All the Best

Britain’s Picture Post Magazine, Best Mirror and Old Friend to Many, 1938-57.

Researched and Written by David J. Marcou.

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For my parents (David Ambrose and Rose Caroline Marcou), my son (Matthew Ambrose Marcou) and his friends, the rest of our family, our friends, all my editors, publishers, students, teachers (especially Professors Esther M. Jackson and Daniel Rodgers, formerly of UW-Madison; Professors Hanno Hardt and John Raeburn of University of Iowa; Professors Daryl Moen, George Kennedy, Veita Jo Hampton, and Angus McDougall of University of Missouri-Columbia, Professors Roger Grant and Gary MacDonald of UW-La Crosse; and Mr. John Whale, formerly of the Sunday Times, as well as for the diverse and talented people who made a profound contribution to the art of the photo essay with Picture Post -- especially the late Stefan Lorant, Bert Hardy, Sir Edward Hulton, Sir Tom Hopkinson, James Cameron, Nachum Tim Gidal, and the very vital Sheila Hardy, Robert Kee, Matthew Butson (of Getty Images), Jon Tarrant, Tom Frail, Steve Kiedrowski, David W. Johns, Charles and Christine Freiberg, Richard Dungar, Anita T. Doering, the staffs of the La Crosse Public Library, Murphy Library at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Wisconsin Historical Society, Smithsonian Institution, National Portrait Gallery of both Britain and the United States, the Museum of Modern Art, the British Museum, the national libraries of South Korea, Britain, and America, and all those who assist the lives of myself and my family, and last but not least, my publisher, without whom the proper editing, illustration, and publication of this book would have been impossible. In fact, we couldn’t have published this book without the assistance of each and every one of you all. -djm-

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“[The] purpose of playing… was and is, to hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” Hamlet, by William Shakespeare (3.2.20-24).

“The best mirror is an old friend.” – George Herbert.

“All the Best!” – Expression of Best Wishes to People for Arrivals, Departures, and Correspondences of Many Types.
Author’s Introduction, by David J. Marcou

Shakespeare knew how to write, how to play, and how to grieve. His plays held up the mirror to nature as no other playwright’s ever has. It is sometimes said the best journalism, too, holds up a mirror, to society. Britain’s Picture Post Magazine was one such mirror – a mirror that not only reflected things as they are, but also things as people hoped them to be. In other words, for British society and people in the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s, to see themselves constructively and critically, they needed a journalistic mirror that provided not only the words they needed to read, but the views of life, then and in the future, they wanted to envision and realize.

Take, for instance, the two-fold ability of that magazine to both strongly criticize Hitler, while also critiquing the Allied war effort. Moreover, even while the magazine was pushing forward to help lead the British war effort to victory, it also took the time to publish “A Plan for Britain,” forward-looking ideas about how to establish social welfare and universal healthcare for the British people after the war. The mirror, which reflected and inspired through words and pictures, could not simply yield an exact transcription of nature or society as they were commonly seen, but also had to dream dreams with and for the people.

What separated Picture Post from its peers were the vitality, humor, and pathos of its reflections and dreams, as well as the intelligence of its layouts and interests. To Picture Post’s staff, the “common man” was just as worthy of positive mirroring as the Queen and her guard. Both made Britain strong; both needed to see themselves in the magazine to corroborate the full story, the archetypal humane photo essay, of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, the Allies and others.

Whether readers looked into a page of the magazine showing a group of penguins appearing to read a newspaper, or an Army chaplain making a cross at a soldier’s grave, it all represented the world readers felt they knew better after reading Picture Post. As George Herbert said, “The best mirror is an old friend.” Such was the status of that magazine during its publishing history. Yes, old friends can be hard on us, but they can also see our virtues and our positive potentials, and they encourage us to realize them. Old friends know where we came from, and where we have still to go. They assist our journey through life, and for that, mirrors that move us are the best of old friends. Picture Post was, for 19 years, just such a friend to the British people and their Allies. In key ways, we are still best of old friends today. And, as with best of old friends, I wish each and every one of you as you read, view, and enjoy this book – “All the Best.”
Part I:

The Birth of a Great, New Picture Magazine
Chapter 1

The Early History of the Photo Essay

“Man’s first images, first means of communication, go back to the Stone and Ice Ages when images were painted on the walls of caves.” (1)

“Modern photojournalism . . . is chiefly manifested in photoreportages, photostories, and photoessays.” (2)

* * * * *

Art has long been interested in the human condition and the world we live in. The people who lived in caves knew this instinctively, if not always well. Niepce and Daguerre in France, and Fox-Talbot in England -- the first photographic pioneers -- understood the dilemmas of man and mechanism; and soon realized humankind needed another form of expression to represent the revolutions that human science and thought were undergoing then. That new form was photography; and their experiments with the first image-fixing cameras made history.

As Tim Gidal suggests, modern photojournalism began in Germany in 1928-29, though its visible harbingers occurred earlier. Subsequently, it grew and joined with its best equivalents in Paris, Amsterdam, London, and New York -- in flight from persecutions in Nazi Germany. Isolated forerunners existed much earlier. Barely 15 years after the invention of practical photography by the early 19th century pioneers mentioned, the Englishman Roger Fenton created a brilliant photo report on the siege and conquest of Sebastopol during the Crimean War in 1855. Fenton overcame great difficulties, since his light-sensitive material consisted of 700 glass plates, most measuring 12 x 16 inches, which had to be carried around “delicately” in a horse-drawn darkroom.

In Fenton’s day, it was not the camera which “froze” the action, as today, but it was the photographer himself who stopped the movement for three to twenty seconds. Fenton’s photographs appeared in huge folio volumes, into which the original prints were pasted; they were published by London’s Thomas Agnew. As mechanical reproduction of the photos in newspapers had not yet become possible, many of Fenton’s pictures served as originals for woodcuts which first appeared in The London Illustrated News. After a time, they were also printed in several European magazines -- e.g., Leipziger Illustrirte and L’Illustration (Paris) -- and the American Harper’s Weekly (New York). Roger Fenton’s photos of the Crimean War were genuine photoreportage.

But Fenton’s war-inspired pictures did not represent the very first photoreportage. This distinction falls to a report consisting of about 800 daguerreotypes commissioned by the U.S. government showing American naval vessels at anchor off Yokohama in February 1854 under Commodore Matthew Perry. Shortly afterward, a treaty which opened up two harbors for American shipping was drawn up between Commodore Perry and the Japanese government. Soon, Japan was sending its own products to America, and to other Western nations, as well.

Comprehensive photoreportages appeared next between 1861 and 1865, during the American Civil War. Matthew Brady and his collaborators -- Alexander Gardner, Timothy H. O’Sullivan, and their assistants -- documented that terrible, bloody struggle in thousands of photographs from its beginning to the funeral of Abraham Lincoln. Fenton’s reportage had been a report on life in war. This American reportage was earthshaking: It was often a horrifying document of death in war -- an account of the Great Leveller.

The 1870s saw the emergence of the dry plate (previously wet plates were used), and in 1878, the first true snapshot was taken with an exposure of 1/25th of a second. A great deal of experimentation was taking place with cameras then. In France, as a result, Paul Nadar made the first photointerview. He took the
pictures, and his father interviewed, with the help of a shorthand writer, the professor of chemistry, Eugene Chevreuil, on the theme of “The Art of Living Longer.” (Chevreuil lived to the ripe old age of 103, from 1786 to 1889.) The interview appeared in Le Petit Journal Illustre.

The most important development then was the photomechanical copying of pictures on newsprint by halftone. In 1880, the New York newspaper Daily Graphic published the first photograph reproduced using a screen of crossed lines to push ink through. It was improved upon two years later by Georg Meisenbach in Munich, whose contribution was the breakdown of the image into minute squares. The dry plate, the focal-plane shutter, and the halftone block represented the birth of the documentary photograph that could be printed directly. Nevertheless, because photographers were seldom professionals in those days, almost 50 years would pass before technical progress and the demands of the time created modern photoreportage within the context of modern photojournalism.

The themes of war, man in nature, and interviews were soon joined by socio-analytic photoreports. The technical possibility of shorter exposures existed at last, and photographs taken out-of-doors without the aid of a tripod were now possible. Flash powder, invented in 1887, eliminated the difficulty of exposures in poor lighting conditions. The simplified technical process made it possible to concentrate the camera lens on close-ups and human subjects, though little advantage was taken of this at first. The masterly handling of the camera resulting from technical developments was still decades away. All the more impressive, then, are the achievements of the American photographers Jacob August Riis and Lewis W. Hine -- possibly the first camera operators to express the spirit of social protest through photoreportage.

Jacob August Riis (1849-1914) emigrated to America from his native Denmark. He found steady employment in 1877 as a police reporter on the New York Tribune. Riis’s territory was provided by the East Side slums, where he often wandered between two and four o’clock in the morning to observe the inhabitants at ease in their foul-smelling streets and even fouler dwellings. He first published his report in the Tribune, and subsequently in the Evening Sun.

Riis soon learned to handle his camera and flash with great skill, though he almost lost his sight due to a flash powder accident. But he refused to give up, and in 1890 the first of his protest books, How the Other Half Lives, was published. It described the living conditions of one million inhabitants of New York, many of whom lacked the minimum means to subsist. Thousands of these destitutes were forced to earn a meager living as thieves, prostitutes, pimps, and criminals. The 36 photos reproduced in Riis’s book caused enough indignation to result in some social reform in New York.

Riis’s most important successor was the Wisconsin-born sociologist Lewis W. Hine (1874-1940). Hine was a reformer whose tool was the camera, and he was well aware that the subjective element in his pictures, far from detracting from their documentary value, strengthened it. He took pictures of children working 12 hours at a stretch in the cotton factories of the South for a starvation wage; and he showed the wretched working and living conditions of miners. Hine’s photo-stories appeared in good halftone print -- as a result, revisions were made in U.S. laws relating to child labor. Hine’s intentions were twofold: he wanted to show things which much be abolished, and what should be recognized and appreciated (inclusive of his photoreports of immigrants at Ellis Island).

If it was true that Riis and Hine tended to depict the disadvantaged side of life (though Hine also depicted heroic construction works atop the Empire State Building), it was left to the French gentleman and amateur reporter Jacques-Henri Lartigue to produce a document in reportage style of the life of French high society in his Diary of a Century, a charming, sensitive volume. (Though that book was shot mainly during the first half of the 20th century, it wasn’t published until 1970, by Viking Press, by Penguin Books, and by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.) Elsewhere, the photos taken by Robert E. Perry in 1909 shed light on the rigors of North Pole exploration, as well as the dancing and dressing habits of Eskimo women.

These photo essays were not modern in many senses of the word (in books then, photos were generally published one to a page); but they did appeal to the people who first saw them. “Sensational,” wrote
Henrich Boll, “This picture of the little Chinese boy bending seriously over his bowl of rice!” in response to a less than riveting image by today’s standards.

At first, the introduction of the printed photograph was thought to have lowered the standard of magazines, since previous hand-illustrated reportages, which were executed in a fine naturalistic technique, had greatly contributed to the popularity of weeklies such as the Illustrated London News, Weber’s Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung, the French L’Illustration, Harper’s Weekly, and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper in America. But soon, the established picture magazines were joined by a number of new journals, and 1890 saw the foundation of the Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, a magazine with a circulation of 14,000 copies in the first year, one million in 1914, and two million in 1930. In 1899, the popular Die Woche debuted. Both magazines were illustrated, almost throughout, with single photographs combined with the text, and sometimes whole themes were represented by photos. Sometimes, a series of photos provided by traveling reporters from distant countries was published. Here, too, the emphasis lay on the photograph as an illustration of the text. The editorial section was text-heavy.

Socially speaking, the photographer was placed somewhere between the unskilled and skilled worker. Equipped with folding camera, flash, and tripod, he took pictures of high society, wedding guests, participants at conferences, inspections of troops, royal and imperial visits, fleets and military parades, as well as studio portraits of potentates, scientists, artists, politicians, writers, actors, and singers. The “watch-the-birdie” style was strong.

Animal subjects also made for popular photos, as did sporting events. Here there was some spontaneous pose and expression. The technical demands of sports photography had considerable influence on photography at large. The outstanding sports photos by Lothar Rubelt, Munkacsi, and others -- taken shortly after World War I -- clearly revealed the possibility of reproducing the natural facial expression of the subject, when the subject was unaware of being photographed. This new expressiveness lent great value to photo essays assembled by the best picture editors of the post-war generation.

The “War to End Wars” helped produce some famous photographers, but mainly later on, and not so much due to their achievements during that conflict. After the war came revolutions, first the Russian, then the German. These later events were captured in photos of street fights, starving people, mass demonstrations, the cruelties of civil war, and the attempts to begin anew. Willi Ruge, the first German reporter-photographer, revealed the street battles in Berlin.

The Soviets were the first to make thorough use of the propaganda value of photos. Propaganda information, by the definition of Marx and Lenin, was an essential part of the picture report, and the tactical consequence of this attitude was the training of more than 100,000 worker photographers in the Soviet Union during the postwar years. They were taught to produce realistic-naturalistic pictures, optimistic in mood, and to omit any hint of deficiencies in their subjects. The same was true of comprehensive photoreportages that appeared in the illustrated Soviet papers and in the propagandistic monthly magazine, USSR in Pictures, which was distributed in a number of foreign countries, including Germany. “A Day in the Life of the Filipov” was a typical reportage of this kind, and it’s possible Solzhenitsyn’s revealing book, A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, was partly an embittered satire on the roseate representation of life that must have confronted him in magazines during his youth. More advanced photoreportages and layouts would come a bit later, in Germany of course, a country racked with troubles. (3)
Chapter 2

The Early Contributions of Stefan Lorant to the Art of the Photo Essay

“In 1925, after having mastered the German language, (the Hungarian Stefan) Lorant began writing articles for various Berlin newspapers, such as the BZ (Berliner Zeitung am Mittag) and the Morganpost. He then edited pictorial publications in Germany, in Hungary, and, from 1934, in England. In Berlin, he was editor of Das Magazin (1925), UFA Magazin (1926), Bilder Courier (1927-28); and in Munich, he was chief editor of the Munchner Illustrierte Presse (1928-33). On being released from six-and-a-half months’ ‘protective custody’ in Hitler’s prison, he returned to Budapest where he edited the Pesti Naplo Magazin (1933). He left Hungary for England in the spring of 1934 where he created Weekly Illustrated (1934), Lilliput (1937-40), and Picture Post (1938-40).” (1)

“The new editor in Berlin for the Munchner Illustrierte was the young Stefan Lorant, then editor of the Filmkurier, the Sunday supplement to the Berliner Borsenkurier. Lorant had previously attempted to instill a new vigor into the style and content of the Munchner Illustrierte, and in September 1928, the paper published a reportage in pictures and text covering several pages entitled ‘The Chanson Reflects Our Time’ with photos by Fritzi Massary, Claire Waldoff, and other typical Berlin cabaret personalities. Such representative themes and their manner or presentation lent the Munchner Illustrierte a cosmopolitan accent and courted readership in northern Germany and Berlin.” (2)

“The new candid cameras, the Ermanox and the more convenient Leica that was developed a short time afterward, were both products of the German camera industry, and their impact was first felt in German picture magazines, notably the Munchner Illustrierte Presse (Munich Illustrated Press). Its editor, a Hungarian-born innovator named Stefan Lorant, seized on the opportunity of the new action pictures produced by the new cameras to convey to his readers a sense of that action -- of being there. He also took some bold steps in the direction of further enhancing the effectiveness of these pictures by skillful contrasts in size, mood and organization in their layout on two facing pages, the unit of design that has become basic to all illustrated journalism.” (3)

* * * * *

Stefan Lorant was not only a pioneer in the realm of the photo essay; he was to become a distinguished author in Europe and America, as well. His first book, I Was Hitler’s Prisoner, sold out through many printings in Britain; and his weighty histories of everything from the industrial crucible Pittsburgh to the U.S. Presidents included thousands of deftly edited pictures, in America. He also helped create a new genre in American history -- the picture biography, or biographies that depended to a large extent on photos, as well as drawings and paintings for their illustrations. (4) He long said he would publish his in-progress autobiography “the day after it’s finished.” In the end, he gave his life-story to Sir Michael Hallett in interviews, and Hallett wrote the biography Stefan Lorant: Godfather of Photojournalism. (5) And yet Lorant is not now well-known in America except to historians, photojournalists and graphic artists.

Modern picture editing, and the emergence of the modern photo essay, began with Lorant and the photographers who worked with him. Lorant had the impact he did, because he recognized one essential fact about modern picture-reporting: The modern photoreporter was the creator of the modern illustrated magazine and modern photojournalism -- not vice-versa. Editors-in-chief of the best magazines, especially Lorant, recognized photographers’ importance, and they quickly welcomed them with open arms, incorporating their productive eye-work into the format of the modern illustrated magazine. Lorant was not the only photographically-defined genius working in Europe in the pre-Nazi period. And after all, he was a writer as well as editor; but he put his writing career temporarily on hold while he worked meticulously with the photographers who were coming to the fore then.
Up until 1928 -- when Lorant took over as the Berlin editor for the Munchner Illustrierte Presse -- the pictorial sections of even the best magazines remained generally static. A forward movement came from two sources, one expected and one unexpected. The first source was the continuing development of the camera and lens. The second, entirely unforeseen, came about through the emergence of a small group of intellectual outsiders from the hitherto “unintellectual” field of press photography.

Leica led the way. In 1913, Oskar Barnack, an engineer (however, not an intellectual) at the Leitz factory in Wetzlar, Germany built the first Leica 35mm camera. It became the prototype for a whole new outlook on cameras, an outlook influenced greatly by intellectuals, artists, editors, and most importantly, photographers. Built originally as an exposure-testing device for motion pictures, Barnack constructed only two models first and took a few test pictures with them. Further development of the Leica was then interrupted by the outbreak of World War I.

After war’s end, Barnack perfected the device he’d invented, and with the help of Dr. Max Berek -- who developed an excellent anastigmatic lens with a maximum aperture of 1:3.5 -- the first six Leica cameras left the Leitz factory in 1924 as a cautious calculation. This was the result of a decision by Owner Ernst Leitz to mass-produce it. Playthings at first, the Leica eventually became the standard for all candid camera work for decades. (6)

As for the early photographers who proved to be more than simple technicians, those choosing to work with Lorant included: Hans Baumann (later Felix H. Man at Picture Post); Kurt Hubschmann (later Kurt Hutton at Picture Post); Georg (who died in an accident in 1931) and (his brother) Tim Gidal (who also worked for Picture Post under Lorant, and who then moved to New York City, and finally to Israel, where he became a respected photography scholar); Wolfgang Weber (who later became a noted travel commentator on German television); the gifted Umbo (Otto Umbehr); Walter Bosshard (the great German photographer, who gave up photoreportage after a serious accident at Panmunjom, Korea in 1953); and the master of the candid political picture, Erich Salomon (who would die, along with many relatives, at Auschwitz in 1944).

Others whom Lorant knew in Germany, but who worked less with him, were the great Alfred Eisenstaedt (who was a legend at Life for half a century), Andre Kertesz (who also came to the States, and carved out a distinguished niche for himself), and Martin Munkacsi (also Hungarian, who had gained a reputation for himself by 1941 as being the best-paid photographer in the United States and the world’s best photographer of women). These photographers all came to know Lorant and respect him. But revolutions had to occur before the connection between Lorant and these other great craftsmen could be made.

The backbone of the new photojournalism was the individual photographer. In 1929 came the breakthrough of photo reportage conceived as a complete and harmonious whole, which represented the beginning of modern photojournalism. These reportages, often planned on a psychological basis and attractively presented, were immediately recognized by the magazines and their readers as the best and most appealing form of the photograph. In a few short months, the new men mentioned above came into the field, independent of one another and often unaware of the others’ existence -- at least at first.

What Lorant did best was to demonstrate in his picture editing for the Munchner Illustrierte Presse an alert sense for latent topical themes. When suggestions were brought to him by agencies or photo reporters, he recognized their topical potentialities, and he organized the most suitable graphic presentation. He underlined the “essay” character of the photo reportage and identified himself with the photos as if they were his own. (7)

Indeed, Lorant went so far as to believe -- as strongly as any picture editor ever has -- that “There could be a photographic equivalent of the literary essay.” (8) To wit, he emphasized graphic presentation and arrangement instead of showing a mere succession of photos, text, and captions. Even if the Berliner Illustrierte published reportages which were just as good if not better than those in the Munchner Illustrierte, their presentation was too strongly stamped with the arguably less creative style of Kurt Korff and Carl
Schnebel, the larger magazine’s editors. The breakthrough to the modern, evocative, shrewdly persuasive photo essay, then, did not take place until the Munchner Illustrierte came under Lorant’s influence.

The relationship of mutual trust between Lorant and the photographers who worked for him permitted them to treat their themes as they thought fit. The photographers could always be confident Lorant’s designs would display their work to best advantage. They knew also that Lorant would not accept mediocre work. With the delivery of his pictures, the photoreporter’s task was completed. Lorant made the selections and sketched each layout according to his own views -- not according to those of publishing directors. This gave the Munchner Illustrierte a distinctive, recognizable character, contributing greatly to its continuing success. The so-called artistic style of presentation became increasingly rare, imaginative cropping and embellishments even rarer. The pictures were published in a natural, simple, and mainly unfalsified form.

Another graphic principle used by Lorant was the reduction and limitation of the pictures to a double-spaced spread. The key photo was shown large, the rest intentionally smaller and grouped in harmonious sequence. Later, at Picture Post in particular, Lorant developed this tendency further, and was aided in this by the photogravure printing process. The formal focal point of the individual pictures often resulted in an unobtrusive oval, which related to the central idea and the graphic central point.

Among the notable Munchner Illustrierte Presse layouts composed by Lorant in 1929 were “Manegen=Luft” -- his dramatic spread on the activities at a circus; and “Politische Portraits” -- his jagged, provocative layout of photos and text covering the German Reichstag. Slower cameras could not have produced these pictures, especially in the case of the circus photographs, nor could they have given Lorant the chance to use them to boldly tell his sharply realized “little” stories. (9)

In 1931, Lorant achieved a major coup in the use of Felix Man’s photos of “Il Duce” (Benito Mussolini) in the same magazine. Later, he would refashion the layout of those pictures into a captivating six-photo spread in London’s Weekly Illustrated -- following time-served in a Nazi prison. (When the Nazis took over Bavaria in March 1933, Lorant was taken into “protective custody” and was imprisoned for the better part of that year.) (10)

In both layouts of the Mussolini pictures, Lorant presented an actual behind-the-scenes visit (Lorant was granted an interview at the time) to the notorious dictator, about whose personality and life style the entire world was curious. Both elements are swiftly captured in the pictures Lorant selected: in the awesome décor of the dictator’s working quarters, and in the close-in head shots of the man at work. With a story as powerful as this, Lorant properly used a much more sober layout style than he had used in the two examples previously mentioned.

The impact was true then, and is still true today. Lorant was bridging the gap between German-speaking and English-speaking audiences with pictures and layouts; and he knew what he was doing in telling Mussolini’s story twice. What was the Italian dictator up to? Lorant was sure he knew. Did Mussolini know, as well?
Chapter 3

The First British Pictures Magazines -- What They Did and Didn’t Reveal

“When World War I broke out, the halftone process was already well developed and picture journals became voracious consumers of photographs. [...] Editors did the best they could, assembling spreads like (the one in The Illustrated London News of November 16, 1918). [...] which, with its jumble of crowds, marching troops and people waving from the tops of buses, does give an idea of the tumult of Armistice Day in London in 1918. But that is all it does. No attempt is made to tell a complete story or to emphasize a particularly good picture. All are the same size, arbitrarily arranged in an overall design that calls attention to itself, rather than to the development of any story line inherent in the pictures.” (1)

“Reputations far beyond those of its staff were at stake in Clarion’s failure and (John) Dunbar convinced his colleagues in management that rather than close the magazine down, it would be wiser to give this new idea a trial and hope to save part of their investment. And so, with almost no publicity and under the feeble title Weekly Illustrated, the first popular picture magazine in Britain came into existence in the summer of 1934, carrying for a very few issues only the message in small type ‘incorporating Clarion’.” (2)

* * * * *

Creating a photo essay requires the organization of a number of pictures on a single theme, so that they give a deeper, fuller, more rounded, more intense view of their subject than any single picture could. And, in a sense, even the early picture books did this. But that form had its limits. Pictures usually were paired on opposite pages, and one had to turn many, many pages to get the “full effect” of all the pictures.

Even the first halftone illustrated papers failed to do much better -- as is readily apparent through closer inspection of the best of these periodicals published during the First World War. Although there were some obvious benefits to being able to easily place several pictures on the same page, any “third effect” -- in the intelligent handling of a complex layout -- had to wait until Lorant and his successors came onto the scene.

In the modern photo essay, the subject can be anything -- an idea, a person, an event, a place. The organization can be either chronological or more purely conceptual. What matters most is that the pictures work together to enrich the theme. They can no longer be regarded as single entities, as individual works of art, but rather as parts of a whole. (3) True, some photographs are essentially powerful in their own right. This is the case, for instance, with the picture used on the front page top of the March 11, 1915, issue of Britain’s The Daily Mirror. The caption tells the whole story: “The Kaiser Stares at the Undaunted Serbian and Sees Only Contempt Written on the Prisoner’s Face.” The German spikes atop the Kaiser’s helmet and the helmets of his staff put the unconquerable look upon the Serbian’s face into perspective. He will most likely pay for his “insolence.”

At that time, The Daily Mirror claimed, “Certified Circulation Larger Than Any Other Picture Paper in the World.” At a halfpenny a copy, perhaps it was. In any case, it was a paper with pictures, and it did occasionally run some stunning images. (4) The Illustrated London News also ran numerous striking individual pictures during its long and glorious life, beginning with woodcuts made from photographs in the 1840s, and continuing with halftone images once that process became widespread. (5) But many of that paper’s photographs were staged, as was the case with its use of a full-page photo on the cover of its December 11, 1915, issue. That still picture shows a Tommy looking left, in a gas mask and with his rifle shouldered. A trench and barbed wire provide interesting background; and the photo does convey the situation for British troopers fighting in France then. Chemical warfare was on the rise, and precautions had to be taken. (6)

For a photo essay -- comprising many staged and more natural pictures, carrying a variety of meanings and impacts -- to succeed, the whole must be greater than the sum of its parts. That is the key to today’s
successful layout strategies. Stefan Lorant first introduced this principle in the modern sense, as it applied to photos, and put it to use in 1928 and thereafter.

