois hegemony is perpetually subverted by the reactionary relations of consumption of the image (a passive mystified audience receiving photos either as empirical truth or as fantasy fulfillment from media which have the power to define truth), and by our relative powerlessness to control the distribution of images (or to initiate new modes of distribution of any signi-

ficance in relation to the monolithic ideological apparatuses we oppose). The question Bob Long starts from is the 'post-structuralist' question of audience: structuralism, essentially, promised to analyse the internal structure of signification of the image, and from that analysis to decode the 'real' meaning constructed by the image. This project offered the political promise of constructing new forms (e.g. anti-realism) which bore no complicity with the dominant forms and which could therefore carry (and would of themselves be) oppositional meanings immune to co-optation. Unfortunately, structuralism's 'objective' readings of images fractured quite quickly: whatever the structural meaning of the photograph, the audience reads it through a variety of discourses, with different intentions and in various points and conditions of consumption - any and all of which are capable of subverting, co-opting or simply dismissing any oppositional image. To use the favourite test: if we could show the structure of Krupps through a meticulous series of photographs and texts, they might still end up being read as a bunch of pretty pictures of passing interest by the few people who happen across it in an obscure local library, a few of whom will be Amateur Photographers who will try to decipher whether its auteur was an Olympus OM1 or a Pentax.

No photographic form is proof against debilitating readings: the **Lewisham Camerawork** is simply another production capable of being misread. The real struggle is to restructure the discourses and relations of consumption which constitute audiences so as to create an ideological space within which political readings of images are possible in the first place. Bob Long's severe mangling of Foucault still manages to express this: that photographs are produced and read within a nexus of institutional, economic and ideological practices, and that this nexus produces and enforces - constitutes - a 'regime of truth'. Fighting this 'power/knowledge' complex requires a whole array of localized struggles, flexible strategies and diverse interventions, which is the task set out by Foucault for the 'specific intellectual'. This seems to be the logic behind at least a large portion of **Camerawork**. It is not, however, a prescription to 'select... the best players (methods) from each team to hopefully produce a more effective practice' or to resign our theoretical gains to any other kind of know-nothing pragmatism. It is a plea to find the points of conflict and contradiction within the photographic regime of truth and to find strategies for exploiting them. This is also what Bob Long does not even attempt: he prefers to alternate between a sulky purism and a vague pragmatism.

As Bob Long himself points out, an apparent lack of theory indicates the presence of unconscious theory. In his own case too, his pragmatism is driven by a problematic assumption: a debased and simplistic notion of 'the political'. This is apparent in his horrendous misreading of Foucault. Foucault's 'specific intellectual' is specific in attacking a particular politics of truth and power: in photography, this would involve such features as empiricist notions of truth; the logic and organisation of marketing strategies; the ownership of public display space; the marketing and distribution of books and magazines; the model of media as one-way communication structures; and a lot more. It is a global notion of politics applied to a local area of struggle. To Bob Long, a pure example of the 'specific intellectual' in photography is the utterly banal **Socialist Worker**, **Socialist Challenge**, etc. Photographer who takes endless pictures of 'workers outside factories, with fists in the air, defiant on strike. When copies of the paper are sold to those and other workers, their ideology and their struggle is reinforced and recognised.' They are specific because they take pictures of specific struggles; they are political because they might get a few more people on a specific demo. 'The political' simply signifies the immediately functional, the most narrowly

useful. Bob Long's 'specific photographer' is completely ignorant of the specific politics of representation. This is not to deny in any way that socialist photographers must be rooted in specific political struggles, and must be available as resources for militants. But the danger - as with most unconscious theory - is double: firstly there is the risk of simply bolstering the present regime of truth by playing its game: the left press for the most part plays the new game against the might of the bourgeois press and loses badly, purveying counter-images and counter-propaganda event by event, in a mode structured by its enemies. Secondly, there is the danger of ignoring areas within a wider notion of politics, where photography can make its own - specific - contribution. This is not only in politics of representation itself; for example, self-portraiture and analysis of the personal past is not only political for feminists. The very fact of people using the media *actively* to deal with their lives at all is in itself political.

Bob Long's interpretation of the **Lewisham Camerawork** is one result of this one-dimensional notion of politics. I do not intend to defend the **Lewisham Camerawork**: Long scores many valid points and shows up real editorial confusions in the issue. I would far rather defend the Northern Ireland issue which succeeds in a lot of the aims implicit in the **Lewisham Camerawork**. The **Lewisham Camerawork** contains some bizarre politics and some questionable pictures, but even so I think Long's basis for criticism is dangerous. In his mind the **Lewisham Camerawork** could not conceivably have served any useful function besides being a 'morale booster' for the left. When assessed as a piece of Anti-Nazi League agitprop, Long can only see it as a failure. Having failed in this only possible valid aim, the **Lewisham Camerawork** could only be a dubious rag of wet liberalism purveying aestheticised politics to a middle class leftist intelligentsia. Long has missed the point: in its confusion, **Lewisham Camerawork** was also about the politics of photography and about the nexus of relations through which confrontations in Britain are visually represented and read - and I think that that was how the issue was taken by its readers. It could have been simply counter-information and agitprop but this would have missed a vitally important opportunity to *educate the left* about photography and the media, to which they pay damned little intelligent attention most of the time. (I for one first became interested in and seriously critical about photography partly through this issue). For example, the interviews with photographers were a revelation to many people of the institutional workings of news production and, when read against **Camerawork's** aim of demystifying photography, were unambiguous in intent. To paraphrase Long: the 'only difference between the **Lewisham Camerawork** and **Creative Camera**' is that the former focused on a political engagement of total and immediate importance to everyone in Britain and through it made people re-examine and really think through the use and manipulation of photography and the media. That is precisely the role of the specific intellectual.

In the course of his article, Long's concern with the problem of audience and with a limited notion of political function led him to reject and dispose of an imposing list of uses of photography: touring exhibitions, photobooks like **Vietnam Inc.** and **A Seventh Man**; most community photography, and - tacitly - anti-realist/unfamiliar forms (because they are unmarketable and too difficult or uncomfortable for people). Perhaps it is simply polemical self-assertiveness which leads him to reject as either impure or impracticable most of the faint hopes that exist for photography.

Only critics not engaged in the cultural production he is trying to cope with (Adorno, Benjamin, Foucault) get any sort of assent: as with any critics, they have no practice and their

theory is therefore uncontradicted. In his whole five-page marathon, only two practices are embraced: firstly, the worker photography movement is offered in place of the existing range of community photography which is under threat and now needing defence (from similar conditions which dealt the death blow to worker photography). The present discovery of worker photography, dead for 40 years and hardly likely for revival, shows all the hallmarks of history as mythology, as nostalgia for an earlier era of purity. This is not to dismiss the important historical reconstruction carried out in, for example, **Photography/Politics One**. The danger is when Bob Long, at an impasse in theory, throws 'worker photography' at us as if it were an available option and without analysing the theory underlying its practice in the 1930s. He would find it comes very close to his functional and limited notion of politics. The second acceptable option he embraces is the current left press, discussed above, which is already an exemplar of the dismal state of socialist photographic practice. In any case we have long since learned from the liberals that being in support of a revolutionary cause and the right ideology doesn't prevent a photograph from being reactionary as a photograph, i.e., reactionary within the politics of representation. Long accepts these practices because their Politics is immediate and unambiguous, however problematic their wider politics. The problem of audience and of misreading is reduced to the problem of getting an audience at the public meeting or demo. Not only is this simplistic, it also gives an inflated idea of the potential power of photography in the first place. There is no reason why Berger's **A Seventh Man** would have had any more direct political influence had it been publicised in Turkish or German, nor would **Vietnam Inc.** have been more valuable had it been aimed at the Vietcong market. No photographic practice of itself can do what Long would like it to do: measured against his criterion of effectivity, photography can only end in critical cul-de-sacs, or the narrowest forms of direct action.

Don Slater

## Bob Long replies:

Dear Camerawork,

When the possibility of printing extracts from my dissertation was discussed with some of the people at **Camerawork**, the shared motive was not to display **Camerawork's** liberalism with a swish of self flagellatory abuse, or to lay down a manifesto for socialist photo practice. We hoped, by using what is perhaps a provocative text, to open up a debate within **Camerawork** around possible strategies of socialist photographic practice. So it was a little surprising to read the response of Bill Smith (**Camerawork** 18) which had little to do with debate and was simply a personal response to what he obviously took as a personal attack. However, he did mention one misreading of the text for which, as author, I suppose I must take some responsibility.