We need to backtrack further here. In Britain during the 1890s, before automobiles came to dominate roads originally built for stage coaches, there had been a short alliance between two odd partners -- socialism and the bicycle. Robert Blatchford, a journalist who had spent some years as a private soldier, founded The Clarion in 1891 as a weekly, on a capital of 400 pounds. Its blend of biblical socialism with love of the countryside caught the mood of the time and the magazine prospered.

Young tradesmen and craftsmen took to their cycles on weekends to explore the “merrie England” of which Blatchford wrote in a book that eventually sold two million copies, and discussed plans for a socialist Britain in evening classes and at Workers’ Educational Societies weekdays. The Clarion was their bible, and a network of Clarion cycling clubs carried its message and pushed its circulation up to 60,000. By 1934, though, most of the clubs had gone the way of the stage coach, and The Clarion’s trumpet call had sunk to a feeble quaver. With circulation at 15,000 and little advertising, it appeared doomed to extinction.

But then Odhams Newspapers’ (which owned The Clarion by then) Manager John Dunbar had an idea. If encyclopedias and sets of Dickens had induced two million homes to buy his group’s Daily Herald six times a week, surely similar offers could entice a quarter of that number, the politically conscious, to pay two pence a week for a “poor man’s New Statesmen”. He managed to convince his colleagues and the project went ahead. However, the “new” Clarion failed to sell as well as Dunbar had expected, and something altogether original was considered.

At this moment, originality arrived in Stefan Lorant, the Hungarian journalist who had been editor of the German picture magazine Munchner Illustrierte Presse. Imprisoned by Nazis in March 1933, he had been released six months later through the intervention of the Hungarian government, and after a spell working in Budapest had recently arrived in London. Something brought him to Odhams Press, to whom he now put forward the idea of a picture magazine on the lines of those that had proved so successful in Germany.

Reputations being at stake in The Clarion’s failure, it was decided to begin a bold new experiment in British photojournalism. The Weekly Illustrated, the first popular picture magazine in Britain, came into being in the summer of 1934, taking on the mantle of the old Clarion. The magazine’s formula was by no means new or striking, but it was at least built around pictures, and for the first months Lorant was there, it had a touch of originality both in the selection of photos and in its layout. Also, it imposed no great strain on its readers’ minds, for which they were evidently grateful, since the circulation rose as rapidly as Clarion’s had fallen, and was soon established at the satisfactory level of over a quarter of a million.

It was here that Lorant met Tom Hopkinson, a caption writer in those days. And it was here that the latter man came to understand the former’s genius. Hopkinson later wrote about Lorant’s difficulties at Weekly Illustrated, and about his decision to leave. He noted in Of This Our Time: “Towards the end of the year (1934), when Lorant told me he was going, I tried to reason with him. ‘Look Stefan, you imagine that somewhere in the world there exists a perfect proprietor. He’ll say to you, “Stefan! You’re a genius. Just do whatever you want and I’ll support you!” But there is no perfect proprietor -- nowhere in the world. He hasn’t been invented.’ “‘Tom,’ he told me. ‘I cannot work where I am not appreciated, and no one here understands what I am doing. No one! Not even you.’”

Lorant left Weekly Illustrated soon after, and from there he went on to publish I Was Hitler’s Prisoner, a financial success. Hopkinson stayed on for a while with his employer, but eventually his and Lorant’s paths crossed again. A few weeks after the pair had met by chance in Covent Garden, Lorant obtained a loan of 1,200 pounds from a girl-friend, and launched his delightful pocket magazine, Lilliput, which is now a collector’s item, and which turned out to be a fairly good picture magazine. Hiring the young journalist Sidney Jacobson, just back from India, Lorant did some unique things there with picture juxtapositions -- including his famous pairing of a picture of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain with that of a llama.
Lorant soon picked up Hopkinson, too, for a brand new magazine he was to edit, not yet published or named Picture Post. Hopkinson had come round to speak with Lorant one day, after discovering the Hungarian was paying his staff cash. A short time later, he was being hired away from Weekly Illustrated.

Now, Lilliput was sold soon after Hopkinson had first approached Lorant for a job -- for more than 10 times what Lorant had first invested. And after a talk with Lorant and the Hulton Press’s General Manager, Maxwell Raison, Hopkinson turned in his resignation at the Weekly Illustrated to become assistant editor for the new magazine Edward Hulton wanted to start. When Hopkinson informed John Dunbar he would be leaving his former publication for a salary of 20 guineas a week -- two more than he had been receiving with Weekly Illustrated -- Dunbar offered him more money. Hopkinson replied, “But that isn’t it. I don’t want more money. I’m leaving to start a new paper with Lorant.”

The picture magazines that preceded Picture Post in Britain were not all unsuccessful publications; some were, in fact, the best periodicals of their day. But they were less than subtle in their use of photos -- until Lorant took over. And if World War I and its immediate aftermath brought with it a flurry of photographic activity in the British press, that flurry did not necessarily contribute a great deal immediately to the complexity of the modern photo essay. It did add to the reservoir of good individual photos, though, that could be drawn upon later for historical and artistic reasons.

The Clarion had been founded in 1891 and contributed to modern picture journals (although it was not a picture magazine per se): First, it was ahead of its time in putting emphasis on biblical socialism, the British countryside, and cycling, during a time when that combination was an appealing way to frame the socialist message. Second, its demise led directly to the first popular picture magazine in Britain, Weekly Illustrated, which ran for about four years, and in which Lorant and Hopkinson had an early hand.

Facing the realities of a capitalist world, both those forerunners of Picture Post carried their own weight for a while financially. And if they or their predecessors and contemporaries were not as strong in terms of the layout of pictures and text as the great modern picture magazines, at least they did begin to reveal the blend of elements that would be so crucial to the popular and critical success of their greatest offspring.

Eventually, then, more substantial vehicles for their combined messages emerged. If Picture Post was the most successful and important of the picture magazines that followed in the path of The Clarion and Weekly Illustrated, its inspiration had come from journalists like Lorant and Hopkinson, not to mention Odhams and the Hulton Press. Picture Post was established by October 1, 1938 -- giving fresh meaning to the art of the photo essay and popular picture magazines. A new era in European photojournalism had begun. (7)
Chapter 4

How Stefan Lorant Came To Be Introduced to Edward Hulton of the Hulton Press

“(Rene) Cutforth: …in 1937, there came a great turning point in Lorant’s life. With 1,500 (pounds; Tom Hopkinson wrote that the figure was 1,200 pounds) borrowed from a girlfriend, he started a magazine called Lilliput. The public took to it at once. What caught the eye were the photographs Lorant put on facing pages: Chamberlain and the beautiful llama; Gracie Fields and the herald angel from a cathedral dome; an Australian bear and A.P. Herbert. This pairing of photographs got Lorant talked about up and down Fleet Street, and led to the launching of Picture Post; for, before long, the Hungarian sold Lilliput and the idea of a big new picture magazine to a man called Edward Hulton, who had recently inherited a fortune.” (1)

“Lorant first learned of Edward Hulton’s existence when, in mid-April 1938, Maxwell Raison visited him in his Lilliput office at 34 Chancery Lane and asked him to contribute some ‘political juxtapositions’, similar to those he did in Lilliput, for a new publication which his friend Hulton was to publish. Lorant was amused with the offer yet declined it. However, Raison and Lorant hit it off. Raison borrowed a volume of Lorant’s edited Munchner Illustrierte Presse to show to Hulton. Shortly thereafter, at Raison’s insistence, Lorant and Hulton met. Lorant was not impressed with the young millionaire, disliking his intellectual support of Oswald Mosley and his blackshirts. But this should be seen in context. Lorant’s autobiographical account, I Was Hitler’s Prisoner, was published in England three years earlier, in 1935, and although the book came out in many editions, having good reviews in all the prominent papers, Hulton had no knowledge of it. He knew Lorant only as editor of Lilliput and the man who made those ‘amusing and witty pictorial juxtapositions’.“ (2)

“Unlike most firms which set out to produce new magazines, Hulton Press rested on a secure financial basis, as I had taken pains to find out. Its proprietor, Edward Hulton, a year or two younger than myself, was the son and grandson of newspaper owners. His grandfather, a compositor on the Manchester Guardian, had launched the Sporting Chronicle in 1871, and from this modest beginning his father, Sir Edward Hulton, had built up a newspaper empire to include the Daily Dispatch, Daily Sketch, and Evening Standard.” (3)

* * * * *

Stefan Lorant has long been famous for the “third effect” that has become so well-known since his early editing days. Take one element (usually a picture), place it with another element (words or another picture), and see what unusual ripples the two can raise together. The now-deceased Life Executive Editor Wilson Hicks defined the third effect as occurring: “When two pictures are combined and enhanced by the reader’s interpretative and evaluative reaction.” (4)

In terms of personalities, too, Lorant was good with third effects. Take the pioneering picture editor Lorant was; place him with a well-intentioned capitalist, like Edward Hulton; and see what emerges from their meeting. In 1938, their “juxtaposition” meant the publication of an innovative new magazine -- Picture Post. Tom Hopkinson wrote that he checked out Hulton’s background, at the time he himself was hired to be assistant editor on Picture Post. He found Hulton’s family and personal history were promising.

Edward Hulton’s father and grandfather had established a newspaper empire that was gaining continually in popular support. From it, he was said to have received six million pounds in 1923. But young Edward (Teddy) could not legally gain control of his inheritance until age thirty; that day dawned in November 1936; the newly established Hulton Press was already owner of the Farmer’s Weekly, Nursing Mirror and one or two other journals, to which Lilliput was soon added.
Besides Hulton, in this new press organization, the business side included Maxwell Raison, a man of easy manners, but shrewd under the geniality. Later, as an independent publisher he would launch New Scientist and New Society. One of his sons, Timothy Raison, would become a Conservative MP and junior minister in Mrs. Thatcher’s Government. Maxwell Raison had only recently ceased to play cricket for Essex, loved the countryside and horses, and devoted as much time as he could to such interests and to his young family. Raison was an important man in the union between Lorant and Hulton on Picture Post. (5)

When Lorant expressed little interest in Hulton’s initial appeal for the sale of his “political juxtapositions” (which were the rage of Fleet Street in 1938) to the latter’s newly formed press, Raison stuck with the owner’s “plan.” He was determined to obtain Lorant’s services for Hulton, and he succeeded. An agreement was reached whereby Lorant would create a pictorial magazine, which he would edit, with Hulton providing finance. The magazine’s nature would be left entirely to Lorant. He was to be editor without interference. The only “limiting” condition in the agreement reached between Lorant and Hulton (with Raison’s help) was Hulton would write a weekly article for the magazine. But even this was not sacrosanct from editorial control.

“When he gave me his first article, I handed it to Tom Hopkinson, my assistant, and told him to rewrite it…. Tom did that, but of course the author’s name on the article read Edward Hulton. It was a modest price I had to pay for having a free hand, and absolute command over Picture Post,” Lorant told Michael Hallett.

Before Picture Post was launched, Hulton Press bought the shares of Lilliput from Pocket Publications – owned by Lorant, Alison Blair, and Sidney Jacobson (who had contributed a gratuity to Lilliput when he returned from India). Lorant told Hallett: “Sydney was my assistant at Lilliput and he remained in that position. I also stayed on as editor, editing the magazine as long as I was in England. Picture Post in the week, Lilliput at weekends.”

Hallett noted, “The evolution of Picture Post could have been anticipated. Its concept was a continuation of Lorant’s work, particularly on the Munchner Illustrierte Presse, Pesti Napló, and the Weekly Illustrated.” Lorant was not “a penniless Hungarian refugee,” as one of his detractors pictured him, but one of the most successful editors in Europe, with a firm understanding of the financial constraints of magazine publishing. He had edited magazines in three languages -- in German, in Hungarian, and in English -- all prior to creating Picture Post, and had written for periodicals in three languages, as well, most recently for the Daily Mirror in London. If Lorant was an editorial "genius", he also claimed, “You don't become a genius overnight… I hope you understand that this is a joke. We Hungarians don't take ourselves seriously.”

Hallett quoted Lorant: "I wanted to appeal to the masses, the common man, to the workers, to the intelligentsia. I jotted in a little notebook what I wanted to do, and I still have it." The first sentence in that notebook includes, "to print the truth and to do it honestly." Then, "to enlighten the readers of subjects on which they have little knowledge; never talk down to them; never underestimate their intelligence; but share with them a common knowledge, to learn together." Lorant added, "I was using pictures as a composer uses notes; I was composing stories in photographs." (6) In a slightly different context, in an interview with Rene Cutforth for "The Life and Death of Picture Post," Lorant said: "When I did that paper (Picture Post), it was really a personal kind of magazine, a personal statement. I had the mind of a liberal. I had progressive ideas, especially after I came out from prison, and I cared. I cared for the ordinary human beings, and I wanted to communicate with them." (7) Edward Hulton would himself write in the magazine’s first issue: "Man must build up from the love of self, to love of family, city, province, country. From this he must learn to understand and love all his fellow men throughout the world." Those sentiments ran deep.(8)

If Lorant wanted to communicate with "ordinary" people, then, he also was shrewd enough to know he needed to be moderately respectful of Hulton Press’s management, including Hulton himself, to warrant that proprietor's trust. Lorant knew dramatic things were about to happen already in 1937, as he indicated to Hopkinson during the chance meeting previously mentioned. After a reference to Lorant's book publishing
success with I Was Hitler's Prisoner, and the hit he was making with the ladies, Hopkinson wrote: "Then in the summer of 1937 I came across him again as we were both walking through Covent Garden, picking our way among the squashed fruit and cabbage stalks. He looked despondent.

"How're you doing, Stefan?"

"He frowned. 'The editors in this country, they do not like my work. Or if they like it, they do not pay enough. There is only one thing for me to do.'

"What's that?"

"I become an editor myself." (9)

A few weeks later, Lilliput was born, and from that venture came Hulton's interest in and offer to Lorant. Picture Post was born, then, with the inklings of Edward Hulton on the subject of Lorant's political juxtapositions -- with the help of Maxwell Raison, and perhaps Tom Hopkinson, as well. Hulton had made an offer -- resulting from his desire to see political juxtapositions like Lorant's in one or more of his magazines -- and Lorant had determined this was an offer he couldn't refuse. He would have virtually total editorial control at Picture Post, and the same control continuing at Lilliput, as well.

Any good editor should know when the right tasks are presented to him or her; and Lorant saw the great business that awaited him with Hulton. Somehow, he saw his editing destiny again, and in 1938, Lorant began Picture Post, with Hulton's money and blessing.
Chapter 5

Preparations for, and Successful Publication of, Picture Post's First Issue (10-1-38)

"The first issue (of Picture Post) was planned for early September -- and finally came out on 1 October (1938). Already we were in July, but all that seemed to be happening was the taking of sets of photographs by (Hans) Baumann and (Kurt) Hubschmann. I was anxious for dummies to be made up, for advertising to be collected, for advance orders to be booked by the circulation. But that was not the way (Stefan) Lorant worked. He could only work when he had generated a head of excitement and enthusiasm. There was also a sharp division inside the firm as to what kind of magazine this was to be. For Lorant and myself the main interest was that it should be strongly political, 'anti-Fascist' in the language of the time; we also believed that the magazine's success depended on its taking such a line. But being 'anti-Fascist' meant being 'left-wing' -- and our proprietor, Edward Hulton, was a staunch Conservative." (1)

"When I had collected all pictorial material I needed, I asked Sydney (Jacobson) to come for the weekend to Aldenham, the place in the country where I lived. There I sketched out the layouts and, as I finished a spread, I handed it to Sydney, who wrote the captions. We worked the whole of Saturday and the whole of Sunday. During these 48 hours Picture Post was born. The dummy emerged that weekend. It turned out to be the first issue, with hardly any changes." (2)

"Rene Cutforth: In the autumn of 1938, Picture Post took off from an office in Shoe Lane, just off Fleet Street. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in British journalism. Its first number leapt straight to success. The publisher, thinking that, with luck, he would sell a third of them, then printed nearly three-quarters of a million copies. By teatime on that first day, you could not buy a single one in the length and breadth of Britain. Within six months, the paper was going to have a circulation of a million and a half, and five million readers every week." (3)

* * * * *

In the beginning, the editorial staff of Picture Post consisted of five people -- Stefan Lorant, Tom Hopkinson, a secretary, and two photographers. Hans Baumann (later known as Felix H. Man) and Kurt Hubschmann (later, Kurt Hutton) were the two German photographers Lorant had brought with him from the Continent. Hopkinson noted in Of This Our Time: "With the passage of time both (Man and Hutton) today have become internationally renowned as cameramen to an extent the gentle, conscientious Hutton at least would never have expected. Very different in talents and outlook, they made an excellent basis for a photographic team, but we could hardly launch a new magazine on two cameramen and no writers but myself."

Hopkinson continued: "The arrangement made with Lorant was that he would handle the picture side and I should be responsible for text and captions. In theory this sounded fine, but I soon found it to be less so in practice, since I could do nothing until he decided what stories to make up and how much space to give them, and Lorant could only work in a creative fervour which would not descend to order, and often not for days on end." Lorant's work habits, then, worried Hopkinson -- especially for the first issue. Hopkinson at least gave balance to his own view of that editor, writing later, "When at last, however, he (Lorant) could be induced to get down to a problem, he could cut straight to its root." (4)

Such was the case not only with the final dummy of the historic October 1, 1938, issue of Picture Post, which Lorant and Sydney Jacobson completed in one weekend, but also with the page size agreed upon eventually -- a not inconsiderable problem in those days. Michael Hallett wrote: "One of the myths surrounding Picture Post relates to its format. It has been suggested that it mirrored the 35mm camera format, though a cursory glance will show it to be considerably squarer than the 3 x 2 format of the 35mm frame. In reality, Picture Post's format had nothing to do with the 35mm format or the Leica. It was a decision made by the printer and Lorant."
Hallett quoted Lorant: "I had a talk with David Greenhill, head of the Sun Engraving Company (Picture Post's printer) in Watford, whom I had known for years, because he also printed Weekly Illustrated for Odhams Press in 1934. We figured out the number of pages that the roller could hold and decided about the most economical size. It was as simple as that. There was no argument about it. We decided about it in a couple of minutes." (5) There were, however, some disagreements previous to Lorant's talks with the printer, and not everything went as smoothly in the staff's work then -- though Lorant seemed to know what he himself was doing.

Once the page size had been decided, the next problem was the title. The magazine's advertising agent, Donald Gillies, had prepared some material built round the idea that the magazine would be called Lo! "Buy Lo! See and know!" Hopkinson indicated most of the staff was receptive to that idea, but Lorant held out. The day after he rejected Lo!, the editor showed Hopkinson "a page of scribbled suggestions in two columns from which he, or someone, or several of us together, extracted 'Picture' from one column and 'Post' from the opposite one, and this was finally agreed (would be the title)."

There were other problems to be worked out, too. The big distributor W.H. Smith would only order 30,000 copies of the first issue for all of Britain. That development disappointed Picture Post's circulation department. The advertising people were no happier, having managed to sell ads on fewer than ten pages in an 80-page magazine, out of which they had been expecting to sell 30 pages. Top management seemed just as dubious. Hopkinson noted that Hulton, who had stood twice for Parliament as a Conservative, thought the magazine had a distinctly leftish look. "Kindly remember that I am not only a Conservative, I am a loyal supporter of Mr. Neville Chamberlain," he instructed his staff.

To emphasize this, the publisher insisted the first number must have a battleship on the cover, and to Hopkinson's surprise, Lorant agreed, saying he thought it "a very good idea." After a private discussion between Hopkinson and Lorant about the magazine's projected circulation (in the neighborhood of 150,000-250,000 at first), the assistant editor queried Lorant: "But what about the bloody battleship? You know there can only be one thing on the first cover -- a girl! A battleship would sink us without trace." To which Lorant replied: "I promise you, Tom, there will be two girls." And there were two girls on that cover -- two dancing cowgirls, which helped contribute to the first issue's sold-out status on October 1, 1938. (The same picture would also appear on the magazine's final cover, 19 years into the future.)

At the last moment, then, with everything ready for the printer, came the scare of war. Chamberlain had gone to meet Hitler for the second time at Godesberg. Could any new project be launched successfully in an atmosphere of crisis? Hopkinson wrote: "We argued fiercely, however, that if war came everyone would want war pictures so that the magazine would quickly find a public; on the other hand if there was peace, Picture Post would be off to a flying start on the general feeling of relief. In the end our argument was accepted and, as we drove down to the printing works at Watford to put the first issue to bed, searchlights and anti-aircraft guns were being sited on rising ground; convoys of troops and guns held up our journey."

Hopkinson continued: "Arguing, cajoling, badgering, Lorant had got the initial print order forced up to 750,000 -- twice what we expected to sell even with the extra interest every first issue arouses. Vernon Holding, the (magazine's) circulation manager, had performed prodigious feats to get it distributed throughout the trade, while fearing that half at least was likely to come back unsold. On the morning of publication I looked in at his office and saw that he was as exhausted and bad-tempered as myself.

"'How's it going?' I asked, when for a moment his phones were silent.

"'Don't know. Come back lunchtime.'"

"'How's it going?' I asked him at midday.

"Holding leaned back in his office chair and almost smiled. 'It's gone!' he said thankfully. 'Over the whole east and south of England you can't buy a bloody copy!'" (6)
The story of Picture Post can easily be seen as a romantic one. Heralded by its first two cover girls leaping marvelously through the skies of October 1, 1938, it blazed like a comet into the world of late-thirties journalism; like a comet it traveled steadily on; and like a comet it eventually tailed away.

The magazine's story can also be seen as a moral tale with heroes, villains and attendant princes and princesses. But the business of everyday journalism cannot be fitted neatly into easy categories. It involves too much "ordinary" hard work, too much ultimate subjection to the press date, too much need to compromise with inevitable commercial pressures, to be entitled to give itself lofty airs.

And yet, as Robert Kee has written, only a pedant would deny that there was something romantic about the life and death of Picture Post and that in its story there is, for those who wish to look for such things, a moral to be found. It is the moral which W.B. Yeats once implicated: in the business of communication, unless you please first yourself, you have little hope of pleasing anybody else.(7) When Picture Post debuted, then, its staff may have pleased themselves, despite the problems, because they certainly must have pleased others. Never before had a picture magazine met with such circulation-figure success in Britain. Its impact was akin to the effect Life Magazine in America had with its first issue in 1936 -- complete with a stunning cover photo and good stories inside. Within six months of its debut, Picture Post's print order had climbed to 1.7 million copies (with circulation just above the 1.5 million mark). Its staff would apparently not look back for a long time; and the British public was continually amazed by their exploits.

There were many fearful predictions about the potential war with Germany circulating in 1938 Britain. And in August of 1938, the newly formed Mass Observation, a pioneer of market research and opinion polling, had found about a third of the population expected war, but most of these people thought it was a long way off. Picture Post helped lead the way toward the “necessary war,” and the even more necessary peace. Its legacy, then, remains one of reform -- of British society, culture, the military, and the economy. Along the way, it proved to be a mirror of British vagaries, strengths, weaknesses, courage, everyday intellect, and simple humor and human feeling. (8)

In its beginning, as in its end, Picture Post was possibly more gallant than it sometimes had to be, more profound than some might know, more remarkable than today's generation has yet realized. It was, in short, a truly great picture magazine. And more, it was a teacher and cultivator of the spirit of an entire generation of Britons -- the generation born during and soon after World War II. Picture Post was an instrument of and potentially beyond its time, a vehicle for millions of people who needed its beliefs and truths then, and who may need its spirit again now.
Part II

Stefan Lorant's Genius Becomes Widely Known to the British People, and Then He Makes an Abrupt Departure
Chapter 6

Stefan Lorant's Background Is More Fully Explored

"The Great Rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connections as possible… Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?... Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies." (1)

"Born in Budapest in 1901, (Stefan) Lorant came from a well-to-do middle-class family. His father, as a young man, worked in newspapers. After he married, he was manager of Erdelyi, the prominent photographic studio in Budapest, which catered for the royal family and the aristocracy. In 1917, his father was killed in the war. It was two years later, in the spring of 1919 that the 18-year-old Lorant graduated from the Academy of Economics and (soon after) left Budapest having no desire to live under the fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy." (2)

"(Stefan) Lorant went to Vienna from Budapest at the age of twenty as a photographer of so-called stills, film scenes posed for advertising purposes. It was not long before he became a cameraman for the film The Life, Loves, and Sorrows of Mozart; he also wrote the script and directed the film Love's Fool…. From Vienna Lorant moved to Berlin where he was first employed as second cameraman for the successful film The Count of Essex. In 1925, however, he gave up his career as a firm cameraman and began writing newspaper articles, one of which, 'Behind the Scenes of the Haller Revue,' published in the journal Das Magazin, December 1925, listed Stefan Lorant as author of text and pictures and includes the note that 'all the pictures were taken with an Ernemann Ermanox.' In August 1928 he was promoted to Berlin editor of the Munchner Illustrierte." (3)

"The idea of Picture Post -- most British of magazines -- came from abroad. Its first editor, Stefan Lorant, was a Hungarian Jew -- one of a small and brilliant band who left their country after the First World War because they found its political climate oppressive, and Hungary too small to give scope to their talents…." (4)

* * * * *

Stefan Lorant never considered himself Jewish. He did not practice that faith, but some of his ancestors were Jewish. He was born in 1901 and educated in Budapest. He left Hungary in the fall of 1919, after the collapse of the Bela Kun government, which led to the beginning of fascism there. Helped by the great novelist Franz Kafka to find a job in Czechoslovakia, Lorant played the violin in a movie house orchestra before moving to Vienna, where he became a film cameraman, scriptwriter, and director. His first film, The Life of Mozart, according to at least one source, established him as one of the leading cameramen in Europe. He was then 19 years old. In Vienna and Berlin he made 14 films, some of which he wrote, directed, and photographed.
In 1925, after mastering the German language, Lorant left filmmaking and began to write articles for various Berlin newspapers (Berliner Zeitung am Mittag, Morgenpost, etc.). He was soon appointed assistant editor of Das Magazin, which became a huge success, and in 1926 he was hired as editor of the Ufa Magazin (later Film Magazin). During those years, he also edited the Sunday magazine of the Berliner Borsen Courier -- the Bilderal Courier (Picture Courier) -- and became Berlin editor of the Munchner Illustrierte Presse. In 1928 he was appointed chief editor of that Munich weekly, which under his editorship became the first modern photojournalistic paper in Europe. (5)

White he was the Berlin editor of the Munchner Illustrierte Presse, Lorant came to know the possibilities of editorial control. Because many leading photoagencies were in Berlin then, and due to its new cosmopolitan policy, the Munich paper's Berlin editorship was of equal status with that in Munich. Thus, the contributions from the Berlin offices often surpassed those of Munich. The opposite temperaments of Lorant and Paul Feinhals, the sensitive, artistic editor-in-chief, often led to underground rivalry, which considerably complicated the collaboration for which Pflaum, the publishing director and moving spirit in the modernization of that magazine, had hoped. "We (Feinhals and I) were always getting in each other's hair," said Lorant. "We were both young, ambitious, and stubborn, and we had basically different conceptions of editorship."

Lorant was named editor-in-chief in 1929, only to be succeeded by Feinhals. But the main burden of the picture responsibility shifted to Lorant in Berlin, because he had displayed an alert sense of latent topical themes. At the end of 1930, Feinhals joined the Kolnische Illustrierte, which soon became Germany's third great magazine under his skillful direction. Always the sensitive artist, Feinhals -- together with Kurt Korff (editor-in-chief of the Berlin Illustrirte Zeitung) and Lorant -- brought new life to photojournalism.

The Munchner Illustrierte Presse then became the responsibility of its art director, Hugo Huber -- because Lorant had a Hungarian passport -- though in practice, Lorant functioned as editor-in-chief. In 1932, as the magazine became even more successful, the Hungarian did in fact take over the top post. Lorant worked closely with his photographers, and they generally felt he gave their work close attention. He worked with many of the best cameramen then in Europe, but, notably, it was a "wild" commission from Lorant that helped establish Wolfgang Weber as a famous independent-minded photoreporter of sociological subjects: "The theme is The Citizen in Distress! Crisis in the Bavarian Forest! Go to the Bavarian border tonight, get all the information you possibly can on the protest meetings. The photos and text must be on my table the day after tomorrow!"

A night’s journey, a day’s work, a night’s return journey. The pictures came in on-time, but Weber and Lorant had a difference of opinion, and Lorant refused to accept them. “I got into my car and drove through the night a third time,” Weber said, “this time to Berlin, and the Berliner published the reportage in a multi-page spread and with a cover picture. I never wanted to see the Munchner again, and I decided to remain with the Berliner.” The reportage was published in September 1931 with the title “Village Without Work.” The cover picture had no title, but the caption “We don’t want unemployment money or relief… we only want to work. On the land, on the road – anywhere, anything!” was dramatic. Five months later, the Munchner published Weber’s reportage “Deaf-and-Dumb School.” More followed.

The Weber-Lorant episode was symptomatic of the independent status of the photoreporter at the dawn of modern photojournalism. It throws light on the working conditions that were in sharp contrast to later practices in the United States, especially at Life. There, long discussions and detailed planning often preceded a reportage, which then was the work of days, usually, rather than hours. Although long-wayround organization may have advantages, the earlier reportages possessed a spontaneity and originality of communication which were unique; and Lorant sensed the value of the photographs he utilized then. One of the virtues of Lorant’s method was the direct contact between editor and photoreporter. Today the approval of a department editor is no guarantee the reportage will even be published. Lorant was more committed to his photoreporters than that.

Tim Gidal wrote: “The common denominator shared by the great photoreporters was the combination of (1) a talent for observation and the ability to experience and participate intensely, and (2) sensitivity, empathy,
and intuition for capturing the essential quality of the whole in the single picture.” We might add that Lorant had those abilities, as well as the capacity to put the best single pictures into context, in terms of layout, to obtain the “third effect.” Gidal quotes from the religious philosopher Martin Buber at one point: “Every living situation has a new face, like a newborn child, despite all similarity to previous situations, something which has never before existed and which will never be repeated... it requires presence, responsibility, and you yourself.” (6) Lorant knew that fact. He was always looking for the fresh angle, the new perspective.

Indeed, later Lorant said Picture Post failed in the 1950s because it kept repeating the same layouts, using different pictures, not the proper response for its editors to take. He told Michael Hallett: “Life in America, Stern in Germany, Paris Match in France -- they all survived. Picture Post was killed because it was dull and boring. It offered no new ideas. The issues in the ’50s were carbon copies of the papers which were printed in the late ’30s. The layouts were copied over and over. If editors had gone with the times, Picture Post would still be with us today.” (7)

After Lorant fled England in 1940, he made his new reputation as author of picture biographies and illustrated histories. Besides his much-acclaimed The Glorious Burden, a history of the American Presidency; The New World, “the first pictures of America”; Pittsburgh, the story of an American city; and his biographies of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lorant published an illustrated history of Germany from Bismarck and the foundation of the German Reich until Hitler’s death and the end of the Third Reich, entitled Sieg Heil (1974). And Lorant had been at work on his autobiography for many years. Tentatively titled I Lived Six Lives, it was supposed to tell about his careers in six countries: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, England, and America. (8)

As for Lorant’s coming to America, here it is important to note that this creative historian, writer, cameraman, and editor did something that President George Washington stated in his famous "Farewell Address" in 1796 about what one must do at times to survive: Lorant depended upon "temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies." And then, he found a "respectably defensive posture" for his later years of professional and personal development. (9)

Hitler, Nazism, and Fascism drove Stefan Lorant from place to place in Europe, until he found a "suitable establishment," the United States, where he could take refuge in a difficult world sufficiently to go about the business that he felt was his to do.
Chapter 7

Picture Post's Early Staff and Stefan Lorant's Role in Assembling and Using It

"On the editorial side of the new magazine there was nothing but Stefan Lorant, myself and a secretary. We had two German photographers working as freelances. Hans Baumann (later known as Felix H. Man) and Kurt Hubschmann (afterwards Kurt Hutton). They had left Germany in 1934 following Hitler's rise to power, and had contrived with difficulty to subsist in Britain ever since." (1)

"I composed the whole issue -- every one of the pages myself. The number of pages varied between 80 and 104. And don't forget, the whole staff consisted of five people: Tom Hopkinson, Lionel Birch, Honor Balfour, Richard Darwell, and my assistant H.E. Bewick. We had no editorial conferences. I made all the decisions by myself. The editorial content of Picture Post was produced by a one-man band." (2)

"(Caption) The entire editorial staff of Picture Post: Published in Picture Post 24 December 1938 to illustrate the story, 'How Picture Post is produced'. The photograph includes (from left to right): John Langdon-Davies, who writes Science Today and articles on scientific, medical and general subjects; W. H. Pearson, who is in charge of the Picture Post library; Lionel Birch, writer, who also reads stories and articles submitted; Richard Darwall, who keeps the diary and arranges cameramen's assignments; Honor Balfour, who writes Lives of the Great Artists and other artists; H.F. Bewick, who composes the pages for the printers; and Tom Hopkinson, assistant editor." (3)

* * * * *

When Picture Post debuted, its editorial content was contributed almost exclusively by Stefan Lorant, Tom Hopkinson, Felix Man and Kurt Hutton (the latter two being free-lance photographers). Soon, a few others were hired to fill in the gaps, but the magazine remained a kind of improvisational show surrounding a "one-man band" -- at least, that is, until Hopkinson took over as editor in July of 1940, and he increased the staff of the publication.

Lorant had brought with him from Germany the two gifted free-lance photographers mentioned above -- whose names were originally German, and who would make large reputations for themselves. Felix H. Man and Kurt Hutton had performed admirably under Lorant previously, and they were mainstays among the magazine's free-lance contributors for many years. Indeed, Hutton was the only editorial contributor to work for the magazine during its entire life. And deservedly, his and Man's work still carry great weight -- especially in Britain. (4)

Lorant never gave his photographers name credits at Picture Post, and there was a good reason for that policy. He had given name credits to cameramen from the start on Lilliput, but Felix Man and Kurt Hutton -- as well as Tim N. Gidal and a few others who worked for Picture Post -- were different cases. Lorant explained his dual practice in this way: "Many of the picture essays (on Picture Post) were made by some of the German refugee photographers who had no working permits in England. They were grateful to me that their names did not appear." The uncomfortable position of a foreigner during the early days of World War II was felt keenly by Lorant. He was a great admirer and supporter of Winston Churchill, and through
Picture Post he backed the war effort and Britain's fight against Hitler's Germany. Neville Chamberlain had not enjoyed the same support from the magazine, probably because he was not as bold in his opposition to the Nazis as Churchill was.

Lorant respected and admired his photographers. He used a number of those who had worked for him in Germany, providing continuity with his earlier publications. Besides Man and Hutton, then, Lorant also made use of the photographs and photo-montages of men like John Heartfield. Lorant recalled: "I admired the montages that he did in Berlin for the AIZ (Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung). I put his Adolf Hitler montage (with a military helmet) on the cover of Picture Post, and I published a portfolio of his montages in Lilliput -- the first publication of Heartfield in England."

Most of the well-known European photographers of the '20s and '30s worked for Lorant, mainly before he took over Picture Post. Dr. Salomon, Kertesz, Brassai, Munkacsi, Capa -- all of them were friends. (5) Life's legendary cameraman Alfred Eisenstaedt also worked for Lorant. Eisenstaedt noted in a 1988 Life article entitled "Pioneers," and covering the work of Lorant, Edwin Land, and Harold Edgerton: "He (Lorant) was brilliant, the number one editor in Germany." (6)

A similar situation existed with literary figures in England -- people like A.J. Cronin, J.B. Priestley, George Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells. Lorant noted: "I was an early member of the Pen Club. At dinners, I met the English writers of distinction." Also assisting his work in those days was Lorant's association with political leaders -- such as Churchill, Nye Bevan, Hugh Dalton, Stafford Cripps, U.S. Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, Brendan Bracken, and Robert Boothby. Picture Post's circulation had risen to 1.7 million under his editorship; thus, the magazine provided a potent platform for those leaders to promote their ideas.

Photographs were essential to Picture Post’s operation, and Lorant required the finest work. His tenets were printed in the 1938 Modern Photography annual: "The photograph should not be posed, rather the camera should be as the notebook of a trained reporter, recording contemporary events as they happen, without trying to stop them to make a picture; people should be photographed as they really are and not as they would like to appear; photo reportage should concern itself with men and women of every kind and not simply with a small social clique; everyday life should be portrayed in a realistic, unselfconscious way."

Lorant admitted his working methods were not conventional, but neither was Picture Post a conventional magazine. "I am sure the staff -- a very small one -- had suffered, thought they never really complained. That came years later when they relived their fantasies." He also held: "Theirs were not nine-to-five jobs. I am sure that at five in the afternoon, some of them would have liked to leave the office and go to the nearest pub. On most days, they could. But not on press days. On that day they had to stay at their desk, sometimes until midnight."

Lorant worked much in the way geniuses often do: cryptically. He says: "I did my work first in my head. I composed the pages, thinking them out in my mind, thus the youngsters on the staff could not understand what I was doing. It seemed to them that I was not doing anything. I put my ideas on paper only after they were fully developed in my head. I composed each issue as a whole, not piecemeal. Tom Hopkinson wrote that for days on end I did not seem to do any work at all. This is nonsense. Nobody ever accused me of being lazy. I was the first in the office in the morning and the last to leave. Picture Post appeared week after week, without a lag. How could it have been otherwise with such a large print run for each issue?"

Hallett stated: "Another myth suggested that Lorant often missed his deadline with the printers, sometimes by one day, sometimes by two. But there can be no logic in this, and he does not take such an assertion seriously. 'How can any editor go to press 24 or 48 hours after his set deadline? No printer would tolerate it. To keep the huge presses idle for two days? How could the printer catch up with the printing? Editors and printer have always had differences. The printer wanted to get all of the material as soon as possible -- to have enough time for the preparation of plates and, of course, to save on overtime -- while the editor wanted to stretch deadlines as long as possible to include the latest stories.'"
To be sure, Lorant's success with Picture Post was generally due to his ability to "appeal to the common man". Hopkinson and Hutton already had shown such proclivities, and their inclinations and the similar penchants of other staff members were reinforced by Lorant's egalitarian credo. (7) Hopkinson's observations about Lorant could be truly balanced at times: "I had come to feel not only great admiration for Lorant but also a real affection for him -- or at least for one side of him. For he was, of all the people I had ever known, the one in whom the most contradictory qualities coexisted unresolved. His courage at times astonished me; at others he became preoccupied with self-protection. He could be loyal to his colleagues; or else -- overcome with suspicion that they meant to do him harm -- would ensure getting his own blow in first. He could be completely realistic or he could expect, and demand, the impossible of life and other people. He could be both generous and its opposite." (8)

No matter his contradictions or perhaps because of them, Lorant was able to make Picture Post into an overnight success, and he keep his magic going. His staff, then, was fortunate to have a man of his abilities at the helm early -- when it was not clear the magazine would be able to keep its early success going long. He had the uncanny capacity to retain his staff's loyalty when they worked for him, and yet cause them to question his methods later. Hopkinson was the most vocal critic of Lorant's inability to do work more quickly. And yet, he could also write that Lorant had a consummate sense of timing.

Hopkinson recall years later that Lorant, when he started the magazine in 1938, had been "like a great comedian who sees himself united with his audience in a mysterious relationship. They expected certain things from him and it was his job to see they got what they expected." (9) To that end, Lorant maintained a somewhat difficult relationship with his staff, a relationship that still managed to obtain the necessary work at best possible times. No one ever accused Picture Post of having a bad sense of timing or boring content early, though some (including Hulton) would later discredit its sense of national loyalty.

But if anyone ever doubted Lorant's hatred of Hitler, Nazism, Fascism, or racist policies anywhere, then they surely did not know Lorant -- or his staff either. And when war was declared on Sunday, September 3, 1939, Lorant was pleased the British were entering the fray against his former jailers. If it would take another year before the Blitz truly began to affect Londoners, a year during which Lorant took shelter in America, Picture Post did not hesitate to attack "Der Fuhrer" continually. Lorant led the journalistic barrage a while, and then departed for safer shores.

Picture Post's first tightly-knit staff of writers and free-lance photographers -- not to mention administrative and support personnel -- added to "the master's" editorial proficiency; and Lorant found a way to make the most of relevant scientific, political, cultural, economic, military, and artistic news. And since Picture Post was his primary vehicle for free expression before Hitler's demise, it should be reviewed with that in mind.

In the end, Lorant conformed to no one editorial rule slavishly. But he did adhere to one principle more than most others: never underestimate the intelligence of your readers. They can all too quickly turn a blind eye on one's efforts. Be grateful always for readers, as your present author here is to you. (10)
Chapter 8

The Issues Dealt With First by Picture Post

"The result of his (Lorant's) walking up and down was a picture story 'Back to the Middle Ages' (Picture Post, November 26, 1938), in which the most ferocious portraits of the Nazi leaders -- Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, Julius Streicher the chief Jew-baiter -- were contrasted with the faces of those scientists, writers and actors they were persecuting. Out of all the thousands of picture magazines I have since read and studied, this remains for me the most powerful example of photographs used for political effect. The photographs became cartoons, hammering home their point more effectively than pages of argument and rhetoric, and for me a picture story such as this, or that on 'The Life of an Unemployed Man' (Picture Post, January 21, 1939) produced by Sydney Jacobson and Kurt Hutton, made up for days of frustration and nights when I walked back to Fulham from Fleet Street because the last tubes and buses had all gone." (1)

"Lorant's success with Picture Post was undoubtedly his ability to 'appeal to the common man'. He also had an acute political awareness of developments within a Europe in turmoil; with Hitler on the march, with Mussolini assisting him; with Stalin's rule in Russia, Lorant in Picture Post came out on the side of humanity, on the side of decency, on the side of common sense. Now, over 50 years later, the older population still remembers Picture Post vividly and with affection." (2)

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Tom Hopkinson wrote memorably: "Though I curse and complained over difficulties which I felt could be avoided, it was Lorant's sense of timing which made the magazine. He had to feel inside himself just what was wanted. In this way a magazine is something quite different from a newspaper." Hopkinson then pointed out: "The newspaper comes in over the tape machines (or 'wire machines' as the Americans call them), also from the dispatches of its correspondents overseas and the material brought in by reporters, so that editing news is largely a matter of selecting, rewriting and arranging material already in existence." He compared that to his magazine’s approach: "But for a magazine like ours, which went on sale more than a week after it had gone to press, the one thing fatal was to follow news. Far better to be capricious -- make a number out of life on Mars or the high price of footballers -- than base next week's issue on today's events. Anything can be right, provided it sells enough copies and contributes to building up the paper's special image."

Hopkinson cited an anecdote: "One morning in November (1938) I found Lorant walking up and down his office, black with thought. When angry or concentrated he put on what (Maxwell) Raison called his 'rabbit face'; his brow sloped steeply back into his hair, his mouth was compressed to a short line, his eyes glared with suspicion.

"What's the matter, Stefan?"

"This bloody Hitler! These bloody pogroms! You see the papers?"

"Yes, I know. But…"
"What do they expect of me? What are the readers wanting me to do? How do I hit back at those bastards?"

Lorant, like the American novelist Norman Mailer, believed there is nothing automatic about freedom and democracy. They require hard work. (3) "Back to the Middle Ages" emerged from his "walking up and down his office" that day in late 1938. That story's introduction -- just beneath the title -- suggests what is to come, in 22 straightforward words: "A fortnight ago persecution on a scale unknown even in Germany broke out against the Jews. Here is a brief factual record."

Above the title on the first two-page spread appear four figures of 20th Century German totalitarian authority. First comes Goering, arm raised and spouting. The caption: "Hermann Goering. -- Economic dictator of Germany. Went straight from school to become a fighting pilot in the (first world) war. After the war, was inmate of a mental home in Sweden. A Swedish court decided he was not fit to have custody of the children of his first marriage. He once said: ‘When I hear the word culture, I push back the safety catch of my revolver.’ First man to think that guns are better than butter.” Beneath Goering, at bottom of page, is the picture of a Jewish storefront -- no people are seen there. The caption reads: "Anti-Jewish signs on a Jewish clothing-shop in Vienna. One on the left says that the owner is on holiday in Dachau concentration camp."

Further right, and along the top of the spread run three more photos of Nazis. The next caption begins: "Julius Streicher. -- Nazi boss of Franconia. Jew-baiter No. 1. Owner of the notorious 'Stuermer.' A former schoolmaster who was expelled from his profession." The rest of the caption below the akimbo arms of Streicher concludes: "Suffers from epileptic fits."

The caption and "passive" photo just right of Streicher's read: "Adolf Hitler. -- Chancellor and Fuhrer. A former housepainter, his only education an Austria elementary school, where he was a dull pupil. Speaks no language but German, writes ungrammatical German, declares that he reads only what he knows will please him to read. Two months ago, said the ‘terrible sufferings’ of the [Sudeten] Germans could no longer be tolerated by Germany, and would be stopped at the cost of war."

On the far right is the pointing, mouth-going image of a "great orator" by some descriptions. The caption reads: "Paul Goebbels. -- Minister for Propaganda and Enlightenment. Entitled to call himself 'doctor,' he is one of the few Nazi leaders with a University education. Owes his academic distinctions to studies under Dr. Gundolf, a Jewish professor at Heidelberg University. His wife, a Belgian war refugee, was adopted and brought up by a Jewish family in Berlin. He says all Jews must be eliminated from German life."

Above the four equally proportioned photos at page-top runs the super-caption: "The four guardians of German culture today: they shield its purity from the 'contaminated race.'" Below these idols of the "Ideal race," in quiet type, is the text proper, which outlines the history behind the infamous "Crystal Night" -- November 9-10, 1938 -- when the Jews of Germany were oppressed in large numbers, in new and unspeakable ways.

The second spread for this story is topped with the super-caption: "These are some of the world-famous Jews for whom there is no room in Nazi Germany to-day." The top four, equally proportioned photos reveal Albert Einstein ("The greatest physicist since Newton") benignly smoking a pipe; Sigmund Freud ("Founder of Psychoanalysis") attired neatly; Luise Rainer ("Brilliant stage and film actress") looking off-camera at an angle; and Elizabeth Bergner ("Once the most idolized actress in Germany") looking off-camera and up. Beneath their portraits, used smaller, are portraits of eight other Jews. The top caption reads: "And these are some of the Jews whose work made Germany great." They are Scientist Henirich Hertz (1857-1894); Chemist Fritz Haber (1868-1934); Chemotherapist Paul Erlich (1854-1915); Shipping Genius and Suicide Albert Ballin (1857-1918); Modern Painter Max Liebermann (1847-1935); Poet and Journalist Heinrich Heine (1797-1856); Composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847); and Composer-Conductor Gustav Mahler (1860-1911).
The third spread shows examples of the racially motivated economic ostracism the German Jews had to face in those days. Anti-Jewish signs were all over Germany in 1938, and three of these are pictured on the upper third of the left page. Beneath these are two five-picture rows of more German-Jewish leaders. The first row shows Playwright Ernst Toller; Film-Director Ernst Lubitsch; Conductor Bruno Walter; Biographer and Historian Stefan Zweig; and Theatre Impresario Max Reinhardt. Above these five, the lead caption reads: "These Are Some of the Artists Driven from Germany." The next row reveals five German-Jewish Nobel Prize Winners. They are Karl Landsteiner (Medicine, 1930); James Franck (Physics, 1925); Richard Willstatter (Chemistry, 1915); Alfred H. Fried (Peace, 1911); and Otto Warburg (Medicine, 1931).

Opposite these three rows of pictures are four pictures of the devastation wrought by racism. Three of these pictures show Crystal-Night-like destruction, while the fourth shows a park bench. Its caption reads: “For Aryans Only. A Sign on a Park Bench -- In a Vienna park, where human beings met as equals less than a year ago (nobody sits).” Finally, on the next page, a small picture tells the story of where the violence of the Third Reich began, if it can be given an exact date. The caption reads: "This Is How It Started -- A picture from 1933 after Hitler seized power. Through streets of Nurnberg a young Jew is forced to carry a poster saying, 'I seduced a Christian girl.'"

Hopkinson wrote of this essay in Picture Post 1938-50: "'Back to the Middle Ages' was an attempt to dramatize photographically the monstrous crime which had been -- and still was -- taking place in the middle of Europe, in the very heart of our Christian civilization. It sought to bring this crime home to readers, and to warn them never to trust men or to a party which could act like this. At that time, not two months after the elations of the Munich 'settlement,' and ten months yet before war broke out, such a warning was still desperately needed." And, indeed it was stated here brilliantly, and relatively "early on." (4)

Compared with the lyrically poetic images presented by Roman Vishniac in A Vanished World, another notable picture-story of European Jewry during the Third Reich, Stefan Lorant's layout does remind one more of bitter satire, and perhaps even arch "cartoon" political criticism; but both indictments of the Holocaust are deeply moving in a way. Vishniac's skill was in the evocative areas of socio-documentary photography; Lorant's ability lay in the provocative areas of the photo essay, at least in the comparison of these two records. (5)

But Lorant was concerned with other issues besides Nazism. Besides many articles on the "Phoney War" and one essay on Conservative MP Backbencher Winston Churchill in early 1939, there are dozens of other themes in Picture Post then. One of these, "Unemployed!" (Picture Post, January 21, 1939), tells the gripping tale of unemployed father and husband Alfred Smith. One dramatic photo from that Sydney Jacobson-Kurt Hutton essay is a view of Mr. Smith, back to the camera, looking up a fog-bound street, dog at his side. That picture would be used later by the magazine, during its coverage of the ongoing war-time suggestions for the difficult peace-time that would follow World War II. Picture Post blamed Mr. Smith's problems -- which included his struggling to put enough food on the table at home and his trying, hopelessly, to take care of his family's medical concerns -- on a failed socio-economic system in Britain. Created by human beings, the magazine indicated it could be fixed by human beings.

The war soon became real to British troops, and shortly after Lorant left for America, the German air-blitz would break out over England. The threat of invasion was becoming more germane to the British, and the "Two Nations" (mainly, rich and poor) depicted by Picture Post from its outset, would, in future, have to pull together, at least for a while. (6)

Perhaps Picture Post had not been on-time with its coverage of Prime Minister Chamberlain's "triumphant" return from Munich, his "peace agreement" with Hitler in hand, at the time of its inaugural issue. But the magazine did include that story in its second issue on October 8, 1938. And if Chamberlain could say to his fellow-citizens: "I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds," Lorant would soon reply with "Back to the Middle Ages," which demonstrated that Picture Post's first editor wanted badly to create a healthier insomnia. (7)
Chapter 9

Stefan Lorant's Honest Concern for His Own Safety Versus the Nazis

"Not to forget, not to allow oblivion to defeat memory: that is his obsession. Defying all dangers, surmounting all obstacles, he travels from province to province, from village to village, capturing slums and markets, a gesture here, a movement there, reflections of hope and despair, so that the victims will not wholly vanish into the abyss -- so that they will live on, past torture and past massacre. And he has won the wager: they live still, these victims of the villages, more alive than we who 'read' without understanding them. And yet -- such is the miraculous range of his gift, (he) can make them speak. Sometimes I think I prefer the storyteller in him to the photographer. But aren't they one and the same? It is always the man who is revealed in his work." (1)

"Wolf (Berthold), Joe (Freyn) said, had left Germany because 'he will not learn to kill other persons.'.... Hauled up before a military tribunal and ordered to join the army, he had fled abroad. Joe, with whom Wolf lived, had been imprisoned for refusing to say where he had gone. Since leaving Germany both had been perpetually on the move, unable to get permits to stay anywhere for long, and here they could only remain until November after which they thought they might attempt to find refuge in West Africa... But now, on this morning of 22 August (1938) as we sat at ease in deck chairs among holiday-makers on a part of the beach (at Nazarre, Portugal) not used by the fisherman, I glanced idly over a visitor's shoulder at the newspaper he was reading; I knew no Portuguese, but it was not hard to make out what the headline was saying.

"'We must go back at once,' I said to Gerti (Deutsch, Tom Hopkinson's wife).

"'Why?'

"'The Nazis have signed a pact with the Russians.'

"'So what?'

"'So it'll be war tomorrow or next day. I'll phone the embassy in Lisbon.'

The official advised us to take the first boat we could, and after two or three days' hanging around in Lisbon, we found berths on a British ship, the Delmo, sailing to Southampton. There were, I noted only six passengers (aboard), two traveling first-class, two second, and ourselves in the third class. Despite the imminence of war, there was little contact between us, and I spent most of my time writing down all I could remember about Wolf, Joe and their circle, out of which six years later would come a short novel, Mist in the Tagus, in effect a memorial to the two wanderers whose wanderings were to end altogether within a year of our meeting." (2)

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Stefan Lorant, Picture Post's founding editor, had a lot to fear if he were ever captured again by the Nazis. His book I was Hitler's Prisoner and his work on Picture Post demonstrate that. (3) But was Lorant in grave danger in Britain per se at the start of World War II? Besides being of Jewish ancestry and journalistically
powerful in 1940 Western Europe, Lorant was a good friend of Winston Churchill, Germany's chief enemy. Thus, his fate seemed sealed with an article he prepared in mid-1939. The caption beneath the shrunken layout, as used in "The Picture Post Story," reads: "The article in Picture Post: WIR WOLLEN DEN FRIEDEN! Written in both English and German, this article explains that it is not Britain's policy to encircle Germany. Readers who had friends in Germany were asked to detach and send these pages to them, so that they would realize there was no foundation to the charge of encirclement. Picture Post, 22 July 1939."