I had written: 'Many of the photographs and articles (in **Camerawork**) lack genuine analysis and are left ideologically naked to be clothed by the ideology of the reader, without challenge to that ideology.' He then writes: 'The implication is clear, ordinary people can't analyse photographs for themselves, we must be told how to read, and forced with political propaganda.'

It is not a question of what Bill Smith describes as 'critical faculties', which is a term I would never use since it suggests some kind of inborn ability. Also it implies that each photograph has an essential meaning which some people are able to discover and others not. A photograph has variable meanings so that its particular meaning is simply whatever it means to the viewer. Surely an important part of socialist activity is concerned with challenging the beliefs that most people hold - not simply

reinforcing whatever ideas (including sometimes racist ideas) they may have.

If **Camerawork** has decided that its audience was specifically anti-racist then the publication of the photographs without captions would have been less of a problem since the world view of the reader (in part anti racist) would have provided a context for the production of meaning of the photographs. One of my objections to the **Lewisham Camerawork** was not that in parts it aimed itself at a 'general' audience, but that it did not seem to understand the difference between an uncaptioned photograph for a 'general' audience (some of whom may be partly racist and believe in our 'wonderful police') and the same photographs used for a specifically anti racist audience. The meaning of a photograph is always up for grabs - it is the function of the caption to anchor meaning because there is no such thing as a socialist photograph, only socialist uses of photography. (Please refer back to the example given in **Camerawork** 16 using the miners photographs).

The letter from Tony Sleep was much more in keeping with the notion of debate, although I obviously disagree with much of what he writes.

He believes his argument for a new morality is 'unfashionable', but unfortunately it isn't; it is shared by many people on the left and has a long history within philosophical and political thinking. It also has a tradition of being rejected:

*Everything which goes by the name of morality and ethics today stands unequivocally in the service of the oppression of working humanity... our order of social life can replace the present-day chaos by order precisely because it is amoral. Lenin's position on the question of proletarian morality based itself unambiguously on the interests of the proletarian revolution. Everything that serves the revolution is moral, everything that hinders it is immoral. Let us try to formulate the question another way. Everything that is in contradiction with the bourgeois order, that contains the seeds of revolt, may be regarded as an element of class consciousness; and everything that supports and strengthens the bourgeois order and attaches people to it, as an impediment to class consciousness.*

*As the masses marched through the Berlin Tiergarten during the November Revolution, the demonstrators took great care not to walk on the grass! Whether this anecdote is factually true or only ingenious, in it is neatly expressed a great part of the tragedy of the revolutionary movement - the bourgeoisification of the bearers of the revolution.* Wilhelm Reich, **What is Class Consciousness** 1933

I tried very hard to avoid replying to the nasty, very personal comments made by people who have never met me, but there is one remark made by Tony Sleep that I cannot ignore. 'Long appears to want to live in a world where sunsets, self-employment, aesthetics, pleasure, play and masturbation are proscribed.'

- 1) I love sunsets and sometimes even photograph them. What I was referring to was the way in which the amateur photo press proscribes the activity of amateur photographers.
- 2) Self employment is a capitalist myth. In a socially organised economic system the so called self-employed are merely employers and/or employees by proxy. I would like to live in a world where everybody was self-employed in the sense that people worked in their collective self interest.
- 3) Nobody in the world is anti aesthetic in that everybody needs and enjoys some kind of sensory stimulation. What I object to is the hierarchy of art which imposes and proscribes a notion of the 'aesthetic' which only represents the interests of a small group of people.
- 4) Of course pleasure and fun are important. As far as pleasure, fun, politics and photography are concerned I would suggest that Tony Sleep take a look at some of the work of John Heartfield.
- 5) Masturbation is wonderful. In fact only last night...

Bob Long

## CULTURAL COLLABORATION

People in struggle against apartheid regimes have long since established that only complete cultural and economic blockades by other countries are effective in working towards constructive change. Campaigns against totalitarian regimes in Latin America still have much work to do establishing such principles more widely in our havens of English liberalism.

London's Photographers' Gallery proposes to send its exhibition of colour photographs, prepared for Salford '80, to Chile and Argentina, both countries in the grip of brutal and repressive military dictatorships. Two participating photographers, Stephen Dorley-Brown and Jan Turvey, heard of the proposal and withdrew their work from the tour; other photographers have not objected. Taking the position that the political decision should be taken by the individual contributor and not by the organiser, Sue Davies of the Photographers' Gallery plans to go ahead with the tour, removing only the work of those who object.

This position sidesteps crucial issues: whether arranged through personal contacts or through government bodies, such cultural collaborations can be staged only with the approval of military regimes, who curb indigenous artistic activity which they see as presenting any potential opposition. While these British



Book-burning in Chile after the coup and the assassination of Allende. Photomontage by Peter Kennard.

## GROVEL

In *Camerawork* 16 we published a letter from David Hoffman about *You and Your Camera* magazine. We now realise that the letter contained statements which were untrue. *Camerawork* and David Hoffman apologise to the publishers and staff of *You and Your Camera* and invited the editor to correct the inaccuracies.

Dear *Camerawork*,

Thank you for allowing me to reply to the letter from David Hoffman. It would take up too much of your space to deal with all the points raised, but I am grateful for the opportunity to correct the grosser errors. The fact that I do not comment on all of Mr Hoffman's points does not mean I agree with them.

1. *You and Your Camera* is published by Eaglepress Ltd. This is not 'a subsidiary of the immensely rich Marshall Cavendish group', it is a completely separate and independent company. It is a new company and not 'immensely rich', but we have not 'claimed poverty' in order to reduce fees to photographers.

2. *You and Your Camera* is not a part-work: it is a magazine, and says so on the cover of every issue. The accusation that in a 'deliberate and premeditated move' we planned to allow the quality of the magazine to be reduced against the interests of our readers and contributors is not only probably untrue, it is an insult to a committed and enthusiastic staff. Every effort is constantly being made to improve the quality of the magazine and increase its circulation.

3. Mr Hoffman's allegation that our 'new payment system (is) designed to prevent a photographer from knowing when his pictures have been used and increasing the delay in payment to many months, is completely untrue. Under our system we send out a payment advice note on publication, together with a copy of the magazine, the transparencies used, and a cheque for the amount involved. We do not wait for the photographer to send us an invoice. The result is that the photographer's paperwork is reduced and he or she gets paid up to two months earlier. The new system has enjoyed enthusiastic support from other contributors.

4. Book rights were not 'slipped in, as if casually', they were discussed individually with all the photographers we were able to contact by phone, and we wrote to the others. Whether the rate involved is acceptable is, of course, a matter for each to decide for himself. The vast majority have decided that it is.

Readers of *Camerawork* may not be aware of the principle which underlies 'book rights'. Briefly, for each page in the magazine a set of film has to be produced for the printer to make his printing plates from. This film remains ours after the original pictures have been returned to the photographer. With most magazines, the film has no further value and is thrown away after use. However, we are planning to re-use some of this film for books.

The advantage for us is that by re-using film we can defray very high production costs. The advantage for the photographer is that he gets a second payment for his picture without doing any extra work, since the use in the book is basically the same as the use in the magazine. For this reason, most photographers are happy to accept a lower payment for the re-use of a picture than for its original use.

From an economic point of view this is necessary because otherwise the costs prohibit the publication of the book. Generally books sell far fewer copies than weekly magazines, yet use far more pictures. If a picture is used small, clearly the payment for it cannot be very large.

Mr Hoffman obviously feels that our rates are low. Overall we pay rather better than any of the other photographic magazines in the UK, and very considerably more than the average in this field. Also, I have not heard of material from other UK photographic magazines being re-used in any significant quantity, either in books or in overseas editions, both of which are possibilities with *You and Your Camera*.

Most of our contributors are aware of, and appreciative of, these factors, and are glad to have their pictures published in *You and Your Camera*. And of course we are very keen to solicit good pictures. I would be very sorry if any potential contributors were put off by Mr Hoffman's letter.