Just to its right is another shrunken layout -- this time to a German newspaper. Its caption reads: "...and the Nazi reaction to it: The German response published on the front page of Volkischer Beobachter, 23 July 1939. It attacks Lorant as the spokesman of the British Empire." (4) If Lorant's early liberal work in other parts of Western Europe during the late 1920s and early 1930s was not enough to cause Hitler Nightmares, then surely articles like "WIR WOLLEN DEN FRIEDEN" must have given "Der Fuhrer" considerable headaches. The German newspaper's reply probably had an effect on Lorant. Picture Post (under both Lorant and Hopkinson) was a leader in the effort to dismantle Hitler's power (e.g., the 1941 Committee under the leadership of Picture Post contributor J.B. Priestley, and Edward Hulton's sponsorship of the Home Defense forces, apparently had positive effects on the British nation during the Second World War).

Lorant was considering his options, then, when the British Army's retreat at Dunkirk (and recovery by ships back to England) forced him to think the Nazi invasion of Britain, imminent. Dunkirk was an operation lasting several days, concluding on June 4, 1940; it had at least one beneficial effect on British morale, despite the loss of France to the Germans -- it was a retreat in which so many were saved who might have otherwise died or been captured. But the war was not going well generally in 1940 for the Allies, and Lorant felt he had to consider new options for his own safety. (5)

In fact, the British Government was not always effective in protecting its residents from itself. Shortly after Lorant went to America in mid-1940, Picture Post's two most important cameramen then -- Germans Felix Man and Kurt Hutton -- were interned on the Isle of Man. The magazine immediately set about the task of negotiating for their release, but their temporary fates proved the British Government was not above making life difficult for people with connections (past or present) to Germany.

Moreover, the fate of Jews and other "undesirables" living in Europe was in no way safe then. Hitler would become the arch-villain in a real-life drama that would see six million Jews exterminated in Nazi concentration camps. And, as much as many of those Jews revealed spiritual courage in the ways they went to their deaths, there was nothing else about the pogroms of the Holocaust that can be seen as spiritually or physically uplifting -- unless, that is, one considers world opposition to Hitler's racism possibly having brought a speedier end to the war. The severely depopulated villages and cities of Eastern Europe, in particular, may have been viewed finally as the master-plan of a megalomaniacal murderer and his gang of thugs; and that is the way Hitler has been portrayed in Israel. The innocence of those Jews who died in that part of Europe just before and during World War II will never be forgotten (6).

Like Roman Vishniac, the legendary photographer of Jewry in pre-World War II Eastern Europe, Lorant had moved from place to place, taking pictures, writing, editing, and doing good work on behalf of humanity, including the Jewish people. Never content he was either as safe or as successful as he liked, he had kept moving -- from 1919 on -- away from the Fascists and Nazis, and towards freedom. His course was charted by the cultural and political geography of his work, and the very temporary "safety" he felt doing his job.

Hopkinson wrote of the tremendous upheaval that Londoners and Picture Post itself felt with the outbreak of war. The magazine was pressured by war-related situations constantly; and Lorant apparently felt that pressure. At one point, the offices of Picture Post had to be moved to the countryside, only to be moved back to London in spring 1940, "because of the difficulties of operating from outside." At Christmastime 1939, Lorant visited the United States -- where he gathered material for a special issue of the magazine, which would soon be published as a book. Lorant returned to England at the end of January 1940, after which the "Phoney War" did not long continue. The invasion of Norway and the failure of the British
expedition sent to help the Norwegians were followed in late spring by the Nazi seizure of Belgium and Holland.

When, in a few more weeks, France too collapsed, Lorant apparently became convinced Hitler would be arriving in Britain soon. The British did not mean to fight, he suggested, and even if they did, their military situation was impossible. The new Churchill Government might make defiant noises, but before long it would be forced to accept terms or face invasion; in either case, Lorant said, Hitler would soon be in control of Britain, as he was almost all of the rest of Europe. Hopkinson quoted Lorant in his autobiography: You British citizens will be all right -- all you'll lose is the freedom to say what you think. But we bloody foreigners will be handed over….I've been Hitler's prisoner once in Munich, I'm not waiting for him to catch up with me a second time."

Hopkinson noted he tried to convince Lorant otherwise: "I argued with passionate conviction that somehow this country would survive. America would be forced to come into the war. Financially we should be ruined, but at the end of it we should still be there. He (Lorant) would agree to stay, he said, if he were given British citizenship, which would at least be some protection when the German army landed." It was then that Hopkinson went to see the British Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, whom he knew from having worked with him on election campaigns, and Morrison told Hopkinson to talk with his assistant, Ellen Wilkinson. She seemed to think Lorant's British citizenship could be arranged. But then -- in a follow-up meeting -- Wilkinson apparently surprised Hopkinson by asking whether he knew his editor was already in negotiation with the U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, for admission into the United States. Morrison's assistant let Picture Post's assistant editor know British citizenship for Lorant could no longer be arranged.

Retracing our footsteps to August 1939, just before Britain's entry in the war, Hopkinson was in Portugal, on vacation with his new wife, Gerti Deutsch. They were taking in the sun and the beach, and they met some unusual people there. Hopkinson would write: "...the drama of the beach was not the only one in which we were involved. Living in Nazaré was a little group of expatriates from several nations, centring round two young Germans, a poet, Wolf Berthold, and a doctor, Joe Freyn. Wolf was away, and did not come back until we were actually in the bus on our way to Lisbon, but the others lived in his shadow and talked about him continually.

Hopkinson noted that Berthold had been called up for the German army, but the poet said he would rather be killed himself than to kill another person, and he fled thereafter to avoid prison. Freyn had also fled, after being imprisoned for having refused to say where Berthold had gone. When the Hopkinsons met that unlikely pair of martyrs, the Nazis were signing their famed non-aggression pact with the Russians. Berthold and Freyn were not Jewish, apparently; but they had angered the German authorities, and they met a cruel fate at Nazi hands within a year of their meeting the Hopkinsons. If pacifist non-Jews had something to fear from the Nazis, then surely Stefan Lorant, an influential Jewish-background journalist may have had even more to fear from them. (7)

By July 1940, Stefan Lorant was feeling the pressure. Perhaps the fact he was trying to draw America into the war against Hitler -- especially when he published A Picture Post Special (Issue): The United States -- was making matters worse for him. Lorant may or may not have been a prime target for Germany then. If so, he was thinking further ahead than the Nazis, and if his magazine's staff was not in as much danger as he was, even they could have come in for ill treatment if caught, particularly Man and Hutton. But then that pair would be interned in England only during the war, and perhaps as safe in that camp then as Lorant would soon be in America. (8)
Chapter 10

Stefan Lorant's Difficult Decision to Go to America, and the State of Picture Post When He Left

"I don't want to go. I was never in doubt about this. I want to stay in this country. I have chosen England as my home -- as my fatherland, when I was over thirty -- so I knew what I wanted. I love this country with all its faults -- with all its weaknesses -- because I somehow feel it is my country. But what can I do -- but go?... I have done everything -- what I asked was nothing else but a piece of paper which says, 'You are one of us, you belong to us, and if we are attacked you have the right to defend your country.' Is it so much to ask for this -- for all I have done? Film directors, slick businessmen, German doctors get their naturalizations lately -- why should the government keep mine back?... If I would stay and wait -- would it be worthwhile to go to a camp -- would it influence people's opinion if I did? I came to the conclusion that it would not. Because they wouldn't even know it. I am certain that even my own paper Picture Post wouldn't publish one single line if I would be arrested....I am not going for good.... I am hoping that this strange naturalization business gets through when I am away. As soon as I have word that they grant it -- I will fly back and go on with our work as though nothing happened...." (1)

"In the United States, these changes (the eclipse of the social documentary sensibility in the visual arts of the 1920s by non-realistic styles) were reflected not only in the direction taken by aesthetic photographers but in the images appearing in the periodical press, which joined with the new institution of advertising to project an image of the nation as an energetic titan ruled by rational industrial forces." (2)

"The German lead ended abruptly in 1933 when Adolf Hitler...seized control. Within a year or two most of the innovative editors and photographers were in France with Vu, in England with the Weekly Illustrated or the soon-to-be-created Picture Post. They were in Switzerland, Holland, and the U.S. as well, where their work inspired and aided a new group of like-minded photographers: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Werner Bischof, Robert Capa, Margaret Bourke-White, Peter Stackpole, and many more. The availability of photographers like Eisenstaedt in the U.S. directly influenced Henry Luce to launch Life magazine in 1936, and Gardner Cowles to introduce Look the following year. These publications rapidly became the most sophisticated and renowned newsmagazines in the history of photojournalism, and they were the training ground for the next generation: W. Eugene Smith, David Douglas Duncan, Gjon Mili, Lisa Larsen, George Silk, Philippe Halsman, Eliot Elisofon, Ernst Haas, John Dominis, Carl Mydans -- to name less than one-tenth of those whose work has defined the nature of modern photojournalism." (3)

"In view of his experiences under Hitler, I could well understand Lorant's wishing to have two strings to his bow by applying for naturalization and at the same time arranging for a visa to enter the United States, but it seemed unrealistic to imagine that, once he had gone, there would be any possibility of securing naturalization to allow him to return." (4)

* * * * *

Tom Hopkinson wrote: "Only a day or two later (after he had learned from Ellen Wilkinson that Stefan Lorant had approached the U.S. Ambassador for admission to the United States) Lorant told me he had made up his mind to leave since the British Government had done nothing for him, and he kindly offered to take Toni's (Hopkinson's first wife) and my children, Susan and Lyndall, with him, since a number of
people at this time were sending their children to America for safety. I asked Tony her opinion, which was the same as mine. We therefore thanked him for the offer but said the children would remain in Britain."

Hopkinson noted: "Before he left on the Britannic ('The Britannic held 778 passengers, including 272 children. Among the passengers were Mr. Noel Coward, Mr. Stefan Lorant, Mme. Tabouis and Viscount Stonehaven.' Daily Telegraph, 20 July 1940.), the last ship on which it would be possible for private citizens to book a passage, I wrote to him expressing my own debt to him, and thanking him for all I had learned from him." (5) Lorant replied in the letter quoted at chapter outset.

Lorant's decision to leave England -- for what he said he thought would be a brief time, until he could obtain British citizenship -- was a major move. He had been to the United States a few months before that - on a business trip to gather material for the special U.S. issue of Picture Post. While he was there, he scouted the terrain. He even traveled by bus. When Lorant returned to England, then, he had a pretty good idea about America. He said he liked it, but also kept saying England was where he had staked his claim. Lorant's letter to Hopkinson indicated the sort of conflict he was undergoing then. He wanted to defend England, not to mention his own integrity, by taking on Hitler more directly. And yet, he knew his situation had been problematic in London; and realized his best personal, if not professional, chances were in America.

Because Lorant had made money in England, he was able to purchase a homestead soon after moving to the United States. Some people might even say he made his move permanent as soon as possible, and never planned on returning to England to live. But just because Lorant decided to make his home in Lenox, Massachusetts (and lived there for half a century) does not mean he fully intended to do so when he arrived in New York City in mid-summer 1940. His letter to Hopkinson quoted at chapter outset, sent just before he left for America, tells his story better.

Lorant had put down fair roots in England, having moved into a place in the English countryside (Aldenham) and begun three ambitious new magazines since 1934 -- the Weekly Illustrated (1934); Lilliput (1937); and Picture Post (1938). And besides establishing himself in journalistic and artistic circles, he had also befriended the political elite. Lorant had even gone so far as to see to the successful production of the BBC's radio version of I Was Hitler's Prisoner in June 1940. If Picture Post's founding editor had any plans to leave England for good, he was mainly keeping them to himself. When he left, then, he departed with his livelihood temporarily behind him. He would have to make a new start in America; and he did.

Lorant's picture histories and biographies of U.S. Presidents are still visually and literarily informative works. He is given the credit, among many he acquired in America, of having completed the first picture biography about Abraham Lincoln. And his book The Glorious Burden, a history of the U.S. Presidency, contains political and cultural erudition via carefully edited pictures and text.

If Lorant righted himself eventually in America, in England Tom Hopkinson found himself in a difficult position in the middle of 1940. As Hopkinson noted later: "The problem weighing on me was that of making the layouts -- the choosing, organizing and arranging of the photographs, on which the success of a picture magazine depends just as much as on the work of the photographers." Lorant's “temporary” replacement continued: "It was this aspect (the matter of layouts) of which Lorant was master, having trained himself in it for the past twelve years, but from the moment he talked of leaving, even though I did not expect him actually to go, I had set myself to learn everything from him that I could… It would always be possible to find someone to take charge of the text, but if the picture side of the magazine were not handled properly our whole enterprise would fail. Accordingly I arranged to see every picture story before it went over to Lorant, and would look carefully through it and try to imagine how I would arrange it into pages; then when it came back later, I would study his layouts and see with how much greater originality he had done the work. But I had been doing this for only a few weeks and was already faced with having to put into practice what, if anything, I had learned."
Once Lorant had left for America, Hopkinson asked Maxwell Raison for a few months' trial as interim editor, "saying that in the meantime I did not want to be appointed editor nor to have my name printed on the title page; we should manage as best we could and discuss my position later when we saw what happened to the paper." Hopkinson added: "With difficulty I managed to persuade my old friend Charles Fenby to leave the Oxford Mail, of which he was now editor, and take my place as assistant editor in charge of the writing side. It was a fortunate choice, since with him Charles brought a more thorough journalistic background than I had ever managed to acquire, plus a wide range of acquaintances in various fields of life whom we could call on for articles or advice."

Then some new faces were added to what had been a fairly tidy little staff. These fresh people included: Macdonald Hastings, Maurice Edelman, A.L. Lloyd, and Anne Scott-James -- all writers -- and Bert Hardy, the photographer who perhaps more than any other cameraman hired by Picture Post would have a lasting impact on the magazine's photo essays. Hopkinson concluded the chapter "In Charge" in Of This Our Time: "By the end of September I was again sent for by the general manager (Raison). He said it was evident that all was going well and they (Hulton and the Directors) had no anxiety about the paper's future. They asked me to become editor officially and proposed to double my salary, making it up also for the past three months. In this way, just as suddenly as I had found the way into journalism opening out after six years' struggle, I now found my money troubles ended; and in place of a car which had cost 27 (pounds).10s.0d. and could scarcely ever be coaxed out of the garage, I now had a brand-new one, the first new car I had ever owned, costing no less than 167 (pounds), and starting whenever I switched the engine on." (6)

A rich future still lay ahead for Picture Post in 1940, and Americans, consciously or unconsciously, awaited the professional advancement of Lorant on its shores. New territories were being charted by picture magazines everywhere from the 1920s forward; but perhaps nowhere else were they being developed commercially as well as they were in America. Life and Look magazines had been in operation for only a short time when Lorant arrived permanently in America. And there would have been chances for the pioneering editor to do business with those organizations, or others like them.

Lorant, though, decided early on in America that he would make his own opportunities professionally, and no longer depend on the whims of magazine publishers, staff subordinates, Nazis, or weekly deadlines to pay his bills. Thus began a stepped up, exciting phase of his career -- the business of book-authorship. Along the way, Lorant fathered two sons -- Mark, who died at age 19 in an auto accident in 1985, and Christopher -- and earned an honorary doctor's degree (from Knox College in 1958) and an M.A. degree (from Harvard University in 1961). (7)

Stefan Lorant left big shoes to fill at Picture Post. But he was a man who knew how to get the most from his staffs wherever he worked, and the men and women who remained in England to work for the magazine he'd helped start, picked up where he 'd left off. If "The Hopkinson Decade" was just dawning on Picture Post's staff and readership in July 1940, Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson helped lead the way into a dynamic stage in the crafting of the modern photo essay. (8)
Part III

The Emergence of Tom Hopkinson as a Positive Editorial Force in His Own Right on Picture Post
Chapter 11

Tom Hopkinson's Background Before and Beyond Picture Post

“Tom Hopkinson helped in the preparation and launching of Picture Post, and edited it during its great years. He was born in 1905 and was educated in Oxford at St. Edward’s School and Pembroke College. He worked as a freelance journalist and took jobs in advertising and publicity before finding a way into journalism. From 1938-40 he was Assistant Editor of Picture Post, and Editor from 1940-50, editing Lilliput at the same time from 1941-46. He spent the years between 1958 and 1966 in Africa, first as Editor of the well-known African magazine Drum, and later in training journalists to take over their own newspapers and radio after their countries attained independence. For his work in Africa he was awarded the C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) in 1967… From 1968-69 he was attached to the University of Sussex as Senior Fellow in Press Studies, and from 1970-75 was Director of the Centre for Journalism Studies at University College, Cardiff, the first such centre to be established at any British University. He (was) the author of several novels and two collections of short stories, and was knighted in the 1978 New Year Honours List.” (1)

* * * *

(Henry Thomas) Tom Hopkinson was born on April 19, 1905, in Manchester, England, the son of John Henry and Evelyn Mary (Fountaine) Hopkinson. Hopkinson’s father was a clergyman in the Church of England, who moved his family more than once. Rev. Hopkinson had been an archaeologist and university lecturer prior to taking up his calling. During the First World War, he joined the Army as a private soldier. Later he became Archdeacon of Westmorland. Tom’s mother had been a mistress in a boys’ school, and also taught her five children to read, write, and spell correctly – as well as some French and Latin – before they were sent away to school at seven or eight years of age. Her father, like her husband, had been a clergyman. Tom Hopkinson’s parents died within a few months of each other.

Tom Hopkinson attended preparatory school in Lawrence House at St. Annes-on-Sea on the Lancashire coast. He went on to graduate from Pembroke College, Oxford in 1927, from where he departed for London and began a soon-to-be-terminated stint in advertising and publicity. Giving up advertising in 1933, Hopkinson found a position as assistant editor in January 1934 on The (“new”) Clarion, a magazine dedicated to the common man, which had sprung up from The (“old”) Clarion, which had been founded in 1891, a magazine devoted to a biblical type of socialism that became popular with laborers who enjoyed cycling holidays in the countryside.

However, the new Clarion did not prove popular and was soon preempted (in 1934, the same year it had started) by a radically new picture magazine, also begun by Odhams Press, the Weekly Illustrated. Its editor was Stefan Lorant, who had recently arrived from the Continent. Circulation soon topped 250,000 per week, and for a brief time, Weekly Illustrated was a success. During the four years Hopkinson worked there, he began to test himself more as a writer—composing short stories (he’d already done a novel or two) that eventually would sell.
Soon to be divorced from first wife Antonia White, also a writer, Hopkinson later saw their work reviewed together when the U.S. magazine New Republic (April 28, 1946) critiqued the American edition of the Horizon collection of stories published by Cyril Connolly. That review reads in part: “A Moment of Truth” (White’s story) is a strange and remarkable achievement for a woman. It is the study of a married couple—a rather dull, long-suffering man and a madly neurotic wife—who ‘find for the first time in their life together… complete accord’ only after she realizes that he has desired her death and he has acknowledged this truth to himself.”

The review continued regarding White’s real former husband’s “The Third Secretary’s Story”: “Tom Hopkinson’s work, oddly enough, has something of the same quality. Both writers are preoccupied with aberrations of the mind. Hopkinson, however, gains his effects by a less strained, less impressionistic prose. Effortless and classic in style, it flows like a river over a smooth bed of sand. And, despite his insistence on realism, he manages to insert into everything he undertakes an element of fantasy, of the supernatural, describing both states in a manner so natural that what is manifestly abnormal human behaviour you accept not only as normal, but inevitable.” (3)

That effortless, classic, realistic style, with a touch of fantasy always present, too, would serve Hopkinson well wherever he went after 1938, the year he resigned from Weekly Illustrated (which failed later in 1938) to become assistant editor on Picture Post. In his many novels, that style is the life preserver that saves the reader from “drowning” – a subject Hopkinson dealt with in one of his short stories, but which he felt he had not handled properly.

Among his book-length writings, the following stand out: A Wise Man Foolish (novel, Chapman & Hall, 1930); A Strong Hand at the Helm (political satire, Gollancz, 1933); The Man Below (novel, Hogarth, 1939); Mist in the Tagus (novel, Little, Brown, 1946); The Transitory Venus (short stories, Horizon Magazine, 1948); Down the Long Slide (novel, J. Cape, 1953); George Orwell (short biography, British Council, 1953); The Lady and the Cut-Throat (short stories, J. Cape, 1958); In the Fiery Continent (autobiographical writing, Doubleday, 1962, 1963); South Africa (non-fiction, Time-Life Books, 1964); (editor and author of introduction to) Picture Post 1938-50 (non-fiction, Penguin,1970); (with his wife, Dorothy Hopkinson) Much Silence: The Life and Work of Meher Baba (non-fiction, Gollancz, 1974); Bert Hardy: Photojournalist (photography, Gordon Fraser, 1979); Of This Our Time: A Journalist’s Story, 1905-50 (Hutchinson, 1982); and Under the Tropic (Hutchinson, 1984).

Hopkinson was a prolific editor and author, and it is no surprise that after his 12 years of service (10 as editor) with Picture Post, he moved on to other equally challenging assignments. One of these proved to be his assumption of editorial controls on Drum magazine in South Africa, in 1958. Hopkinson’s background on Picture Post – where he had been a reform-oriented editor, to the point of his own downfall following his disagreement with Owner Edward Hulton about the potential printing in 1950 of an atrocities tale from the Korean War – came in handy with Drum. Aimed at a black audience, and staffed mainly by blacks, Drum was a progressive, if a bit rough-hewn publication when Hopkinson took over there.

The new editor was appalled by the consequences of South Africa’s apartheid system of white supremacy, and he regularly had to save his black reporters from mistreatment at the hands of police. During Hopkinson’s tenure, the nightmarish nature of apartheid became apparent internationally when South African authorities killed dozens of peaceful civil rights demonstrators at Sharpeville in 1960. Drum, observed the Times Literary Supplement, “scooped the world press” with its coverage of those events.

Although Hopkinson led the magazine’s political and technical reform efforts, tutoring some now-famous South African journalists (including the acclaimed photojournalist Peter Magubane): he decided to leave his post in 1961 – once more unable to satisfy the conservative tastes of his magazine’s owner. Hopkinson resettled in Kenya as director of the International Press Institute’s Nairobi center, which trained black journalists for the many newly independent nations of Africa. He and third wife, Dorothy, said they enjoyed themselves very much there.(4)
After the Hopkinsons returned to England in late 1966, Tom remained interested in journalism education. His next job was with the University of Sussex, where he was given the title Senior Fellow in Press Studies. Hopkinson would write in Under the Tropic (a memoir mainly about his time in Africa): “My task was to draw up a plan under which that university -- and others that might later wish to do so -- could be brought into journalism training.” The editor-educator went on to say: “When the plan took shape it had to be acceptable to the universities, whose values were academic, and to the newspapers and other media, whose values were practical and down-to-earth, and I started by going around the country to examine the various ways in which journalists were already being trained.”

Hopkinson’s contributions with the University of Sussex apparently added a great deal to the efforts by the National Council for the Training of Journalists to assist school-leavers in learning more about their profession in Britain.(5) Hopkinson also visited the United States to study American journalism education programs and was founding director of the Centre for Journalism Studies at University College in Cardiff, Wales from 1970 to 1975. Later, he settled into a slightly less strenuous routine, when he returned to Oxford, where he’d graduated a half century before.

In two letters to your author written just a short time before his death, Sir Tom responded to my requests, with a bibliography and some basic information from his first days as editor of Picture Post. Tom Hopkinson gave me the idea for a book about the British magazine he had worked so hard to make a first-rate publication, and let me know that all good journalists have to use their time wisely. I am grateful for his inspiration.(6) Sir Tom Hopkinson died in Oxford on June 20, 1990, from the effects of cancer. Contemporary Authors states in his obituary notice: “Administrator, educator, journalist, and author. Hopkinson was a skilled, iconoclastic British journalist whose influence was felt across the British Commonwealth.”(7)

In many ways, Tom Hopkinson was the archetypal editor when he worked for Edward Hulton on Picture Post. Slow to anger, yet precisely responsive when he did become moved, he used words and pictures well. Classically refined enough to deal with the literary, artistic, political and academic lights of his day, he was also practical when he had to see eye-to-eye with Bert Hardy and James Cameron – two talented, yet earthy journalists whose work he treasured while he worked with them, and later, as well.

Hopkinson’s best professional years were probably spent with Picture Post. But besides being an editor and journalist of note, he also crafted an honorable place for himself as a novelist and teacher; and wasn’t a bad family man, either, despite three marriages. His three children – Lyndall Hopkinson Passerini, Nicolette Hopkinson Roeske, and Amanda Hopkinson Binns – lend credence to that view.

In late July 1940, then, Tom Hopkinson had a lot to look forward to, as did the magazine he had just taken over. But there needed to also be a lot of work done to insure its future. Photos and stories had to be assigned; advertising had to be sold; letters had to be written and phone calls made; pictures had to be developed and edited; stories had to be typed and edited; layouts had to be prepared; covers had to be planned; printers, drivers and distributors had to be satisfied; the staff had to be paid. In short, a leading magazine had to continue leading. Would Tom Hopkinson and his staff be up to the task? It seems they were, at least for a decent period of years.
“Now, with success, came realization that the effort had to be repeated every week. Because we had had so little time for preparation and not known till a few weeks before the first issue whether we should have a magazine at all, there was virtually no staff, particularly on the writing side. Whenever I complained of this to Lorant his answer had been, ‘Find someone to help you out now. Later we look around.’ … I did the best I could, but of the first three (journalists) to whom I gave a trial, one needed an hour to write half a page; another was tired out by evening… and the real discovery, Lionel Birch, was carried off to the hospital for an appendicitis operation while out on a story late at night. Faced with the task of writing a large part of the magazine myself, I urged Lorant to organize a steady flow of work throughout the week instead of handing me the whole issue in a bundle at the last moment. ‘But how do I know which stories I am using till I have planned what is going in the whole paper?’ he would snort and glare…. Finally the spirit would descend on him. He would gather all the folders of photographs together, order them to be carried to his Lilliput office, and from there between seven and midnight a rain of rough layouts would come pouring out, covered with scribbled instructions…. Sometimes I would sit looking in despair and rage at the pile of rough layouts covered with impossible instructions before I could summon up the energy to get started. Sometimes we were a day late going to press. Sometimes…two…. Once when I remonstrated bitterly that it was hardly worth working that afternoon since we were already so far behind, he replied: ‘You are quite right, Tom! We take our children to the circus,’ and we did. The printers,…delighted to find a print order for a million copies a week…, made prodigious efforts. Once, rather than let us leave their works for dinner,… they ordered in a complete dinner from somewhere which was served to us among the proofs and paste-ups. When there was snow and heavy frost in the north, (Vernon) Holding and his circulation department organized teams of unemployed men to pass bundles of copies over a snowbound pass to lorries waiting on the further side, having provided supplies of food and coffee to keep them working through the night. Success carried everything along. Two months after the first issue our print order was a million. After four months it was 1,350,000.” (1)

“… from the moment (Lorant) talked of leaving…. I had set myself to learn everything from him that I could…. Accordingly I arranged to see every picture story before it went over to (him), and would look carefully through it and try to imagine how I would arrange it into pages; then when it came back later, I would study his layouts and see with how much greater originality he had done the work. But I had been doing this for only a few weeks and was already faced with having to put into practice what, if anything, I had learned.” (2)

“I had spent many hours putting together my text and in my mind my article took pride of place and needed to be supplemented by photographs and other visual material. But here (in Lorant’s Lenox, Massachusetts home) my precious text had become secondary to the picture story. That is how Lorant saw it. Even the layout, the total story, had taken importance over individual pictures. It had become a simple and logical story typical of his style in Picture Post and his earlier pictorial magazines.”(3)
Tom Hopkinson and Stefan Lorant did not always get along well with each other; and yet, there was a kind of “affection” between them that made the abnormality, even seeming anarchy, of the editorial decision-making process on Picture Post sensible enough to both to warrant surprisingly healthy circulation figures. Perhaps the better feelings between the pair started when Lorant began Weekly Illustrated, with Hopkinson on staff. Hopkinson soon recognized Lorant was something of a genius.

Hopkinson noted later that in those first few months of their relationship, he came to comprehend that, “Lorant understood photographs as no one else I had ever met understood them. He had been both a still and movie cameraman -- he claimed to have been cameraman on Marlene Dietrich’s first film (he later claimed he had given her her first film-test and she didn’t get the part, though they remained lifelong friends) -- and he thought in pictures not words, appearing to possess a mental record of any photograph he had ever seen and where he saw it.” (4) Probably, then, Lorant’s best layouts for Weekly Illustrated, done in 1934 -- like “Mussolini: What is He Planning?” (photographed by Felix H. Man) or “Midnight in Paris” (which Brassai photographed, and which has been called a “varied” and “difficult” layout to produce, yet one which told a “small evocative story” using black framing with a series of mainly night-time stills) -- influenced Hopkinson early on. (5)

It was no editorial “short-course,” then, that led Hopkinson to do a good job on Picture Post when Lorant moved to America. Hopkinson’s respect and even admiration for Lorant on Weekly Illustrated had already prepared the second Picture Post editor for much of what was to come. But it’s also clear Hopkinson sometimes felt frustrated by Lorant, because, as Lorant’s assistant editor on Picture Post, he had not been given the authority to get the job done as effectively as he would have liked. Lorant was a mixed blessing, then, to Hopkinson.

Hopkinson wrote: “Thinking over his (Lorant’s) character after he had left and realizing all he had achieved during only six years in Britain, I felt it was a disaster for the country as well as for the paper that he should now be leaving; but I also, on a personal level, felt relief. This was due partly to ambition and the wish to see if I could cope with the situation left me; but also to the removal of a weight, the problem of working in close cooperation with someone so unpredictable.”

Hopkinson continued: “Yes from his very changeableness, I had learned a valuable lesson. Up until the last two years I had always, I saw, expected men and women to be of one piece; mixtures indeed of a goody and a baddy, but consistent mixtures, or at least more or less consistent mixtures. I knew now that they were not… I had learned this from looking closely at someone else. It would be some years before I realized that I might have reached the same conclusion much earlier if only I had formed the habit of looking closely at myself.” (6)

Hopkinson tried to make up for his lack of introspection during his early years by writing a fair amount of autobiographical material later. Without his personal and situational analysis later in life, the historical record surrounding Picture Post would be significantly weaker. His personal insight into the workings of journalists there, and in other places as well, makes for good reading and research. Of course, Hopkinson was a person with his own biases, too, and because of that, it’s fair to say he and Lorant agreed on many things, and disagreed on others.

One thing they both early agreed on was, a picture or photo essay had to be composed of many “third effects,” and words and pictures had to be combined in appealingly informative ways. As Lorant said about his early editing in Germany: “I didn’t think that the single picture was enough. I thought it would be interesting to see how Gandhi eats breakfast -- to see more.” Thus was born the modern photo essay, conceived of in basic, yet inventive, informed terms. (7) A powerful story-telling device began to take root, then, and grow -- and today, the photo essay is still composed of the same crucial elements described above: photographs combined together to create third effects, and used in dramatic conjunction with words, illuminating one another as they evoke and/or provoke intellectual and emotional aesthetic responses.
Something else Hopkinson came to agree more and more with Lorant on was the impromptu nature of the journalistic process. No matter how much a photographer or a writer planned his or her report, it was still vital they respond to the situation they found themselves in, out in the field. Thus, “whirlwind journalism,” which included everything that went into the production of the magazine -- from the difficulties of distribution in wintertime, to the payment of all support personnel and printers, to the proper visualization (not pre-visualization) of a picture when the photographer only had limited chances to come up with the best images, to the proper choice of a word used large in an otherwise weak layout -- combined with the improvisational nature of the process to produce a readable product.

Hopkinson had said there was one problem when he took over from Lorant; that had to do with arranging pictures, the keys to each layout. And Stefan Lorant inspired him to capture readers for ten years on Picture Post with the same sort of courage that had gone into the Hungarian’s provocative, yet basic approach to the otherwise complicated design process both men helped make essential to modern living. As important as pictures are to the proper design of magazines, or newspaper feature pages for that matter, words too are key, and the relationship of the various parts must be harmoniously composed and perceived. There may be some anarchy in the methods pointing toward the final design, but there must be a significant third effect achieved among pictures, and even with the words, if each layout is to be truly modern.

We have led off this chapter with one quotation pertinent here -- the third, dealing with Michael Hallett’s response to Lorant’s layout of “The Picture Post Story”. Every good writer cherishes his or her best words, just as every good photographer takes pride in his or her best pictures. But it is the designer who can bridge the gap between two different elements of expression – by finding common ground in the layouts of the two elements together. And if the late Life Executive Editor Wilson Hicks was referring only to pictures when he set out to expand upon the “third effect” Lorant first mastered, he wouldn’t have called his ground-breaking book Words and Pictures. A picture with words is still the basic unit of photojournalism.

There was no real short-course for Hopkinson that went into the making of his magazine from 1940 to 1950. He’d learned as he went from the time he met Lorant, and before, too. But Lorant taught him “the importance of envisioning feature stories in terms of text and photography.”(9) The “problem” for Hopkinson in July 1940 was to stop watching the master perform, and truly produce Picture Post himself. Getting past his first “live” layouts, then, may have been tough; but Hopkinson had been through tough times before, and survived, in 1940 and at other times, too.

Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson were professionals, conditioned by the crucible of experience to lead large staffs in the creation of significant journalistic products. They rarely second-guessed themselves once they found the course they felt they needed to be on. Hopkinson learned from Lorant, and Lorant learned from Hopkinson – over time. And if they disagreed on the details of magazine production from time to time, they agreed on the overall goal for the most important journalistic organization either of them ever helped create: Picture Post Magazine as a commercial and critical success.
Chapter 13

Tom Hopkinson Takes Over as a “One-Man Band,” and Assembles Some New Talent for Picture Post

“At the time Robert Capa came to London, my situation was: the editor had left for the U.S.; our two chief cameramen had been interned in the Isle of Man as ‘enemy aliens’; the three or four most experienced staff writers had joined the armed forces. I was a one-man band, desperate as to how I could keep the magazine alive. It could well be that, under these circumstances, Robert Capa had to wait a few days before I could see him for a proper talk. Later, when Magnum (the international photo agency Capa helped start) was founded, they gave exclusive rights in their stories to our rival, Illustrated. This was practical, because by then we had put a proper team of cameramen together, which Illustrated had not. It was therefore a most profitable outlet for their work.” (1)

“I asked (Maxwell) Raison for a few months’ trial, saying that in the meantime I did not want to be appointed editor nor to have my name printed on the title page; we should manage as best we could and discuss my position later when we saw what happened to the paper…. But our first joint task (Hopkinson’s and new Assistant Editor Charles Fenby’s) was to gather an effective staff. Honor Balfour, who later stood for Parliament as a Liberal, had been recruited already. Macdonald Hastings -- full of knowledge on everything connected with country life and sport -- had written several articles for us and now joined the staff. Before long we added Maurice Edelman, a young writer who would become a Labour MP in the 1945 election, and A.L. Lloyd, the expert on folk music, whom the BBC regarded as too left-wing to be allowed to handle programmes during a war for democracy. Our first woman editor was Anne Scott-James, who came to us from Vogue and would later become equally renowned for her work in newspapers, magazines, and television…. In addition, to my great excitement, we found a remarkable new photographer. Bert Hardy was a young Cockney, the eldest of seven children, who had left school at fourteen. He left on a Friday afternoon and started work on Saturday morning in a printing and developing works at ten shillings a week with sixpence an hour overtime…. When Bert Hardy came in to see me he was in his twenties and already an experienced cameraman…. By the end of September (1940) I was again sent for by the general manager (Raison). He said it was evidence that all was going well and they (Raison, Edward Hulton and the Directors) had no anxiety about the paper’s future. They asked me to become editor officially and proposed to double my salary, making it up also for the past three months.” (2)

* * * * *

Richard Whelan wrote in Robert Capa: A Biography that the great war photographer Capa “assumed that Picture Post would publish the convoy story (that he was working on in mid-1941) in England, but when he went to the magazine’s offices, he learned that Stefan Lorant had moved to the United States. Accustomed to being treated with the deference due him as the ‘Greatest War-Photographer in the World’ (as Picture Post had proclaimed him in 1938, with his story for the magazine on the Spanish Civil War entitled ‘This is War!’, Capa was annoyed that the new editor (Tom Hopkinson) kept him waiting.”

Whelan continued: “Finally he (Capa) stormed out to the nearest telephone booth and called Illustrated (successor to Weekly Illustrated, which had published some of his photographs in the mid-‘30s), whose editor, Len Spooner (later, a Picture Post editor), told him to come over right away. Spooner promptly bought the convoy story (related to Lend-Lease Policy) and told Capa he would like to publish his work regularly, thus beginning a close personal and business relationship.” (3)
Hopkinson was very much in need of good photographs and photographers at the time, but he was not in a position to honor Capa above all others. He must have needed to deal with people who were a bit less temperamental. Capa expected immediate acceptance from Hopkinson, who did not know Capa well; and the great war photographer was not willing to be patient. To be sure, Hopkinson would later write that he was always looking for good photographs as Picture Post’s editor. “It would always be possible,” he later wrote, “to find someone to take charge of the text, but if the picture side of the magazine were not handled properly our whole enterprise would fail.” (4)

Whether or not Hopkinson was still a “one-man band” in mid-1941 is debatable. And to be fair to Capa, who was said to have “stormed out” of Picture Post’s offices after waiting for Hopkinson to attend to him, Capa had just been on a slow-moving convoy across the Atlantic, and then held for several days in a “Patriotic Camp” in England, to see if his credentials were in order. Thus, his convoy pictures were especially dear to him -- if not necessarily to Hopkinson. (5)

But Hopkinson was still in a bind himself then. Having just committed himself to the layout process on the magazine as never before, he realized he needed more regular staff to meet readers’ needs. And he knew he was not quite the miracle-worker Lorant had been as editor, at least not yet. Thus, he was more than happy to keep the people around him whom he knew and trusted (the old staff that would stay, people like Honor Balfour, and the free-lancers whom he had come to know prior to his taking over as editor -- including Bert Hardy). But Hopkinson was somewhat wary of people he hadn’t worked with before -- unless they provided ideal backgrounds.

In any case, Hopkinson put Picture Post’s old staff to work immediately, upon taking over in July 1940. He had already approved Hardy’s new-found status as “regular free-lancer” in March 1940, before Lorant had left for America. And other new staff -- Assistant Editor Charles Fenby, Writers Maurice Edelman, A.L. Lloyd, Macdonald Hastings, and Woman’s Editor Anne Scott-James -- added immeasurable scope and promise to what Hopkinson could henceforth do as editor.

The new editor had already suffered or soon would suffer many losses to the war -- even before the German air-blitz began to take its toll on the British public in September 1940. That is, Sydney Jacobson, an “old” staffer, and Lionel Birch and Richard Bennett -- two staffers whom Hopkinson had managed to recruit -- joined the army; and German-born Felix Man and Kurt Hutton had been interned on the Isle of Man (as “enemy aliens,” much like many Japanese-Americans would be in the United States in 1942).(6)

If Hopkinson’s new staff wouldn’t have filled the bill immediately, he would have been in real trouble. However, they came through for him generally. Moreover, Hopkinson fulfilled his first layout duties; and Picture Post continued to do well. Part of the magazine’s success can be attributed to the war effort Lorant and Hopkinson had stood behind from the beginning. Both men were true anti-Fascists, and Hopkinson put together a re-formed staff with similar feelings.

In Hopkinson’s autobiography, he begins Chapter 15 (“Everybody’s War”): “It is hard in the climate of today to form an impression of those times in which men and women having worked a long day in factory or office took on every kind of voluntary work, often for nothing and without waiting for any instruction -- and sometimes made free use of buildings and materials without bothering to obtain permission.” Picture Post’s second editor continued: “All that had happened in the first nine months of war had convinced ordinary people that the country’s fate depended on themselves.” (My emphasis.)(7)

Indeed, one British woman’s actions in that war struck another British woman’s sense of duty archetypally -- through her courageous heart and head. Nineteen-year-old Joan Mehling MacKenzie was on a train headed for Wales on September 3, 1939, the first day of hostilities between Britain and Germany. Ms. MacKenzie would soon become a fire-spotter, one of those brave souls who watched the rooftops and airways over British cities for signs of German attack planes and roof-fires, the deadliest combination that nation had ever faced on its shores in war-time.
John Wukovits narrated: “Across the aisle of the train, she (Ms. MacKenzie) noticed a young mother placing her child into its protective gas bag, but MacKenzie saw that the mother had forgotten to bring along her own gas mask. ‘I remember thinking, “She has a little baby so her needs are greater than mine. I’m going to have to be gassed and give her mine.” You grow up fast in war.’” (8)

Growing up just as fast as Ms. MacKenzie was new Picture Post photographer Bert Hardy. Hardy was photographing his first war (he would later work as a cameraman in at least seven more), and he was doing some exceptional work -- including the 1941 essay “Fire-Fighters!” (9) Hardy told Leslie Shaw in 1980: “I wasn’t a writer, so I suppose I had to make my pictures tell the story -- I wasn’t a journalist in any sense -- not for the written word… I suppose I was a photo-journalist, yes. I really suppose the reason I became a good photojournalist -- if you like to say that I was a good photojournalist -- was because I couldn’t write what I wanted to say. I probably wanted to write -- I’d have loved to have written -- but I just couldn’t, not having the education, and so on. And I think that, in a way, is why I became a photojournalist.” (10)

Hardy was making “big money” then (about 100 pounds a week), and was pleased to be hired as a more permanent free-lancer for Picture Post in March 1940. He seems to have earned every penny; and his photo essays from the Blitz period are emblematic of the best work done on the Homefront by the magazine’s staff during that war.

But Hardy was called up by the British Army (in 1942), and even though he did send home every possible story to Picture Post when he wasn’t photographing for the army, he was not to be a full-time member of that magazine’s staff until 1946, when he left the service. Still, Hardy contributed many sterling photo essays to Picture Post during the war; and he was very much in Tom Hopkinson’s thoughts when overseas. Obviously, Hopkinson was very pleased to employ Hardy full-time once he did leave the service.

Hopkinson relied more on free-lancers during the war than perhaps at any other time of the magazine’s history. But there was a good corps of permanent staffers being built up then, as well, for the years after World War II. And Sydney Jacobson and other key troopers would return to the magazine after the war. Then, too, Felix Man and Kurt Hutton would be released from their internments; and if it hadn’t been for the technical expertise of Man, and for the humane undercurrents in Hutton’s work, many outstanding photojournalists who came up through the ranks on the magazine would never have been influenced by their examples.

In July 1940, when Lorant departed for America, then, Hopkinson felt a great responsibility had been placed on his shoulders. But he also knew, somehow there would be a sense of relief in his first days as Picture Post’s new editor, because Lorant had been a “chaotic genius” -- who had evoked both respect and worry from his staff. Hopkinson was “on his own” by the time the Second World War hit home to most Britons; and as much as he feared failure then, Picture Post’s new editor also knew he could do the job for Hulton, his staff, his advertisers, and his readers.(11)
Chapter 14

Stefan Lorant’s Decision to Leave for America Has Few Negative Effects on Picture Post Under Tom Hopkinson

“Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.’ It is one of Milton’s last demands of the Long Parliament in the Areopagitica. ‘The liberty to know’ is a peculiarly well-filled phrase. The liberty, and not the right: the reader cannot demand knowledge, he can only demand the opportunity to acquire it; the labour of which may or may not be well based; if he wants knowledge, he must have the proper information, as full and accurate as can humanly be had…. This knowledge, further, is the preliminary. Only when it is absorbed can there be utterance and argument. The reader, perhaps, asks no more than to know: it is already a considerable demand. But the writer, the journalist, asks also to utter and to argue freely. He must first know, and offer the same opportunity to others. Without that, he has not earned the liberties that go with it.” (1)

“Those first eleven months between the launching of Picture Post and the outbreak of war had been a wild scramble to catch up with the magazine’s success. Everything depended on the brilliance of one man -- Lorant. No one had ever got around to basic tasks -- building up a staff; organizing a methodical way of working; ensuring supplies of pictures through a chain of contacts at home and overseas; creating a really modern photographic library. … The war again was a special period. Most of our staff were in the forces. The size and shape of our magazine were dictated by paper rationing. Sales were fixed. Even the contents were to some extent controlled, since our material obviously had to be related to the war, and it was impossible to send staffmen overseas except to war fronts or on stories connected with the war effort. But from late 1945 all this began to loosen up, and during the next few years it was possible to a much larger extent for an editor to make the magazine he wanted. It also became possible to find and blend a talented staff together; to discover a proper method and routine of work; and to get together a picture library which would be unique in this country and of permanent value to publishing in all its forms.” (2)

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Stefan Lorant was a gifted man. And he ran Picture Post pretty much by himself. That is, HE made it go; and his staff was always somehow “secondary” to the magazine’s success. Thus, his departure from Picture Post in July 1940 should have dealt that magazine, its staff, and its readers more of a setback than it did. After all, Picture Post was not quite two years old when Lorant left for America; and its fate had to be dependent on its overall quality now, not on a central organizing genius -- an editor who created a formula for success in the layouts themselves, despite the changes in other ways that would take shape.

Perhaps the design formula (layouts that drew readers readily into and through the pages without drawing attention to their techniques per se), plus the genius of Hopkinson and his expanding staff, were why the magazine continued to succeed. Hopkinson and staff were quality people, with progressive, realizable goals to guide them daily, goals partly established by Lorant. Still, Hopkinson said he felt as if a weight had been removed from him when Lorant left -- i.e., the new situation wherein he no longer had to work with an unpredictable editor.(3) And if he would yet have to deal with an unpredictable publisher (Edward Hulton), at least Hulton generally kept out of the day-to-day business of running the magazine, until 1949-50, that is.
It is the journalist’s lot to ask the proper questions for each story; acquire the best possible information from the answers to those questions; come to know what people will be most concerned to hear in the ensuing story; and produce the copy and/or pictures needed to relate to its audience the subject that was first set forth for investigation -- whether more objectively, or more subjectively. In the end, the readers/audience should be able to detect in the “utterances and arguments” of the journalist something solid, something that will cause him or her to think, to acquire knowledge himself or herself, and to help them someday utter an opinion or two themselves. But the fact the audience shares in the responsibility of public expression does not diminish the real responsibility of journalists.

As the noted British author and journalist John Whale wrote: “Journalists tend to write and speak as if the only threat to the excellence of their product came from outside it -- from any of the unwelcome persuasions either to speak or to keep silent which are gathered together in the word censorship.” Whale continued: “But censorship is only part of the threat. The wider threat is of a general undervaluing of words as an instrument for reasoned discourse between people. Journalists themselves contribute to that devaluation every time they are careless in their use of words, their exposition of facts, their deployment of arguments.”(4)

If Picture Post continued to succeed in an unprecedented way during the 1940s -- as I suggest it did -- then it was because its staff of journalists continued to find the proper way to value words and pictures. And if every popular magazine does not necessarily do that, Picture Post did. In other words, Picture Post continued to find a language for what was right and wrong about modern British life; and it did so affectionately at times, in terms of “the common man” at least. It also did so intelligently, in terms of both the common man and the more educated types who inhabited Britain during its lifetime. Its language mainly offered solid information, and asked (and answered) reasonable questions.

In 1940, Picture Post was busy offering support for the Home Guard -- in its preparation for the “coming invasion” of England. However, with the attack on Russia by Germany in June 1941, the immediate danger of an invasion of Britain had passed. That the experts -- with the exception of Basil Liddell Hart -- had been utterly wrong about the early course of the war, and that leading military figures had played so ignominious a part in the collapse of France, gave amateur critics the confidence to sound off more about the war effort.

Picture Post, then, was sometimes wrong or ill-informed, but its agitation ensured that methods and equipment that would otherwise have got by unnoticed came under scrutiny. That the magazine had taken such conspicuous action over the Home Guard meant a constant and healthy flow of critics came or wrote into Picture Post’s offices, with ideas for furthering the war effort, saving scarce materials, improving production, clearing bottle-necks in industry and so on. The magazine was a positive part of the Allied effort, as it published both helpful and unseemly facts.

Naturally this criticism caused anger in high places. And Picture Post often had to put up with government restraints on its activities. Sometimes, though, it was possible for the magazine to affect issues without publishing the facts. Late in 1942, a distracted young Royal Air Force officer made a complaint to Hopkinson about the danger from the too-high landing speed of a new type of fighter-bomber. The officer wanted his story to be printed before he lost some of his comrades to the risky aircraft.

Hopkinson later wrote: “I asked him to give me a week to deal with it (his story). Through a distinguished scientist who had written for the paper, I had access to the Minister of Aircraft Production, Sir Stafford Cripps, and when the young officer came back a week later, I was able to tell him that the planes he complained about had been grounded, and before long they were all withdrawn from service. No publication had taken place, but it was Picture Post’s willingness to publish which had brought the young officer to us, and which perhaps helped also to ensure that investigation and decision followed as quickly as they did.” (5)

As important as Hopkinson and his staff felt it was that they support and also critique the war effort, they were also keenly concerned over plans for the new country they hoped would emerge when the war ended.
Hopkinson noted in his introduction to Picture Post 1938-50: “Churchill, as war leader, deprecated all such (futuristic) argument, feeling, no doubt, that the national unity he had so determinedly built up might be split. But letters from the forces showed how intensely concerned they were that post-war Britain should be very different from pre-war, and Picture Post had involved itself in the discussion.”

As early as the first issue for January 1941, when it seemed doubtful any independent Britain would survive, Picture Post published a Special Issue devoted to “A Plan for Britain,” which Hopkinson had asked Julian Huxley to help him prepare. In that Special Issue, measures were outlined for full employment, minimum wages, child allowances, all-in social insurance, a state medical service, planned use of all land, and a complete overhaul of education. The public response proved so impressive, a special conference of experts was scheduled in the coming months. And when the Beveridge Report on social security emerged in 1943, Picture Post was there to trumpet its merits. (6)

In all this, Picture Post was becoming even more progressive in its thinking than it had been under Lorant. Lorant had been an avowed anti-Fascist; he had also been a man who could produce notable “third effects” -- in layouts or in professional and personal relationships; he had not been the overall administrative genius Tom Hopkinson was to be. And the readers and staff of Picture Post were probably glad Hopkinson could accomplish almost as much as Lorant could in the first two categories, and more in the third category.

Before long, then, Hopkinson was transforming the small, older staff Lorant had left him with, into a larger, more flexible team of gifted journalists and skilled support personnel. And when Hopkinson left the magazine in late 1950, he departed knowing he had made his mark on the staff, readers and content of Picture Post. Especially after the Second World War, Hopkinson had the time and resources to upgrade an already critically and commercially successful publication into a world-class journalistic organization. The former solid staff had become a rich blend of experienced, talented professionals.

Moreover, “a proper method and routine of work” had been developed -- of the sort that made for more efficient use of the staff’s time and skills. If a writer needed a cameraman, he or she got one immediately; and when they returned from the field, the process by which their materials were used was speedy and skillful. There was no wasted motion, no time for the editor to take a few days off and consider his options “imaginatively.” The work had to be done quickly, and well. Staff morale was at least as positive under Hopkinson as it had ever been under Lorant; and stories generally were done on-time and were published.

In addition, a solid picture library was established under Hopkinson’s guidance. The Hulton Picture Company grew from its early days; and it is now a key element in the world’s largest picture repository, Getty Images. Hopkinson made it work early on; and it continues to function smoothly today. (7)

If, as John Whale wrote, proper information and knowledge should precede utterance and argument, then Picture Post was acquiring some very useful data and comprehension in the years following Stefan Lorant’s departure. As the magazine did so, its readers came to rely on its journalistic utterances and staff as never before. And if a New Britain awaited that nation’s citizenry after the Second World War, then Picture Post was helping lead the way.