Jack Schofield

*You and Your Camera*

photographers can decline to withdraw their work, imprisoned and 'disappeared' Chileans and Argentinians are given no such choice. The article by Chile Solidarity sets out the history of this repression. We are also publishing Stephen Dorley-Brown's letter to the contributors and Sue Davies' reply.

The situation in Argentina is less widely known here than that in Chile, but there can be no refuge in ignorance when 10,000 people in Argentina have 'disappeared' since 1975. Is there a fence to sit on? Or is there only barbed wire?

'Whereas in its issues Nos 107 and 108, the magazine *Hoy* published lengthy special interviews with the notorious leaders of the former Unidad Popular . . . The above mentioned interviews served not only as an instrument for the flagrant violation of the political recess imposed by the law, but also to propagate doctrines and opinions which are unlawful and contrary to the institutional order of the Republic . . . I hereby order that the printing, distribution and sale of the magazine *Hoy* shall be suspended for two months as from today.'

Santiago, 22nd June 1979

ENRIQUE MOREL DONOSO Brigadier General Commander

As in the suspension of the only magazine expressing views critical of the Junta's rule, the military in Chile today control and repress all aspects of cultural activity. Initially after the coup of September 11th 1973, this repression took a violent and open form. In the case of the cinema alone, every film school, distributor and centre of production in any way connected with the previous government was militarily occupied.

Today repression of cultural activity is more subtle, firmly established through the establishment of commissions covering all spheres of culture, all with a controlling military presence. One witness gave evidence last year to the United Nations on repression in the theatre: 'For a long time the theatre was respected by almost all Governments, which recognized that the theatre essentially embodied a view of the world and that that view was generally a critical one. The criterion applied at present is quite surrealistic. One never knows how they will react or what aspect of a particular work they will consider as an attack on themselves. An effort is made to avoid appearing to take very drastic measures, but whenever they think that such measures must be taken, responsibility for the decision is entrusted to some colonel who happens to be the authority in charge of public order at the time.'

Thus the theatre company 'Aleph' was banned last year from performing a work entitled 'My precious' on the grounds that it 'openly infringed the current political recess'. The film *The Great Dictator* was banned from a Charlie Chaplin film festival, in the same way as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Nicholas and Alexandra* and *The Day of the Jackal* have been banned. The fate of music is no different. The pop group 'Quelantaro' requested the University of Chile to sponsor a concert at the Grand Palace. The request was rejected. The availability of literature has been hit by the imposition of high taxes on books. As well as all 'subversive' literature being banned, book imports in 1978 were one third what they were in 1971.

This level of repression has been paralleled by many artists being killed or exiled. Even before September 1973, in the attempted coup of June 1973, Argentinian cameraman Leonardo Hendriksson filmed his own assassination (his film is included in Part 1 of Patricio Guzman's *Battle of Chile*). For those who have managed to stay free in Chile, there has been a continual fight against cultural repression. This fight has been joined even by sectors previously supporting the Junta, for example the press-owners association challenging the Junta's constitutional plans. In many areas semi-clandestine cultural organizations have grown up. They have formed a 'National Union of the Arts'.

The Chilean Junta has been ostracised by both individual democratic nations and by the major international forums. The only international respect that Pinochet is able to find comes from Margaret Thatcher. Because he is thus isolated, Pinochet has attempted to gain some international respectability through other forms of contact. Most dramatic of these has been the attempt to offer Santiago as an alternative venue to Moscow for the Olympics! Continually the Chilean Junta, and the Chilean Embassy in London, attempt to arrange cultural visits or exchanges with Chile. Artists must not give Pinochet the international respectability that democratic governments have denied him.

Jerry Hughes, Chile Solidarity Campaign

An open letter to Sue Davies, David Buckland, Peter Wilkie, John Butler, Teresa Colman, Pat Grimshaw, Sunil Gupta, Oliver Bevan and Jenny Okun.

You and I have been invited by the Photographers' Gallery of London to take part in a travelling exhibition of colour photography. The first venue will be the International Photography exhibition at Salford this summer. It then goes to the Photographers' Gallery, to North America, and finally to Chile and Argentina. Jan Turvey and I have withdrawn our work from exhibition in the last two countries mentioned, and I call on you to do the same.