John Whale also wrote: “Ignorant, inaccurate, partisan even in presenting fact, negligent of the serious, tenacious of the trivial, greedy of bad news -- journalists are worth studying, because study might remedy a few of their weaknesses; and that would be a result worth reaching, because their work can be important to the way the world is run.”(8) Picture Post’s journalists and other staff members were important to the way things were run in Britain from 1938-57. Stefan Lorant had a lot to do with that; but so, too, did Tom Hopkinson. They and their staffs made some mistakes; but generally they did their jobs well.
“In publishing our ‘Plan for Britain’ so early in the war, Picture Post was taking the lead in what was to become one of the most controversial issues over the next years -- that of war aims. Churchill himself was strongly against any discussion of war aims: Britain, he declared, had only one war aim, to defeat Hitler -- and his position was understandable.…. Winning the war appeared to him the only issue on which all could remain united; over discussion as to what Britain should be like when the war ended they would quite certainly fall apart. (But that) did not stop ordinary men and women -- particularly those in the forces… -- from thinking and talking about it a great deal. The result of our special issue, therefore, was twofold. It intensified support among readers, who looked upon the magazine as their mouthpiece, almost indeed as their own property, and it increased the antagonism felt in certain government departments, above all in the Ministry of Information. Ministry officials had been incensed early in the war when Picture Post had published blank pages with thanks to the MoI for all the photographs they were at that time failing to supply (Picture Post, November 4, 1939). We had now doubled the resentment by launching a public discussion on what life was to be like after the war ended.” (1)

“In October (1940), Dora, Michael and Terry (Hardy) were evacuated to a place called Greenfield, about twenty miles outside Manchester… My (Bert Hardy’s) circumstances must have been known to Tom Hopkinson, the editor of Picture Post. Having found out that Dora had been evacuated up North, he tried to give me commissions nearby so that I could drop in and visit her. This sort of concern was typical of him.” (2)

“…as time went by, as the war years faded, as the world increasingly split into two halves, West and East, and as the Labour Party ran into the economic troubles of the post-war years, the views of our proprietor moved one way, and the views of the editor and staff either did not move or moved another. I began to receive a shower of notes complaining that the paper was too left-wing; that we were ‘soft’ in our attitude to the ‘People’s Democracies’ of Eastern Europe; that we were guilty of ‘appeasement’ in our attitude to the arch-enemy Russia; responsible people now ‘looked askance’ at the magazine which was ‘going rapidly downhill.’ I did not discuss these comments with my fellow-journalists, since I have always considered it an essential part of an editor’s job to maintain a peaceful climate in which his staff can do their work unworried…. But in the year 1950 sales of the magazine were as high as they had ever been. We had a steady sale of over a million and a quarter copies a week, and were making well over two thousand pounds an issue.” (3)

* * * *

Tom Hopkinson was just as complicated a journalist and man as Stefan Lorant. Both men held contradictory elements within themselves; and both men could be moody at times. But where Lorant was volatile, both personally and editorially, Hopkinson could be volatile editorially, but was less emotive personally. Also, Lorant put his greatest human skills into journalism, while Hopkinson saw that human skills were crucial to both journalism and personal relationships.
To a significant degree, Hopkinson was the long-suffering husband of former wife Antonia White’s story “A Moment of Truth” (mentioned earlier), even if his most definitive wish wasn’t to see his wife dead. He did, however, desire to be less than heated, even stoical, during personal crises. Hopkinson liked having his way; but he also didn’t like public displays of disaffection.

Hopkinson’s public journalistic expressions were a different matter. He often clashed with authority, whenever it came to the matter of perceived attacks on “the common man.” This was the case even when those attacks were less than direct. For example, Hopkinson’s support for the armed forces stemmed from his long-held devotion to everyday working people. And if Prime Minister Churchill depended on both commissioned and enlisted British troops during the Second World War to defeat Hitler, Hopkinson still harbored the view through the war that Churchill didn’t care as much about them outside military service.

Thus began a long campaign by Hopkinson and staff to educate and inform the military -- who, after all, held some clout during the war. It was Hopkinson who saw the potential power of that military following the war; and that is why he moved ahead to work with Julian Huxley on the magazine’s “Plan for Britain” in January 1941. Hopkinson wrote about that plan later: “In that issue we outlined policies most of which later became generally accepted, though not all have survived the economic blizzard of the 1970s and 1980s. Our policies included minimum wages throughout industry, full employment, child allowances, a national health service, the planned use of land, a complete overhaul of education -- proposals which would later become the basis of the welfare state (in Britain).”

Hopkinson continued: “Though determined that this issue should be published, I was uncertain how it would be received, and so following publication telephoned in to hear what response there had been from our readers. ’I can’t tell you how many letters there are,’ my secretary, Mrs. Brosnan told me. ‘They’re still in sacks! We can’t get round to unpacking them till more staff can be brought in.’ In all, the response was overwhelming; weeks later we were still publishing some of the hundreds of readers’ letters. As a follow-up, we organized a conference -- not easy in war-time London -- to which we invited a number of readers for a weekend of discussion with the experts who had written the articles.” (4)

Hopkinson contained a rare combination of elements within himself -- journalistic fire and personal calmness -- that allowed him to debate in professional forums, but would not permit him to be too combative in other affairs. He was a trouble-shooting editor, who sought to quell discontent among his immediate circle, yet stir up argument in acceptable journalistic domains. Perhaps it’s no coincidence Hopkinson took special pains to look after the needs of staffers like Bert Hardy, who Hopkinson once described as being “our best trouble-shooting cameraman.” In October 1940, Hopkinson was trying hard so that Hardy was kept busy around Greenfield, England, to where Hardy’s family had been evacuated. (5)

Hardy was grateful to Hopkinson for that and countless other kindnesses. And Hopkinson reflected on the overall situation he was in with his staff in 1950, when he wrote in Picture Post 1938-50 that Edward Hulton’s criticism of his political views was between the publisher and himself. And that, apparently, was as far as those criticisms went then. Hopkinson stated: “I have always considered it an essential part of an editor’s job to maintain a peaceful climate in which his staff can do their work unworried. This obviously becomes impossible if he passes on criticisms from above.”

Hopkinson apparently kept those criticisms as far-removed from his staff during the Korean War in 1950 as he could. Even when Hopkinson was dealing directly with James Cameron on the story that went along with Bert Hardy’s stunning photographs (from the South Korean atrocities the pair had stumbled upon in Pusan in early September 1950), Hopkinson played it close-to-the-vest, professionally and personally -- asking only what he knew his staff could deliver, and not asking them to stand behind him in the storm to come.

Searching East European magazines “for some picture which would give the opposite side of the case -- ill-treatment by the North Koreans of prisoners from the South,” in anticipation of what Hulton or other conservative critics might say, Hopkinson happened upon a useful picture. “To my surprise I actually found
such a picture in a Czech magazine.” Hopkinson continued: “It showed an American soldier dressed up by
his captors in false nose and swastika, forced to march in procession trailing the Stars and Stripes in the
dust.”

With Cameron’s agreement, Hopkinson planned the story as an appeal to the United Nations -- the nominal
authority over the war on the South Korean side -- and sent copies to the U.N. Secretary General and to the
leader of the British delegation to the United Nations, Kenneth Younger. Hopkinson noted: “In this form I
showed the magazine to Edward Hulton as usual on the Friday afternoon, and on the Monday we went to
press in our normal way.”(6) Hulton stopped the presses that Tuesday; and prevented the Hardy-Cameron
atrocities tale from ever being published in full in his weekly. He also sacked Hopkinson soon after.

The fact Cameron and Hardy both stayed on at the magazine indicates the kind of support they had among
staff. Hardy would continue working for Hulton until the magazine’s close in 1957; Cameron -- who (this
time) had “never worked so hard to write so badly” -- would be gone in a matter of months. (7)

However, Hopkinson asked that everyone stay on when he was dismissed. That a handful of journalists --
including A.L. Lloyd, Marjorie Beckett, and the science writer Derek Wragge-Morley -- turned in their
resignations, demonstrates that Hopkinson was well-liked by staff. If the fired editor had asked for a show
of support, even more of the magazine’s staff would probably have gone off work with him. (8)

It should be said that Hardy’s photos of the U.N. landing at Inchon, during his and Cameron’s coverage of
that key 1950 battle, won the Encyclopaedia Britannica/Missouri Pictures of the Year Award for best
Korean War photo coverage. Hardy and Cameron won high praise from a wide range of professionals --
including the famous American war photographer, David Douglas Duncan. Duncan wrote to your author
that “Bert Hardy and others at Picture Post earned everybody’s respect, and not just for (their) Inchon
shots.” (9)

Of course, Hopkinson would never have been hired in the beginning, to eventually take over for Lorant, if
it hadn’t been for Lorant’s acceptance of him as assistant editor in 1938. If Hopkinson did not express his
thanks to Lorant as strongly then, perhaps he did later. And if Hopkinson was not cut out of the same mold
as Lorant, he did at least respect Lorant’s genius.

If Hopkinson learned anything from Lorant, it was: If you have a good journalistic idea, stick with it for as
long as it remains original. The idea that kept Picture Post going strongly early on was the anti-Fascism of
both editors. And when Hopkinson took over the magazine, he took one more step ahead with the idea-
question: “What should the peace consist of after Hitler is defeated?”

Hopkinson was neither as volatile a personality as Lorant, nor as bland as some modernists might think. He
did combine a great professional flamboyance with a personal stoicism that made for a firm but fair
editorial control over Picture Post. Blessed with the temperament to work his own sort of miracles for ten
years on the magazine, Hopkinson was the standard-bearer for his staff through a turbulent decade -- “The
Hopkinson Decade” -- at Picture Post. And if there would never be another editor of his type hired by
Hulton, neither would there be another Lorant.
Part IV

The War-Time Contributions of Picture Post
Chapter 16

1938-41, The “Phoney War” Becomes a Real War in Britain, “Lest We Forget.”

“The reader will realize that all this clatter and storm was but an accompaniment to the cool pressures by which our war effort was maintained and our policy and diplomacy conducted.” (1)

* * * * *

1938 was Neville’s year. His grizzled moustache, prominent teeth, and Victorian respectability dominated news, as his mixture of sharp, if too limited, logic dominated British policy. But Chamberlain kept the British public uninformed about his decision-making, when it needed to know more about events at home and abroad.

First, he virtually forced out of office a popular if somewhat ineffective Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden. Then, he dispatched a British expeditionary force to France in September 1938-- culminating in a “defeat” nearly two years later on the beaches of Dunkirk. In addition, there was another, similar decision -- his overruling the advice of the Air Staff, choosing to challenge the Luftwaffe over Britain, instead of bombing German aircraft factories -- fighters were cheaper to build than bombers -- and the Battle of Britain followed.

The policy which produced the Munich Agreement was apparently just as insensitive to public needs. Chamberlain always saw Nazi Germany as a foe; but his method of “defeating” the Third Reich was too incremental. By extracting concessions from the Czechoslovakian Government to its Sudetan German minority, he hoped to deprive Germany of one excuse for going to war. At the height of the crisis ending at Munich, the British Government received alarming messages from the German opposition to Hitler, indicating the Fuhrer was more ready to march into Czechoslovakia than he was. Chamberlain’s first intention was to fly immediately to see Hitler in the emotional atmosphere of the Nuremberg Rally. Then, he thought better of it, and went three days later, taking Hitler by surprise with his willingness to make concessions. It was not Chamberlain who misjudged Hitler, but Hitler who misjudged Chamberlain. Hitler thought he had frightened the elderly civilian with his saber-rattling. It was a misjudgment which helped cause the Second World War. When Chamberlain returned from Munich the afternoon of September 30, having bought peace at the price of a dismembered Czechoslovakia, one observer described the Prime Minister’s progress as the most shameful sight he’d ever seen: The huge crowd seemed ready to roll on the ground to let Chamberlain ride in glory over them.

For many Britons, fear coincided with a belief that war was morally wrong -- and that peace was very comfortable. Four hundred thousand cars a year were rolling off the production lines at Oxford, Coventry and Birmingham, and the desecration of the countryside by the motor-car was a cause of more immediate concern to the prosperous middle class than quarrels in faraway countries.

There was another Britain, though, if one looked for it -- the Britain of the old heavy industries overtaken by overseas competition and new developments, the Britain of coal mines, shipyards, steelworks and the dole queue. This Britain was more concerned about where the next meal was to come from than about Czechoslovakia’s fate. One worker in three was unemployed -- two million total -- and a man, his wife and four children existed on 47/6 a week, their food mainly consisting of bread and margarine and cups of tea.
Sometimes the two Britains met, as at the annual Duke of York’s camp for public schoolboys and those described as “industrial boys.” King George VI had founded the camps before he came to the throne, and was photographed every year performing “Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree” with young guests. In George VI, the middle classes found a mirror of their ideal selves: decent, conscientious, hard-working, rooting in traditional ideas, above all, safe.

A photo published by Picture Post in its inaugural issue of October 1, 1938, showed a young bird — mouth open and squawking. Tom Hopkinson’s caption in Picture Post 1938-50 says: “This was the Year of Optimistic Talk. 1938 was the year of optimism. All men are reasonable, so Hitler must be reasonable too. All conflicts can be resolved by talk, so the clash between Fascism and democracy can be solved that way as well.” No matter that it was the year of a crisis by-election in Oxford, or that Quintin Hogg -- the Conservative Party candidate there -- was aiming his assault as much at the idea of war as at his Progressive Party opponent, A.D. Lindsay (both events being covered fully by the magazine): October was the “Month of Fairs,” as the magazine also helped to point out. And if Kurt Hutton’s picture of a young woman on a roller-coaster, skirt raised and showing off her legs, wasn’t enough, there was also the eye-catching photo used on the magazine’s first cover — of two “cowgirls” leaping gracefully through the air, hats off -- which gave the British public something else to take pleasure in. Indeed, there was plenty of optimism in the air; and Picture Post’s staff sensed this well. (2)

But there was also the historically profound article “Back to the Middle Ages” — which put Hitler’s regime into perspective. And there was the printing of the picture of a Jewish youth living in Paris named Herschel Grynsban, who had killed a German diplomat (Herr Rath), because 12,000 Polish Jews living in Germany — including his parents -- had been unceremoniously marched to the Polish border near the beginning of November 1938 (in retaliation for restrictive Polish immigration laws), and had undergone enormous hardships. The Poles would not have them, and the boy’s father had written to him about their sufferings.

As a result of one 17-year-old’s mistake, 20,000 Jews were arrested, and many of these people were beaten, tortured, and further insulted in the famous “Crystal Night” (November 9-10). Also, 267 synagogues were plundered, 815 shops wrecked, and 36 Jews killed. The laws of Germany no longer protected the Jewish minority there; soon, they would find no real protection from the laws of many other European countries, as well. (3)

By March 1939, a sufficient number of dissident Slovaks had been found to furnish the excuse that part of the Czechoslovak Republic was breaking up, and Hitler’s troops marched into Prague. In the tense atmosphere following that invasion, Chamberlain was persuaded by the News Chronicle correspondent in Berlin that an invasion of Poland was imminent. The British Prime Minister took one of his idealistic leaps forward, and on March 30, 1938, he wrote an unconditional British guarantee for Poland against any threat to its independence.

In August 1939, a Russo-German pact was signed; dramatic scurryings behind the scenes followed, with a Swedish businessman named Dahlerus acting as intermediary in attempts to arrange a visit to Britain by Goering. After obtaining British agreement to a German proposal that Goering should meet Chamberlain at Chequers, Hitler changed his mind. The invasion of Poland followed. The British people had been led to suppose that instant annihilation from the air would follow a British declaration of war against Germany. Then in December 1939, it snowed and snowed, and grew icy, for two months. The British, who had braced to face annihilation from the air, found it almost more difficult to endure the “lesser” miseries of the blackout, verminous evacuees, burst pipes and fireless grates.

Picture Post carried many important stories in 1939 — including its tale "Unemployed!" (about laid-off laborer Alfred Smith) on January 21, and “Scotland and Home Rule” on July 8, two topics Brits were concerned about, in addition to Hitler. (4) But Edward Hulton was not forgetting events in Europe. Ironically describing those events as the “phony war” — perhaps in mock imitation of U.S. Senator William E. Borah’s term, spelled without an “e,” for the situation in 1939 Europe (5) — Hulton headed one of his articles, “Muddle,” and wrote: “…although we have been at war for nearly three months muddle is still enthroned…”(6)
Anticipating the war’s future, in February 1939, the magazine asked Wickham Steed, a former editor of The Times, to go down with cameraman Felix Man to Chartwell and interview Winston Churchill at his home. Churchill -- the man the Tory Party didn’t trust -- was no more than a backbencher under the Chamberlain administration. He had held no office since being Chancellor of the Exchequer under Stanley Baldwin a decade before. Steed concluded his profile: “His abiding care is the safety of Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth. Should some great emergency arise…his qualities and experience might then be national assets; and the true greatness, which he has often seemed to miss by a hair’s breadth, might, by common consent, be his.” In a brief introduction, Picture Post added its own prophetic comment: “At 64 the greatest moment of his life has still to come.”

Called to the Admiralty on September 3, 1939 -- a few hours after Britain had declared war on Germany -- Churchill’s speeches marked him as destined to become the war leader of his country.(7) He was soon asked by the British King to head a new National Government, and he officially acquired power on May 10, 1940.(8) On Whit Monday, May 13, the coalition Prime Minister faced a mainly pro-Chamberlain House of Commons made more hostile by the Conservative belief that Chamberlain had been sacrificed for Churchill’s defects. In a speech that became famous, Churchill said he had nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat -- and that his only policy was to wage war, his only aim to achieve victory.

As Churchill spoke, the first German tanks had crossed the river Meuse, and within a few days had torn such a gap in the “impregnable” Allied line, they threatened to cut off the British and French armies in northern France. The British commander, Lord Gort, no great general, had enough sense to stand and fight long enough to ensure the safe evacuation of the Allied troops after their retreat to the small Channel port of Dunkirk. There on the open beaches, more than 300,000 British and French troops were evacuated by sea through the inspired improvisation of the Royal Navy in a week-long operation that ended on June 4, 1940.(9) What could have been the final blow to Allied chances became, instead, a propaganda victory and morale booster on the British Homefront.

Picture Post covered the German offensive with a dramatic story entitled “Blitzkrieg” in the June 8 issue of the magazine. In a diary-like series of entries, the writer delineated the war’s progress during its 37th week. The introduction echoed his report: “The lightning war smites Europe. It blisters its way between the Allied Armies, cleaving them in two. It carves out a charred road to the English Channel. It scorches the Belgian Army and stuns the Belgian King into surrender.”

The photos that accompanied the words were equally dramatic. There was first a full-page photo of a man - arms folded and standing up against a building, peering helplessly at a fallen girl a few feet away -- that told the story of what the war was doing to innocents. Its caption reveals the tragedy of the deadliest armed conflict the world had ever seen: “We dedicate this picture to the Fuhrer. We dedicate this picture to the ‘moderate’ Goering. We dedicate this picture to those of our own politicians who promised us that Germany would never be allowed to attain air-parity with Britain; that they had secured peace for our time; that they were abundantly confident of victory….It shows a Dutch father wounded all over, but forgetful of what he is suffering. The dead girl on the corner is his daughter.”

That lead-in photo is followed by 17 related photos -- some used large, some small -- on 12 more pages. Tanks are shown in action. At least one other bloody aftermath is also shown, in enlarged detail. The caption for that two-page photo reads: “The End of His War -- He was a German motor-cyclist. His job was to ride at the head of a motorized column. Behind him came cars of high-up officers, tanks, lorries crammed with petrol and supplies. R.A.F. bombers came over. French artillery knew their distance to a yard. The column was knocked out.”

In the same essay, Nazi prisoners are also seen -- either being questioned or marched behind barbed wire. Nazi and Allied losses are shown, too (including some of the damage done to the great churches of Europe during the Blitzkrieg). The smell of death and destruction is suggested on every page. The essay concludes with a patchwork quilt of scenery photographed from above as a counterattack is made. The caption for that full-page photo brought home Editor Lorant’s message about how the British had to wage the war, just before he left England (in July 1940) to take up residence in America: “The R.A.F. Hits Back: Bombs
Falling on a Column of German Transport -- A hundred and fifty German lorries, tanks, and armoured cars are passing through a town. They are traveling from east to west. They form a support column for the invader. And they form a target for the R.A.F. Part of the main road is obscured by smoke. Bombs are bursting to the south-west of the town, and a salvo of a dozen bombs is falling towards the railway line." Britain is fighting back.

Exactly two weeks after the start of the German air-blitz over Britain, Picture Post carried a report on the capabilities of the British militia. Entitled “The Home Guard Can Fight” and written by Spanish Civil War veteran Tom Wintringham, the photo essay outlines what the militia can do to help protect the Homefront. The 19 photographs used on nine pages reveal the ways in which new Editor Hopkinson went to school in the Lorant methods of picture layout and writing. It also tells the story of what Edward Hulton was most concerned to do in Britain via a home defense network.

Hulton had offered his support to the training of the British militia, and soon, property was guaranteed for use by the Home Guard School. The first 13 pictures in this essay show the Home Guard’s “first-class irregulars” busy preparing for the coming war to the Homefront. Sharpshooters and explosives experts are tested, in class and in the mock battlefields of Osterly Park, near London. One full-page shot (used opposite a picture of a teacher lecturing in a field) is the view from just overhead of 18 soldiers gathered round a rectangular table and listening to another instructor as he points (with stick) to a part of a model landscape. The caption reads: “How to Smash the Blitzkrieg: A Lesson in Village Defense -- The instructors are men with practical experience of modern methods of warfare. The learners are Home Guardsmen who, in time of invasion, would be called upon to defend a typical village as this. With the aid of the panorama, they are shown their job.”

On the next page, a larger photo is used above a bit of text (three columns wide) and three smaller photos. The picture on top shows a demonstration of how to creep up on an unaware (here: blindfolded) soldier and do him in (here: to steal an object from his hand undetected). Below is a progressive trio of photos showing the proper use of the shoot-through holster. All the cropping here seems done strategically. The top photo shows the stalker reaching in at a dramatic angle for his prize, while the unsuspecting recruit (with observers behind him) sits helplessly on the ground. Meanwhile, the three pictures below reveal only essential details -- the side of a man’s torso, with three positions of use for the holstered gun. The entire essay is a how-to course in running a national militia, and if it is a bit dry in description, the Home Guard did help put many British minds at ease then.

When France fell in June 1940, there was a surge of determination throughout Britain. The Germans would invade, it was said, before autumn. Almost every man, able-bodied or otherwise, wanted to be ready to fight when they came. Popular pressure had forced the Government to set up the Local Defence Volunteers, later to become the Home Guard. But they lacked either training or weapons. Borrowing Osterly Park from the Earl of Jersey and appointing Tom Wintringham as Director, Picture Post set up this successful school of “Do-It-Yourself” war. It also organized the shipment of arms from private sources in the United States. Thus, the war was becoming very real to the British people, months before Hitler’s bombers launched their air-blitz over British cities.

When that “Blitz” came, the British people were as ready as they could be. Disdaining Hitler’s attacks early, the public soon fell into an operational mode for the remainder of the war. But early in 1941 -- four months after the Blitz had begun -- Picture Post already had one eye on the future of the nation, once Hitler had been disposed of. Tom Hopkinson explains one important number: “For 4 January 1941 we decided to prepare a Special Issue summing up what we believed our country’s ‘War Aims’ should be. We called it ‘A Plan for Britain.’ The plan -- for its day -- was revolutionary. A job for every able-bodied man. Minimum wages. Child allowances. An all-in contributory scheme of social insurance. A positive health service. A bold building plan -- to start immediately war ended -- in order to root out slums. The same kind of education for all up to 13, with the public schools brought into the general system. Holidays for all...and much more which today we all take for granted. But this was 1941, and our Special Issue unleashed the biggest flood of letters we had ever had. They were still being read and sorted a month later.” (10)
And if men were to have jobs, so were women. As one half-page photo indicates near the outset of Thomas Balogh’s “The First Necessity in the New Britain: Work for All,” work outside the home was to be just as much the domain of women as men. As an enthusiastic crowd departs work -- many on bicycles, many of them women -- photos and words combine. The caption for a utilitarian photograph reads: “Work Can be Made Universal, Pleasant, Secure, by Proper Planning of the National Resources -- Men and women pour out of the factory gates. There will be plenty of reconstruction work after this war -- more than we can cope with. After the last war speculation ran riot and the boom was artificial. This time we must have a national plan to make the best use of our resources.”

Various historical photos are also used, with telling effect. They summarize in a few pages what Winston Churchill outlined in his memoirs: the road from World War I, through economic depression -- in Britain and in the rest of Europe -- to Hitler’s power grab in Germany. One picture shows what may be the heart of the problem confronting Europe then. It’s the photo of “The Unwanted Worker,” which Picture Post had also used in its January 21, 1939, essay on Alfred Smith entitled “Unemployed!” The continuity of blame is laid on a failed social system, a system created by human beings, which must be re-created in a better way, by humanity.

But war still beckoned, and Picture Post showed its effects on soldiers and civilians, wherever they were impacted. It could readily be seen in the pages of the magazine how “Two Nations” -- rich and poor -- could be united to thwart Hitler. The exploits of Bert Hardy around the time of his remarkable camera work for the February 1, 1941, issue of Picture Post should not go unnoticed here. He showed how the “ordinary” Brit was doing his or her part for the war effort.

For a fortnight, Hardy slept every night at a fire station. Nothing happened, because the Nazis were laying off London. Then came the storm. Out all night one night, in one blazing building after another, Hardy lost an expensive camera, a tripod, and a pair of trousers. He also got a burned leg -- plus many dramatic pictures. His photos for that photo essay were as good a recognition of British pluck and determination in the face of Nazi bombers as any such photos from that period.

Leading off is a picture of roof fire-spotters, pointing into the distance. In Hopkinson’s Picture Post 1938-50, he presents their positioning (on the right hand page) in relation to an equally dramatic shot of the 19-year-old Spanish gypsy dancer who had taken New York City by storm, the beautiful Carmen Amaya. (Although her picture appeared in the June 14, 1941, issue of the magazine, in Hopkinson’s book, select authentic layouts are sometimes paired with striking pictures from other Post coverages, before and after the true spreads.) The first caption reads: “The Night of the Blitz: Roof Spotters Are the First to See the Fire -- the night is dark. The city is silent. On the roofs of high buildings stand the spotters. Overhead the pulsing drone of enemy bombers. Suddenly a bomb falls, then another. Somewhere, a burning building starts to light up the sky. Immediately the warning is given.”

The next two pages reveal a fire station’s interior. The central call area is dramatically portrayed -- on the top, and to the bottom left of the spread. Operators are seen taking calls. From them, messages are written up, and a mobilizing board is called into play. Each pin means a pump. Each move means another engine at a fire. The two photos used at the bottom of the right hand page show a fireman sliding down a pole and others moving quickly to their trucks, as well as the departure of one such truck as it leaves the station.

The next spread is mainly black and white on black, and its subtitle is: “The Fight Is On.” These pictures tell the story of how the men use their hoses -- on rooftops, and on the ground, or as one caption makes known: “From a Dozen Points, Water Is Pumped on the Raging Fire.” The text beneath the subtitle for this spread includes some neat writing: “Duck your head and quake as the night raiders come back, guided by the glare, and drop their clutches of iron eggs all around, while the firemen and auxiliaries get on with their job without a blink.”

The final “Fire-Fighters!” spread consists of two full-page photos -- both dramatic renderings of fire-fighters in peril. The caption on the left page reads: “The Height of the Blaze: Eighty Feet up in the Air a
Fireman Strikes at the Heart of the Fire -- Stark and grim is the climax of the fire fight. Blazing walls are crumbling. The fire is bursting through. Overhead, guided by the flames, the German bombers are circling. One after another they release their load of death. Unmoved, unflinching, the firemen run out their ladder. One man mounts, higher and higher, till he is alone above the flames. There, eighty feet up, he strikes at the very source of the fire.”

Just as compelling is the close-up of another fire fighter, also high above the ground. In that still, a figure looms, looking the mad clown. His hand dangles over the edge of a burning building, while in the background, enflamed rafters appear to slant like falling skyscrapers. Is he alive, or dead? No one seems to know. But the caption beneath summarizes and highlights the mission of all the fire-fighters in this photo essay: “The Man on the Ladder: In Clouds of Smoke and Steam He Faces the Fire Alone -- All night long they have fought the fire. They have fought it in the streets streaming with water. They have fought it within buildings blazing like a furnace. On to the flames they have poured a hundred thousand gallons of water, concentrated at colossal pressure. And still the fight goes on. From our rule of anonymity we accept these pictures. They were taken by A. (Albert) Hardy, one of our own cameramen.”

Of course, Bert Hardy was fairly brave to tread so unflinchingly where others feared tread. He deserved the first photographer credit in Picture Post’s history, because he was not only brave in the face of potential death -- his coverage of at least eight wars for the magazine proved that -- but he was also talented. As a war photographer, he turned out to be comparable to the American Robert Capa; and covered more types of stories -- in war-time and peace-time -- than Capa did, though Capa died on the field of battle.

But the British people, with journalists like Hardy, found many sources of inspiration during World War II. British culture is one of the richest and most vital of all the “old” cultures; and the people who have grown up with it don’t often back down from a fight. Winston Churchill knew as much when he led all Britons, including Hardy, into the full-scale waging of war. “Cooler Processes,” indeed, prevailed in Britain.

The great British writer Rudyard Kipling wrote about the source of British cultural power in his poem “Recessional”: “The tumult and the shouting dies -- the captains and the kings depart -- still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice, an humble and a contrite heart. / Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget -- lest we forget!”(11) The period 1938-41 made the British people able to win the war, for they came to know that Hitler could not make them forget. And Picture Post played a key role in not allowing the nation to disremember its past. It would be four more years before Britain and the Allies taught their would-be conqueror key lessons, four more years of gritty, clear-headed-enough decision making, and four more years of incalculable hardships, with millions of lives lost on both sides.
“In two or three minutes Mr. (President Franklin Delano) Roosevelt came through. ‘Mr. President (asked Prime Minister Churchill), what’s this about Japan?’ ‘It’s quite true,’ he replied. They have attacked us at Pearl Harbour. We are all in the same boat now.’” (1)

* * * * *

In 1940, Picture Post had published a special edition entitled The United States. Stefan Lorant put it together, and did so during and just after his visit to America at Christmas-time 1939. Lorant had decided to produce that special as a much bigger issue than normal, and The United States was published as a book. This positive portrayal of the Americans proved to be useful propaganda in winning sympathy for Britain, and Lorant collected the necessary material during his visit.

Before he’d left for America, Lorant talked with his assistant editor, Tom Hopkinson, about the running of the paper in his absence; the success of Picture Post had been due, he said, to its left-wing policies, determined opposition to Nazism and Fascism, and continued criticism of the Chamberlain soft line -- which the Prime Minister had evidently not abandoned, though Britain and Germany were officially at war. It was essential, Lorant said, to maintain this strong attitude in the magazine and not relax -- which Hopkinson heartily agreed must be the line for the magazine. (2)

Now, Lorant’s business in America may have helped positively influence U.S. policy toward the Allies in 1940 and 1941; but it was the Japanese who took care of any lingering doubts in most Americans’ minds on December 7, 1941, when their warplanes launched a murderous attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The United States declared war immediately on the Axis Powers; and the Allies, were now sufficiently reinforced. As Churchill wrote in his memoirs: “(The Americans) wasted no words in reproach or sorrow. In fact, one might almost have thought they had been delivered from a long pain.” (3)

On January 1, 1941, the 26 members of what President Roosevelt had termed the “United Nations” joined in a solemn declaration that they would wage war together and not make a separate peace. The declaration was mainly intended as a gesture to Russia, believed to be suspicious that the capitalist powers would seize any chance to join Germany in an anti-Communist crusade. The Soviet leaders, however, also harbored the suspicion that the Western Alliance would be happy to stand back and watch Russia and Germany exhaust each other in a bitter struggle. They showed themselves less interested in gestures than in the reality to come, behind the slogan which appeared, chalked and painted on British walls and pavements: “Start the Second Front -- Now.”

Yet, despite continuing Russian pressure (and enormous suffering), there was no sign of a Second Front, only a muddled Canadian raid on Dieppe, which was beaten off with the loss of more than half the attackers. Churchill put off “Uncle Joe” Stalin’s importunities with the promise of “a deadly attack upon Hitler” in 1942. He then persuaded Roosevelt to buy into an Anglo-American landing in French North Africa, which itself ended any prospect of a cross-Channel invasion for the next year.

The invasion was placed under the command of the unknown, tactful General Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose diplomacy would be useful not only in reconciling Anglo-American differences, but also in soothing susceptibilities of a number of French leaders. The British General Sir K.A.N. Anderson would attend
adequately to the fighting part of the assignment. Thus, for a few more months, the British were able to cherish the idea they remained the senior partner in the Anglo-American alliance.

Anderson became bogged down in difficult hill country in Tunisia, and although British Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery’s army forced German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel’s troops to retreat from Alamein, the intention of sandwiching the Germans and Italians between the First and Eighth Armies was frustrated until the following year.

Towards the end of 1942, a harassed Chief of Imperial General Staff confided to his diary: “We are going to have great difficulties in getting out of Winston’s promise to Stalin, namely, the establishment of a Western Front in 1943. Stalin seems to be banking on it, and Clark Kerr (British Ambassador in Moscow) fears a possible peace between Hitler and Stalin if we disappoint the latter.” The C.I.G.S. had, however, a happy compromise up his sleeve -- an Anglo-American invasion of Italy, which would be almost as good as a Second Front, and which Churchill was soon describing as a blow at “the soft underbelly of the Axis.”

Picture Post continued to do its part in telling the story of war in 1942. Its ears were not fully trimmed, then, by government censorship, and the British Government claimed censorship had to be a “voluntary” matter. Criticism was possible, but there were powerful indirect forces at work within British society and government to damp down critics -- when they became troublesome. For one thing, the government could cut off its subsidy to newspapers and magazines -- as it did with Picture Post. When the magazine -- despite Ministry of Information warnings -- continued to criticize government policy, particularly the quality of military material in North Africa, the Ministry cracked down. Its aim was to stop Picture Post being read by troops in North Africa and the Middle East. It cut off the subsidy paid -- not to the magazine, but to the export firms handling distribution. Picture Post alone was excluded in this way. The fighting men could still buy Vogue, The Illustrated London News, The Sphere, Illustrated, and Punch, if they desired to.

Thus, a two-page essay was published by Picture Post on January 31, 1942 entitled; “Should We Stop Criticising?” and its introduction reads: “A new practice comes into being. Papers that criticise are dropped from the list of subsidised for export by the Government. There are some in high places who would like the voices of criticism to be stilled. In Singapore and London they have taken their first steps.” Near the bottom of the page at left, a stand-alone quotation was inserted, from British Government Official Brendan Bracken, who had said at the Foreign Press Association Luncheon in September 1941: “A free press is the most watchful sentry of the state, a “yes” press is fatal to good government.” That was the whole point of the article.

Above the text are six reduced pages from previous Picture Post issues. The magazine’s patented “War Diary” lead-in (for “The Seventh Week” essay from November 4, 1939) leads off. The photo there shows a sign posted against a backdrop of darkened trees, with a bit of daylight at right. It reads: “KEEP OUT! This is a private war. The War Office, the Admiralty, the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information are engaged in a war against the Nazis. They are on no account to be disturbed. Nothing is to be photographed. No one is to come near. BY ORDER.”

The next five miniatures range from Tom Wintringham’s “Arm the Citizens!” (June 29, 1940), to Edward Hulton’s “I Appeal to the Government” (June 21, 1941) -- which dealt with the situation in Crete. There is a picture of a determined-looking Churchill walking past a group of seemingly disinterested onlookers, and has the caption, “The Man on Whom Everything Depends: Winston Churchill, Britain’s Leader in the Most Critical Hour of All”. Finally, there’s Sir John Wardlaw-Milne’s “Are We Working All Out?” from September 6, 1941 (Wardlaw-Milne was an influential Conservative Party member, and chairman of the all-party Finance Committee in the House of Commons, whose reports of administrative waste and inefficiency Churchill was forced to study closely).

Hopkinson said in his text for that two-page spread: “To those, if there are any in Britain, who think it does not very much matter whether the Press is free to criticise what happens in Singapore (an Allied defeat Churchill said the “naggers in the press” had no need to know fully about then) or here in Whitehall, there
is one question to be put: has this war been fought in such a way as to place our commanders and our holders of high office above criticism’s reach? Can they fairly come to us and say, don’t question, trust? Or does there come clanking behind them a whole chain of ugly names -- from Norway to Penang, from Ironside to Brooke-Popham -- the men who knew, the places that were safe?”

Hopkinson continued: “When I asked to become editor of Picture Post in July, 1940, I decided that it was not going to be my practice to sign articles in this paper. Editors should work to make the reputations of their papers, not themselves. I put my name to this one because it is an article of criticism, and those who criticise should give their names. I have written it because I think that what has happened is not just a matter of office routine -- 10,000 copies to be sold in Britain instead of in the streets of Cairo or the canteens of Libya and Palestine. It is a matter which concerns the freedom of British citizens to read the things they want to read, even if those things are distasteful to men of power and influence. I have written it also because I want friends of this paper in the Middle East to know why they may not be seeing Picture Post in future. Whether this copy will get to them or not is another question. We shall see, and we shall let you know.” The editor concludes: “Meantime we intend to continue our policy exactly as before, to criticise when there is need for it, to applaud when it is deserved. Criticism is no pleasure -- for one thing it involves four times the work of bland approval or a simple record. We think that that is the course we ought to follow, the one most likely to help in winning a war we are all determined must be won. What do you think? We should like to know.”

Picture Post covered other aspects of the war by soliciting reports from its staff serving in the military, and by utilizing the staff it had left on the Homefront. For example, it told the story of the gallant efforts of other British media to inform America about the perils that threatened the Western Alliance. In a July 25, 1942, essay “The B.B.C. Talks to N. America,” the reader learns that BBC Radio employed 54 announcers then; that it offered many specifically “North American programmes”; and that the programs sent to America started at 11:15 p.m. each night, and ran for 7-1/2 hours of non-stop service (including news, talks, features, and variety shows).

The photos and drawn illustrations used there depict a busy arm of Britain’s media, and the layout is complex and appealing. The two maps illustrating the transmissions to Europe and the rest of the world in the essay’s final spread suggest a wide scope; and the overall staff size of the BBC was even more impressive: 10,000 employees worked for it in 1942. That included the people who manned the BBC’s four overseas networks. One eye-catching photo shows a BBC reporter interviewing a man on crutches in the street, a man wearing a white suit, tie and hat. The caption reads: “An Outdoor Broadcast: America Meets ‘John Londoner’ -- Every week, an outdoor recording van goes out into the London streets to collect unrehearsed interviews with ordinary Londoners. Here’s Stewart Macpherson, a Canadian on the B.B.C. staff, talking with an ex-serviceman.” There were many Canadians working for British media then. They knew as well as U.S. media what was on the minds of many North Americans during those demanding days, and they may have had better contacts in Britain.

Other war-time salvos were fired for His Majesty’s Government in essays like “A New Way to Choose Our Army Officers” (September 19, 1942). The introduction reads: “An entirely new system for the appointment of our Army Officers is being tried out. It is one of the most progressive moves that have been made since war began. If successful it will put an end to all talk of ‘class-favouritism,’ and should lead to a high increase of efficiency.” There are 17 photos (mainly depicting the paces the men were put through at an O.C.T.U.) in this almost scientifically laid-out, five-page essay; but the one that catches the reader’s attention is a smaller picture at the bottom of the right page (below two proportionally similar photos) in the first spread. Its caption is: “The Sort of Problem an Officer Might Have Sprung on Him -- ‘Supposing you’re walking along, with a girl on each arm, like this’ says the S.M., ‘and a private tries to pull one of the girls away from you. What would you do?’ The candidates try to answer.” The great thing about the picture is that the officer in question has a male officer candidate on each arm instead of girls, and that one officer-onlooker is dressed in a Scottish kilt.

Picture Post takes on a more serious subject in its November 21, 1942, issue with its photo essay “Victory in Africa.” An array of British cameramen contribute; it states it’s “told in magnificent pictures by our
army cameramen.” All 13 photos used are indicative of “something new for the British people”: “A smashing victory over Rommel and his forces.”

Perhaps the most compelling pictures are the first two, plus two or three used later. The first photo shows a dead German soldier stretched out in sand as a good-sized Allied artillery piece is pulled past him by a truck. The smaller, one-column photo below it and below the essay’s title shows “The Victor.” Who is he? The rest of the caption explains: “General Montgomery, Commander of the Eighth Army, stands up in his tank to watch the battle.”

The third telling photo (in the next spread) shows men moving into battle, bayonets ready, led by an officer carrying a pistol on a cord. Its caption reads: “The Men Who Made the Whole Plan Feasible: The Infantry Go Forward Under a Smoke Screen to Take a Strongpoint -- In every infantry struggle the Eighth Army is victorious, every enemy counter-attack is driven back and every strongpoint taken. One of the outstanding reasons for the success of the plan of attack is the accurate dove-tailing of all branches of the Army and the perfect timing of operations.” That half-page photo was taken by Sgt. Leuart Chetwyn.

The fourth notable picture (on the second two-page spread) is also used half-page, but this time on the upper half of the right-hand portion of the spread. A line of marchers is shown, the first man’s right arm in a sling, and the next man carrying a blanket. A British officer in shorts marches alongside, directing the action. The caption is: “Prisoners: A Weary Procession of Despondent Men -- They moved into battle as soldiers, they shamble despondently out as prisoners. Men of the Afrika Korps who, a few weeks back, were hammering on the gates of Egypt. Now prisoners of the Highland Division.”

Six photos are used in a complex, but symmetrical fashion in this second two-page spread. And dead men are shown, as are captured enemy officers. Most importantly, two moderate-sized photos show Allied troops and doctors working with the wounded. A humane caption accompanies one of the latter pictures: “At a Casualty Clearing Station: A Blood Transfusion is Given -- In the first days of the 8th Army’s drive forward many pints of blood from the ‘blood banks’ were used, and many lives saved by transfusions, which give wounded men strength to face operations.” (4)

But if Picture Post detailed battlefield struggles, it also served the Homefront. In an evocative section of Gavin Weightman’s Picture Post Britain entitled “Blood, Sweat and Tears 1939-1945,” Weightman reveals the types of photos that have made the magazine’s photographers so successful and remembered over time. The first black and white on black example of this is the lead picture for that section. It’s used on a page-and-a-half, with reverse printing of accompanying text along the right hand side of this spread. It shows a man in a white uniform jacket walking through rubble, with firemen in the background putting out a fire. Who is he? The weight the man carries (along with the bemused look on his face) tells all -- a wire case filled with some indescribable fluid. Weightman’s caption reads: “A typical propaganda image of the Blitz in London: a milkman, white as snow, his full crate untouched, emerges mysteriously from the ruins of a bombed street. Where has he come from? Where is he going? Only the photographer knows.” Weightman does not note the year that picture was taken.

More memorable photos follow. Bert Hardy’s image of two little girls leaving London from Paddington Station in 1942 reveals both the difficult circumstances of war, and the willingness of the British people to lend a hand. Apparently, the girls were traveling alone, though they couldn’t have been more than six or seven years old. And if they were smiling, it may have been because a female train attendant (or at least a woman in uniform) was helping them. A large suitcase sits in front of the trio, making one wonder if it belongs to the girls, or to the woman.

Another photo shows the famous social engineer William Beveridge at the home of Edward Hulton -- most likely in 1942 or 1943. Many people are standing around a desk in it, including Beveridge, and Hulton sits on the floor with several ladies in hats. In its January 4, 1941, special issue, “A Plan for Britain,” an editorial wrung its hands: “Our plan for a new Britain is not something outside the war or something after the war. It is an essential part of our war aims. It is, indeed, our most positive war aim. The new Britain is
the country we are fighting for.” Not only civilians but also the millions serving in the Armed Forces were must have been heartened by this promise of a better future.

Popular acclaim for such plans reached a peak with publication on December 1, 1942, of the Beveridge Report, one of the most extraordinary episodes in the war, which more recently has recently been attacked as Utopian folly. Britain perhaps should have been looking to modernize its industry as well as to improve its social services. For the mass of people living through the war, however, the promise of a more just society as well as a potential means of life enjoyed held crucial degrees of truth and importance. Picture Post was an ardent supporter of Beveridge. (5)

To be sure, while the magazine continued to assert its own special character after its auspicious debut in 1938, all through the war years, it had simultaneously been extending its influence and authority in such a way as to emerge from the Second World War as something like the popular wing of an aspiring new establishment. Unobtrusively, it had developed what amounted to a clear-enough political approach. In the context of war, this seemed no more than a national concern for present and future. In day-to-day matters, the facilities available to people who needed refuge or speedy repair of their homes was an obvious cause for anxiety. But it was in looking to the future that Picture Post was best able to take a political stance without appearing to do so. The magazine excelled at this, for it had the talent and contacts to help remedy the nation’s pressing problems.

The war itself had done much of the work. There was no need to pick up a party political label to make a case for social change when the war would end. The magazine had been running articles by J.B. Priestley on “Britain’s Silent Revolution.” Hulton, still nominally a Conservative, had articulated as early as October 1942 what all parties were aware of, that the war had made one nation of Disraeli’s notorious two. “This war,” he wrote, “is truly welding us. We must solemnly resolve to keep up the process in the peace.” (6)

In 1941, Picture Post had commissioned George Bernard Shaw to write about Socialist intellectuals Sidney and Beatrice Webb in “Two Friends of the Soviet Union” (September 13, 1941). There was a strong link between this iconoclastic couple and much of Picture Post’s social philosophy -- to the extent that it had any single philosophy. Shaw had written of the Webbs (who were in their 80s in 1941 and married almost 50 years): “(Sidney Webb) took to her (Beatrice’s) social investigation business like a duck to water. They started with a history of trade unionism so complete and intimate in its information that it reduced all previous books on the subject to waste paper, and made organized labor in England class conscious for the first time. It traveled beyond England and was translated by Lenin. Then came the volume on Industrial Democracy which took trade unionism out of its groove and made it politically conscious of its destiny. There followed a monumental history of Local Government which ran into many volumes, and involved such a program of investigations on the spot all over the country, and reading through local archives, as had never before been attempted. Under such handling not only Socialism but political sociology in general became scientific, leaving Marx and Lassalle almost as far behind in that respect as they had left Robert Owen. The labor of it was prodigious; but it was necessary. And it left the Webbs no time for argybargy as between Marx’s Hegelian metaphysics and Max Eastman’s Cartesian materialism. The question whether Socialism is a soulless Conditioned Reflex a la Pavlov or the latest phase of The Light of the World announced by St. John, did not delay them: they kept to the facts and the methods suggested by the facts.”(7)

At the heart of what may be considered Picture Post’s social philosophy was the belief that only through collective improvements could the individual human being make a better life for himself or herself; and the Webbs had written on this. Others had learned from them. But there was a second truth to be learned from the older generation, as well -- about consensus, and what it could achieve. In University of Edinburgh Prof. Arthur Marwick’s essay “Middle Opinion in the Thirties: Planning, Progress and Political ‘Agreement’,” he makes a good point about the thirties, or the “devil’s decade.” Contrary to what most people believed about British public opinion in that so-called “dreary era,” there was more agreement between people than disagreement. As Marwick pointed out: “It is the aim of this paper, first of all, to stress in a way previous commentators have not done, that there was in fact a very large groundwork of social and political ‘agreement’ in the thirties; and then to show that it was from this groundwork that there
arose the ideological structure which took Britain safely through the forties and brought her to rest in the fifties.”

Sufficient staff of Picture Post seemed to believe in building national consensus, though that word may not have been used as often as it could have been. Not wholly opposed to some older conventions, neither did that staff want to be seen as friendly to out-of-date methods. Hence, its support for the Beveridge Report in 1942-43. Marwick noted that although true “disciples of middle opinion were moving into a position of opposition to the National Government (in the thirties), their attitude was still fundamentally different from that of the committed generation who believed ‘It is now or never, the hour of the knife./The break with the past, the major operation.’”(8)

Thus, it can be understood why British centrist progressives could endorse a “National Government of the Right” in 1931, a “National Government of the Left” in 1936, and a “Conditional (governed by war-time factors) Consensus Government of the Right” in 1940. By 1945, they were once again ready to change horses: the Labour Government of Clement Attlee was a “Conditional (governed by peace-time factors) Consensus Government of the Left,” and centrists hopped aboard that train, too.

Where key members of the staff of Picture Post may have differed with Publisher Hulton (who would alter his political allegiances more than once during the 1940s and 1950s), and with some of the centrists as well, was in the acuity of the social dream they envisioned for Britain’s future. Which other Allied magazine had the gall in the midst of a bitterly contested war to be regularly trumpeting a new order for the postwar era, as if Hitler were already disposed of? And what other Western magazine had its hand on the pulse of the crucial Anglo-American Alliance as well as within the heartbeat of “ordinary Brits” during this time? None, other than the socially scientific, yet largely populist Picture Post.

That magazine and its staff appeared as happy to see the Americans enter the war as any other Allied news organization in late 1941 and early 1942; but they also knew that if the war was to be won, the British people needed something real to fight for. Churchill knew full-well the British nation would rise to the challenge of Hitler’s racial and imperialistic “logic”, due its cultural, political, and military heritage; Picture Post also knew the nation would rise to that challenge due to its collective hopes for “all the happy tomorrows.” Consensus may have been gained in the Britain of the 1930s, then; and in a paradoxical way, a kind of hard-won, yet visionary consensus was also gained there during the war years, as a collective social future was plotted via a long-cultivated emotional, physical and intellectual past.
Chapter 18

1943 and the Magazine

“The British, who had gone so confidently to war singing ‘We’re gonna hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line,’ seemed as far from the Siegfried Line as ever.” (1)

“The House of Commons has said its say. It has not precisely rejected the Beveridge Report -- indeed, so far as words go, it gave it a kind of welcome. It has not even quite killed the Report. It has done something different. It has filleted it.” (2)

“In part, this period represented a remarkable collective achievement of the common people under conditions of bombardment and the threat of invasion -- it was the ‘People’s war’: Picture Post directly or indirectly served this spirit by depicting the war in terms of this collective effort and experience, rather than from the vantage point of grand strategy and high policy.” (3)

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In 1943, Britain began to fill with Americans. At first they were welcomed by many people. But they were paid better than their British counterparts, as the British had been better paid than the French at the beginning of the war, and so were attractive to young women. It became desirable for an esteemed American broadcaster to explain frankly to both peoples that there would be stresses and strains in their personal relationships which could not be resolved by politicians’ bromides about “our common heritage.”

There was so little left from the war effort that only the most basic repairs had been made in the bombed cities of Britain, where on a windy day dust and grit from the remains of buildings stung the skin. Yet the war news was better, if somewhat remote. Sinkings of Allied shipping in the Atlantic dropped to manageable numbers. German Field Marshal Paulus surrendered with 91,000 men at Stalingrad, and King George VI, wishing to mark the victory by a courtly gesture, sent the Russian people a Sword of Honour, which Stalin was said to have received with deep emotion. There was still no Second Front, but after the Germans and Italians had surrendered in North Africa, British and American armies invaded Sicily and began a long, slow progress up the Italian peninsula. Stalin was said to have received this news, too, with deep emotion.

Mussolini fell, and was whisked away by a German paratroop rescue squad to preside forlornly over a shadow government in northern Italy. Italian Marshal Badoglio sued for an armistice, and the Italian fleet sailed under the white flag of surrender between the bomb-scarred walls of Valletta’s harbor. But the British had never taken the Italians seriously, and victory over Mussolini was regarded as a poor substitute for the long-delayed victory over the real enemy. A wave of strikes represented the war-time doldrums and disillusionment in Britain. Some new stimulus was needed, and was found by turning men’s eyes to the good life they could expect after the war, when Hitler would be beaten.

In 1941, Arthur Greenwood, then a Labour member of the Government, had commissioned Sir William Beveridge to produce a plan for universal social security. Greenwood and Beveridge had served together in
the secretariats that produced ambitious reconstruction plans following World War I, and had bitter memories of what could happen to even the best-laid plans when a prior Government had been uninterested in implementing them. When Beveridge’s report was published near the close of 1942, Greenwood, though out of office, had taken steps to ensure it received the best possible publicity. The BBC touted its virtues abroad in 22 languages -- it was, after all, powerful propaganda that Britain was already behaving as if the war was won. The Government, for its part, pronounced a cool blessing on Beveridge, and 121 M.P.s voted in favor of a motion demanding strong Government approval, in spite of threats by War Cabinet member and former Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin to resign, if they pressed the motion to decision.

Prime Minister Churchill, meanwhile, had never made any secret of his belief there could be no question of looking forward to a better world until the war was won; but under the prodding of Greenwood and Labour cohorts, and in the prevailing climate of discontent, he appointed a Minister of Reconstruction who, if he did not reconstruct very much, was at least a sign of good intentions.

And Beveridge marched on. He was a Fabian Liberal and his Report, which would have been revolutionary if implemented in 1906, was in 1943 almost behind the times. (And hadn’t FDR’s New Deal already implemented Social Security in America for others to see?) That mattered little, however, compared with the Report’s symbolic importance. In thousands of Army camps from Shetland to the frontiers of India, where tedium was relieved and a certain amount of enlightenment spread by the weekly Army Bureau of Current Affairs lecture, Beveridge was a required subject of discussion and debate. In factories at home, too, and even in pubs, people talked -- perhaps skeptically but with interest -- about this conception of a Britain without unemployment and poverty. Perhaps it was all window-dressing; but where despair lurks, hope must also be nearby, and in 1943 it meant a great deal to the British to be reminded that there could be a world better than Woolton pie, the overcrowded bus, and the spiritual erosion of the blackout.