The British government's recent restoration of full diplomatic relations with these countries has an obvious bearing on the timing of the South American request for this exhibition. The Chilean and Argentinian governments, faced with international disgust at their denial of human rights, now look on this country as a friend. While the cultural field is not a central means of achieving democratic government, it is important for workers who have the means to express solidarity with those who struggle under totalitarianism.

Artists are not immune from this responsibility. The facts about Chile and Argentina are well known. But in this instance perhaps they should be spelt out again.

In the United Nations General Assembly last November Chile was again condemned by a huge majority for its continuing violations of human rights. The report to the assembly found that human rights had deteriorated in the preceding year, that the security forces continue to operate without legal control, and that new labour laws do not provide for the right to strike. The abatement of the mass killings of trade unionists, socialists, marxists, social democrats, artists and singers which were carried out after the fall of Allende should fool no-one. The incorporation of the trade unions within the junta, and the pauperization of the masses by monetarist orthodoxy, have made such repression unnecessary. But the change of name of the secret police after the Sheila Cassidy case does not mean that torture and murder have ceased, as the reports of recent refugees from Chile confirm (cf. October 1979 report of the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Latin America).

A delegation of New York lawyers recently visited Argentina to investigate disappeared persons. They characterised the situation as 'constituting the most starkly brutal human rights violation in Argentina or indeed anywhere in the world that seeks to be civilised'. While the government denies involvement in this, statements such as 'a terrorist is not just someone with a gun or a bomb but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to western and christian civilisation' (President Videla recently) are seen by the extreme right as the go-ahead to take the law into their own hands. The 'disappeared' are persons who have been abducted by para-military groups in civilian dress. The *Buenos Aires Herald* recently stated that between 1975 and October 1978 at least 10,000 'disappeared'. On 29 May 1979 General Viola, the Argentinian army commander-in-chief, said that relatives should consider the disappeared persons to be absent for ever.

If we go ahead and exhibit our work in these countries that have returned to the dark ages, it will be seen as giving support to repression. Artists are not above politics. The argument is not about what is in our photographs, but what they are going to be used for. And it is clear that this exhibition, if it does go ahead, will simply be a public relations exercise for fascists. Paulo Freire used the term 'culture of silence' to describe the condition of peasants in the Third World. They cannot act because they have no democratic forms through which their voice can be heard. We have the means to speak, and in this case we also have the means to act.

Stephen Dorley-Brown

Sue Davies, Director of the Photographers' Gallery, replies to Stephen Dorley-Brown.

Dear Stephen,

1. When you told me of your objection to sending your work to Chile, I agreed not to do so and to mention it to the other participants which I have done as I have seen them and again by letter.

2. I have not approached anyone in South America except a brief inquiry to Cristina Orive from whom we have bought postcards and publications for ten years, and who will suggest it to the Consejo Argentino de Fotografía (CAF) which they founded last October.

3. I am quite prepared not to offer it to places to which any of you object individually - if the majority agree it should be offered, it will be a case of removing only the objectors' work.

4. I personally feel that if such exhibitions take place through personal contact rather than government bodies - as we now do with Czechoslovakia - it can help artists on both sides as exchanges can be arranged and people can be shown here who might not be allowed to show in their own countries.

5. I will concentrate entirely on trying to get the show to the USA for the time being until this is satisfactorily resolved.

6. There is a good chance that nobody will want it but I hope this is not the ultimate answer!

Sue Davies



Edith Tudor-Hart

On her way to collect garbage after the market has closed' from 'National Unemployed Workers' Movement agitational pamphlet

## Arts Council Photography Sub-Committee

As part of the campaign for the reinstatement of the Photography sub-committee, discussed on page 13, the Standing Conference of Photographic Galleries has drawn up a petition for the Arts Council. In addition, we ask Camerawork readers to send this coupon to the Finance and Policy Committee.

To the members of the Finance and Policy Committee, Arts Council of Great Britain, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU.

I protest at the dissolution of the Photography Sub-Committee, and strongly urge the establishment of a Photography Panel as soon as possible.

Name .....

Address .....