The most persistent critics of the Report were the Berry brothers -- Lord Camrose and Lord Kemsley, owners of the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Sketch, respectively -- who ran leading articles, feature reports and letters attacking the plan continually. Their biggest concern of many of the critics related to how the new scheme was to be financed. On March 6, 1943, in “Beveridge: The Fight Is On,” Picture Post asked, “Can we afford it?” bowed briefly to the Conservative argument, and then told a story. “Let us bring this question down to earth with a small parable. A certain man had a large family. He had three sons and two daughters. He had an aged mother, and his wife had an old uncle without means of support. They lived in a small house in a suburb. There was no garden, no fresh air, no change of exercise. The old lady sat by the fireside all day. The uncle lived and hoped for an occasional shilling to buy cigarettes and a newspaper to himself.

“One day the man’s wife said to him: ‘Look here, we cannot go on living like this any longer. The children are always ill; my life is going by without my living it; the old people would be better off if they were dead. Let us move farther out into a larger house with a garden. The children will be able to run about. I shall have room to hang up the washing. The old uncle will be able to work in the garden. He will grow a certain amount of greenstuff, and recover his self-respect; and on fine days the old lady can sit out-of-doors. Of course it’s a risk, because it will cost more. But it means so much to our happiness, let’s back ourselves and chance it!’

“No,” said the husband. ‘Not until I know how much I shall be earning in ten years’ time. We may be able to afford it now -- but who knows where we shall be then?’”

Picture Post was aware all Brits could gain from the Beveridge Report, as the thumbnail sketches and explanations in the same article’s “What a Ministry of Social Security Would Mean to the Ordinary Citizen” and Quintin L. Hogg’s “An Open Letter to the Tory Party” earlier in the issue indicate; but it also sensed women had the best reason to back the plan. As Hopkinson wrote then: “Why should women work to bring the full Beveridge Report into operation? Because here for the first time they are offered the full status to which they are entitled….The recognition of the housewife, and the help for married women on marriage, in maternity, and at widowhood, are the proposals which particularly affect women. But nearly every section of the Report affects them in some way. They already know the Government’s attitude on the
children’s allowances. It is proposed not to pay 8s. a week for every child after the first, as Beveridge suggested, but 5s. This is a setback. But any children’s allowance is a victory of principle, and it will encourage more women to work for the full provisions of the Report which has become the Housewives’ Charter.”

Picture Post correspondent Anne Scott-James enlightened the British on a related issue that year. In the November 13, 1943, issue, her “Why Women Don’t Have Babies: An Enquiry” presented some radically new arguments for what could be done to stem the tide of falling birth rates in Britain. She recommended social, financial, psychological, career-oriented, medical and philosophical solutions to the problem at hand. She indicated public attitudes must be changed, if women were to give birth at higher rates. She wrote: “...something more...has got to happen if the larger family is to come into fashion. We have got to get rid of the ‘no children, no dogs,’ attitude. People have got to feel that children are a good thing.” Her last solution, though, was in keeping with the modern educational reform that emphasizes shared home-making duties. She wrote: “If a bigger proportion of school time were given over to teaching the home-making subjects, wouldn’t girls -- and boys too -- grow up with a wish to use their knowledge in making a real family life?”

Scott-James’s six-page report, and the photographs of one infant’s development adjacent to her writing, reveal a trend ahead of its time. The early life of a baby girl (not boy) was featured in 23 pictures, from the age of three weeks through 18 months, and worthy progress was noted. The photographs that still stand out are those of the baby at four months of age in a portable bed, as “She Begins to Life Her Head and to Kick”; at five months, “She Uses Her Toys”; at 12 months, “The First Conversation”; at 16-17 months, “The Instinctive Interest That Children Seem to Find in Books”; and at 18 months, “Into the Future: And now -- looking for new worlds to conquer she can climb upstairs, though not yet down.” Scott-James made her points in writing in harmony with the photographer’s pictures. (Those pictures are reminiscent of an earlier series of photos taken by Tim Gidal for the magazine. Part of his series appeared in Robert Kee’s humanly rich collection The Picture Post Album, with eight views of a baby’s day on a couch. After being coy with the photographer, the infant finally put its foot in its mouth, literally -- a humorous and humane touch.)

Another series of memorable photos is assembled in the essay “A War Artist on the Clyde,” in the October 2, 1943, issue. The introduction reads: “‘Advance!’ -- ‘Retreat!’ -- ‘Surrender!’ -- ‘Victory!’ The war words grow bigger and bigger in the headlines. Some people have the feeling sometimes that they don’t know what to make of it all. The man who makes something permanent of it -- something for posterity -- is the artist. Here is an artist, Stanley Spencer, at work in a great centre of war industry.” That centre is Clyde’s shipyard.

There is an excellent eight-picture spread closing the Spencer essay and it is even more expressive of genius than Gidal’s. Here, we read eight captions that indicate the range of looks an involved artist might yield, sketching on a rather large pad, with plenty of things to occupy him. They read: “A War Artist -- On the Job -- Stanley Spencer -- Makes Sketches -- On the Clyde -- Oblivious of Noise, -- War, Onlookers -- And Cameramen.”

The pictures are good, but the best is a modest-sized horizontal on the left-hand side of the preceding spread, beneath Spencer sketching a welder at work. The caption for that bottom horizontal, in which the artist (shown small) sketches by a dock, reads: “The Great Scene of the Clydeside Shipping: The Artist Leaves the Details for a Moment and Looks Out on the World -- His eye is for details. They are the details he needs for the vast mural he has been painting for years. But to-day he writes himself a little note, ‘Don’t, for the Lord’s sake, forget the finished shipping.’ Then he goes back to the human details he loves best, ‘The variety,’ he exclaims, ‘is tremendous!’” On his right is a half-built ship, on the left, some big steamers on the horizon. It’s a view of what art combined with the life of the sea can be about.

Kenneth Clark’s “Hindsight” essay on Spencer in Picture Post 1938-50 revealed more about the artist’s life: “It remains to say a word about Stanley Spencer, whose record of Clydeside ship-building is the pretext of this note. Posterity may well decide that he was the most remarkable painter of all those who recorded their
feelings about the first war. By 1939 he was in an uneasy frame of mind. The value of his early work had been a kind of visionary intensity which had made his descriptive realism strange and memorable. But as with all visionary artists, his power of transforming the commonplace came and went, and was not at his command. He had been deeply moved by the first war; by 1939 he was wrapped up in his personal problems. However, we thought that the sight of men on girders with blowlamps was so strange, and so far from his ordinary experience in the village of Cookham, that it might arouse in him the necessary excitement. On the whole we were proved right. The long, frieze-like paintings of ship-building haven't the intensity of his Resurrection, but they are superior to most of his later work, and will remain one of the best things to come out of the War Artists' scheme." (4) Mr. Clark's remarks remind us of Harold Evans's assessment of what the writer's job always was at Picture Post: "In an interview the writer might get more out of his subject by a soft approach and polite questioning, but if the pictures were likely to result from stirring with argument then, in the words of the editor, Tom Hopkinson, 'he had to stir'." (5)

Of course, not only artists and scholars proved their worth in war-time Britain; so, too, did “common” people. And if the Second World War was the “People's war,” in Stuart Hall’s phrase, then nowhere, arguably, were they portrayed better than in Picture Post. Hall hit the mark when he pointed out the struggle of “ordinary” Brits was the nation's struggle, and Picture Post's record, their record. He went on: “For many people, then, looking back on the war through the ‘eyes’ of Picture Post is to recapture, not only the facts, but the experience -- the feel -- of wartime Britain: the latent content (content Lorant was first so good at recognizing and utilizing, and that Hopkinson picked up on soon enough) of the photos is this sense of ‘this-is-what-happened-and-how’ and of ‘having-been-there’.”

Moreover, Hall sees that “One part of this impact of Picture Post’s memorable wartime spreads is due to the photographs themselves -- an impact so taken-for-granted that it requires explanation.” In this regard, Hall encapsulates some definitions of the photograph, including: “Peter Wollen, in his excellent introduction to this whole discussion, points to the parallels between this line of argument (linguistic signs as the archetypes of reality) -- and the foundations of a typology of signs first established by C.S. Peirce (who defined the photographic image as an indexical sign -- i.e., one which is ‘physically forced to correspond point by point to nature’), as well as the influential aesthetics of Andre Bazin, a defender of the realist and neorealist tradition in the cinema, who spoke of the photographic image as a ‘moulding, the taking of an impression by the manipulation of light’.” (6)

Now, Bert Hardy’s photos come immediately to mind, indicating the kind of sacrifice and renewal working class people went through in Britain during the war, especially with his early “The East End at War,” “Wartime Terminus,” “The East End Parson,” “A Trawler in War-Time,” and “Fire-Fighters” photo essays. And his “manipulation of light” was extraordinary, especially in the first series of commissioned photos he did for the magazine, of vulnerable people in Newcastle’s air raid shelters. But by 1943, Hardy was a noncommissioned officer working on the Homefront for the Army Film and Photographic Unit; when he did do essays for Picture Post, they were not as regular as they had been just before he enlisted in June 1942. During autumn 1943, Hardy did skip off for at least one weekend -- to do a story for Picture Post on a stag hunt with Macdonald Hastings. On July 1, 1944, though, Hardy began covering the European theatre of operations in earnest, in France to begin. (7)

Other photographers stayed behind for the magazine -- including Felix Man and Kurt Hutton. Of their work during the war years, it can be said that they, too, performed best when they were dealing with “Basic Brits.” One group of photos in Picture Post Britain, by Man, is particularly appealing. Five pictures there reveal various groups of people listening to Prime Minister Churchill on the radio. On the upper left is a group of business-suited gentlemen, listening up. Below that picture is a candid shot of a group of working class types -- whom the great cartoon-figure Andy Capp would feel at home with -- sipping brew at a local pub as one of them puts his ear close-up to the radio speaker. The next picture is a view of two men, a woman and a dog stopping by a house window to hear what Churchill has to say. A fourth photo shows a group of people passing by a radio store and half-listening in. A sign reads: “Wanted: Radio Sets for Cash,” as a woman turns her head to hear, and her child looks miffed in a stroller. Finally, a middle-class couple enjoy a meal together in a nice restaurant, but interrupt their dining long enough to pay attention to the radio. A well-dressed waiter stands silently behind them. A catch-all caption reads: “Whenever Winston
Churchill made one of his speeches on radio the country stopped to listen, wherever they were at the time. Though there was, from early in the war, a rising tide of belief that what was being fought for was a better, fairer Britain as well as the defeat of Hitler, Churchill was cautious about making promises. Mostly he offered ‘Blood, Sweat and Tears’ and confidence in eventual victory."

This grouping of pictures doesn’t indicate dates taken, or when a photo essay or two may have incorporated these images into them. They were taken during the war, and in 1943, to take that representative year, the Allies were making their way into Italy, Mussolini had lost his hold on Italians, the Russians had held firm at Stalingrad, and the Beveridge Report was keeping debates lively. If anything, there was a kind of semi-tense, semi-sweet anticipation of the future -- the lull before the storm of the European invasion -- and most people wondered what would come next. Churchill knew; but as he said at Teheran in November: “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.” (9)

Before the invasion of Italy, Picture Post had continued with what had always been one of its most effective journalistic instruments, the question mark. (“Can Bombing Beat Germany?”; “What’s Wrong with the Fleet Air Arm?”; “What’s to be Done With Germany After the War?”; and “The Famine in France -- Does it Matter to Us?”) Almost always, such questions were discussed with an air of responsibility and without too much sensationalism.

Just before the Allies moved into Italy in 1943, the magazine had been offered an article suggesting any such move would be a strategic error for the Allies. But Hopkinson decided not to publish it for fear of creating unnecessary alarm and discouragement. Instead, to coincide with the attack on Sicily, he published an historical piece about when British troops last landed there, 140 years before. Once the Italian operation had indeed become bogged down (in what Churchill later wrote were “prolonged, unsatisfactory operations”(10), Picture Post began to ask questions and published an article by the previously rejected author, in which he scrutinized the validity of the whole campaign. Criticism was made explicit on grounds that lessons must be learned “if final victory is to come soon.”

It wasn’t a bed of roses for most people in war-time Britain. One photo that tells a realistic story about the response of many of the nation’s children was printed by the magazine in 1943. Robert Kee used it again in The Picture Post Album, and he placed this information below the shot (which reveals three children with only half-interested looks on their faces standing at a table with a concerned middle-aged woman, probably their mother, looking at an off-camera worker): “Looking for a Way Round Co-upons: 1943 -- A Women’s Voluntary Service depot, where children’s clothing could be exchanged. ‘When it comes to rationing,’ ran the original caption, ‘children often get the worse of it.’” The future didn’t always look bright, then, to the British people, though they did take some comfort that nearly everyone in that country was sacrificing something to bring about victory. (11)

By the time of the Teheran Conference, then, in late November 1943, the British were ready for good news. Winston Churchill sensed he could give it to them, albeit obliquely. As he wrote in his memoirs: “November 30 was for me a crowded and memorable day. It was my sixty-ninth birthday, and was passed almost entirely in transacting some of the most important business with which I have ever been concerned. The fact that the President (Franklin D. Roosevelt) was in private contact with Marshal Stalin and dwelling at the Soviet Embassy, and that he had avoided ever seeing me alone since we left Cairo, in spite of our hitherto intimate relations and the way in which our vital affairs were interwoven, led me to seek a direct personal interview with Stalin. I felt that the Russian leader was not deriving a true impression of the British attitude. The false idea was forming in his mind that, to put it shortly, ‘Churchill and the British Staffs mean to stop “Overload” (the invasion of Normandy) if they can, because they want to invade the Balkans instead.’ It was my duty to remove this double misconception.”

A roughed-out date was set for the opening of the Second Front (which would eventually take place on and just after June 6, 1944, but whose tentative launch was planned for May of that year for Normandy); the postwar frontiers of Poland had been broadly outlined; and “the establishment of a World Instrument to prevent another war” had been discussed. In other words, the fate of the postwar world was already being negotiated and charted. Churchill wrote later: “I do not feel any break in the continuity of my thought in
this immense sphere. But vast and disastrous changes have fallen upon us in the realm of fact. The Polish frontiers exist only in name, and Poland lies quivering in the Russian-Communist grip. Germany has indeed been partitioned, but only by a hideous division into zones of military occupation. About this tragedy it can only be said IT CANNOT LAST.”(12) These excerpts reveal the strain the British Prime Minister must have been under in late 1943 -- to convince Stalin to take a reasonable position on Poland, while not undermining the approach of Roosevelt, who apparently was just as interested in courting Stalin as Churchill found he had to be.

In his “Portrait of the Year” for 1943 in Hopkinson’s Picture Post 1938-50, Laurence Thompson wrote, after noting the effect of the Beveridge Report on Britain: “There were, however, less benevolent planners of the future at work than Sir William Beveridge. At Teheran at the end of November, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill held their first summit meeting to decide the shape of the post-war world. They rearranged the frontiers of Poland, for the integrity of which Britain had gone to war. Churchill outlined plans for using the Mediterranean as a springboard into the Balkans which caused Stalin to berate him until Churchill became red in the face. Stalin demanded the promised invasion of France. Roosevelt supported Stalin. His decision settled the matter; and, though he may not have been aware of it, settled the division of Europe between east and west for a generation.”(13)

During those dark days of decision-making, Picture Post may or may not have been supporting the Prime Minister when he needed it most; but Churchill did not get the support he needed from his American counterpart, even though the British leader -- whose mother was born and raised in the United States -- claimed “a great affection for the American people.”(14) Roosevelt must have been more interested in short-term gains (entry of the Soviet Union into the Pacific theatre, and a quicker end to World War II) versus the aftermath to Allied victory than even the perseverant Churchill -- who was regularly being criticized by the Allies for his “military chauvinism.”

As for Picture Post and the strength of its individual photographs, perhaps none was more dramatic from that portentous year than the picture next to the 1943 “Portrait of the Year”. In the foreground, a dead German soldier (with an arm and leg blown off?) lies along a snow-laced road, as a Russian tank advances ahead of him in the distance. The caption says: “1943 -- In the wintry air of Russia the Germans begin to smell defeat. The Russian tanks are rolling, and now for the first time they are rolling westward. The Germans are forced to yield up Russian territory which Hitler had said would be theirs ‘for eternity’.”(15)

1943 may not have been a glorious year for the Allies; but it was a year in which victory began to seem obtainable. And Picture Post covered the bittersweet details of what that victory might someday look like.
Chapter 19

1944 and the magazine

“Nineteen-forty-four was the year of Overlord, rockets, and the Butler Education Act. At the time it was Overlord which filled men’s minds, but the Butler Act, with its system of selective higher education, was to create a meritocracy which by the nineteen-fifties was beginning to emerge as a new ruling class; and Wernher von Braun’s rockets, designed to wipe out London, have -- among other things -- carried man to the moon.” (1)

* * * * *

The British general Sir Frederick Morgan was responsible for planning the invasion of Normandy, code-named “Overlord,” and the British C.I.G.S., Sir Alan Brooke, who as a corps commander had been driven out of France in 1940, had been promised command of the operation by Churchill. In fact, command went to the American general Dwight D. Eisenhower, with an American in Morgan’s place as Chief of Staff. This demonstrated clearly the hard fact that, in point of numbers and weight of equipment, the United States was now the senior partner in the Western Alliance. The condescension that had been a feature of the British attitude began to turn slowly to exasperation, illustrated by the prickly Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery’s well-publicized rows with some equally prickly American generals.

In Asia, the Fourteenth Army, under perhaps the most able British commander of the war, Field Marshal Sir W.J. Slim, first halted the Japanese at Imphal and Kohima, and then began the long, tortuous slog forward through the Burmese jungle towards the river Chindwin. In Russia, Marshal Zhukov re-conquered the Ukraine. In Britain, south coast harbors filled with landing craft, Hampshire lanes held fleets of camouflaged tanks and lorries, and the air was heavy with the roar of bombers on their way to pound the German Atlantic Wall.

D-Day was scheduled for dawn on June 5, but a storm blew up in the Channel, and Eisenhower postponed the invasion by 24 hours. At 4 a.m. on June 5, at the end of a 15-minute conference, he gave the order for the next day: “Okay, let’s go.” The enormous machine began to roll -- 500 warships; 4,300 landing craft; and 10,000 planes. At 6:30 a.m. on June 6, the assault went in, and by midnight about 150,000 Allied troops (Brits, Americans, and Canadians, mainly) were ashore in Normandy. Those who remembered the difficulties of landing three British divisions in a friendly port in 1939 were wont to declare, with exaggeration, that Overlord was easier. By end of July, 36 divisions, more than 1.5 million men, were in Normandy, and for the first time since the invasion of Russia, the Germans were forced to divert substantial forces from the Russian Front.

A week after D-Day, the first flying bomb fell on London, and new evacuations began, comparable with those of the Blitz. The bomb -- a pilotless plane -- had an effect on morale similar to that of the German dive-bomber early in the war. It wasn’t so much the physical damage the enemy contrivance did that unnerved the British, as the drone that anticipated it, and then the tense wait for the cut-out that predicted its fall. Nine thousand flying bombs launched between June and September of 1943 killed just over 6,000 people -- a great diversion of effort considering the relatively small result. But the British people were tired, and felt that, with their armies hitting the Germans in France, they should be safer at home.

There was worse to come. In September, rockets began to fall. They gave no warning of approach, and whereas more than a third of the flying bombs had been destroyed by fighters or A.A. fire, no defense was
found during the war against rockets. If the invasion had been delayed -- it the Germans had not driven out some of their best scientists because they were Jews -- rockets with atomic warheads might have achieved in 1944 the knock-out blow of Hitler’s pre-war dreams. The German people, too, were weary. In July Colonel von Stuaffeberg and a group of high-minded associates failed narrowly to kill Hitler and make peace. A purge of dissident German generals and civilians followed, some of them being hanged by pianowire from meat-hooks, their deaths filmed for Hitler’s edification.

In December, the Fuhrer scraped up 28 divisions for a desperate counter-offensive in the West. He chose the hilly, wooded country of the Ardennes, where the French had been decisively defeated in 1940. The Americans there, caught off-guard, were driven back 45 miles and had to be rescued by Montgomery. It was the diceman’s last throw. One of Hitler’s generals described the mental and physical wreck to which the conqueror of Europe had now been reduced: stooped, pale, hands trembling, left arm uncontrollably twitching. Herr Hitler spent much of his time drugged, in an underground bunker, raving at his commanders that they must not give an inch of ground, moving armies which no longer existed, across maps of territory long lost.

In the July 15, 1994, Picture Post, a rather fashionable figure from America appears. “(Ernest) Hemingway Looks at the War In Europe” contains revealing details and quotations, thought it is only a two-page spread. And yet, the British were very interested in characters like Hemingway, with his contacts from World War I and the Spanish Civil War. The expressions recorded in the first three photographs of the great man of American letters are of interest. The first reveals Hemingway laughing at the interviewer’s question; the second shows him primping his beard; and in the third, he shows off his head stitches. The broad caption reads: “The Author of ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ Comes to Britain to Report the Liberation of Europe.” First caption is: “I’m only a reporter now -- doing articles and covering the war for Collier’s Magazine. I cable 6,000 words a day.” Second caption is: “Of course it was different in the Spanish war. I wasn’t there to watch -- but to fight. I liked that a lot better.” Third caption is: “These stitches? There are 52 of them, but there’s no romantic history, I’m afraid. Just a crash in the black-out.” The spoken captions bring the essay’s subject as close to readers as the pictures. Three other photos in this eight-picture spread reveal Hemingway about to settle in for a “typical good hotel breakfast” -- bacon, mushrooms, rhubarb, toast and whiskey – with his response to an overhead attack being: “Isn’t That One of Those Flying Bombs Just Going Over?” (the largest photo used), and the pajama bottoms and khaki shirt he has on (“Clothes? I Wear What’s Around”).

The text also brings out germane detail. At one point, Hemingway “watches carefully as the cameraman gets ready.” That provokes him to speak: “Is that a Leica? I always use a Rolleiflex; used it a lot in the Spanish Civil War. I don’t now, of course. I just write war reports for Collier’s Magazine. Someone else takes the pictures. And now the others are doing the fighting too.” Hemingway asks: “You don’t suppose I could have some of those photographs, do you? I should like to send some to my boys. I’ve got one in Italy, you know. The other two are at school back home. Normally I’d be with them now.” Just prior to leaving, the magazine’s cameraman snaps a photo of the war reporter mulling his work. The caption reads: “The War Correspondent Goes Back to His Typewriter -- He works for Collier’s an American weekly magazine. Since being here he has flown over Normandy, and landed there by landing-craft.” Hemingway at home away from home? Yes, and the essay tells just enough of his story to let readers know what the famous American author is doing in their country.

The next five pages in Picture Post 1938-50 are devoted to the August 12, 1944, issue’s “Do We Want a State Medical Service?” -- a 23-picture essay. In its first spread, there is an Erich Salomon-like photo used large. Its caption reads, “The Picture That Has Never Before Been Taken: The Council of the British Medical Association in Session.” The first paragraph of text engages the reader honestly: “This is a long and complex article... The subject it has to cover is a complicated one. The future of the Medical Service in this country is obviously of the greatest importance to each one of us. Our health and happiness, the length of our life, the health and happiness of our children will depend upon it. It would seem that no one could possibly have a greater concern in the future of the Medical Service than each one of us has. But there are two bodies of men who have all this, and something else, at stake. The something else is their livelihood. The bodies of men are the doctors, and the medical students -- the doctors of the future.”
A Government White Paper had emerged; and a survey or two of doctors and the public sent out. So Picture Post, in progressive style, asked about this potential service. “If the public is called in as witness that Britain doesn’t want a National Health Service, it is worth testing the public’s real opinion. Is there, then, any way of deciding what the ‘public’ is thinking at a given period on any subject?” It’s noted the British Institute of Public Opinion used the method of American Journalism Professor George Gallup, with its questionnaires for doctors and the public. Typical questions are restated. Question No. 9 may be the key to the questionnaire: “On the whole, would you like the idea of a publicly-run National Health Service, or would you prefer Hospitals and doctors to be left as they are?” Meanwhile, a key to the doctor’s survey is: “Should the National Health Service include everyone?” The magazine adds that preventive medicine scarcely exists; and doctors were overworked. “Does the National Health Insurance scheme help the general public?” it asks.

From the surveys, it’s determined 55% of the public, and 60% of the doctors, want a free National Health Service; 49% of medical students favor the Government’s proposals, from which 36% think the country’s medical service would suffer by this new service. But 72% of the students favor free medical service; 69% of the public and 89% of the students want Health Centres for better treatment, and 68% of the doctors want them. Picture Post included more pictures of the survey’s conduct than the doctors’ debate at the British Medical Association. In the end, the gist of the survey may be seen as pragmatic and idealistic at once. Maurice Edelman’s text closes: “What can we conclude form the Survey? It is certain that the old organization for the medical care of the public is due for change; and that opposition to change comes not only from a small section of doctors, who fear it on grounds which have little to do with the public’s health, but also from an inadequate appreciation by the public of the benefits which the change to a planned system can offer.”

Was this a harbinger of things to come; postwar? Perhaps it was, for there is now a National Health Service in Britain; but what has been the price? “Hindsight” by Edelman in Picture Post 1938-50 gives an answer: “…What the National Health Service has forfeited has been the intimacy (and the limited resources) of the family practitioner. What it has gained has been the access by millions to clinical and therapeutic services that in the past they could ill afford, if at all. The new patients of the Welfare Age have been demanding -- often over-demanding. The National Health Service has been imposed on by unscrupulous clients, tired doctors, and gold-digging drug companies….Above all, postwar ministers of Health have failed to provide an adequate infrastructure of training and accommodation to service the colossal scheme of free medical care…. Yet the N.H.S. remains a solid and perfectible achievement of the 1945 Labour Government. In the balance sheet of its credits and debits, I have no doubt that it has brought vast benefits to the nation’s health which outweigh the inconveniences of long queues, doctor and nurse shortages and inadequate hospital services. Much that is now taken for granted as a public entitlement would have been a dream before the war. Much that is freely available to the poorest in Britain is the envy of the affluent American middle classes, crushed by medical charges. I’m glad to have belonged to the Parliamentary Labour Party that brought the N.H.S. into being.”

Back to 1944. By September 9, that year, the magazine’s readers received some positive news from France. As the 26-picture essay “The Road to Victory”’s introduction indicates: “Two members of our staff, Macdonald Hastings, writer, and Leonard McCombe, cameraman, come back from the British forward areas in Normandy, bringing pictures and story which will rank among the most vivid and moving documents of the war.” Their photo essay moves from the tale of an Argentan couple watching their home go up in flames, to a weeping, 74-year-old priest at the bombed-out Gothic church St. Germain (also in Argentan), and on to the devastation and dangers of war for the fighting men. Two notable photos are the image of two “padres” (one Methodist, the other Roman Catholic -- Caption: “The Price of Victory”) putting together a wooden cross near the feet of a dead trooper, and the picture of a dead German soldier near a road on which an Allied truck is passing (Caption: “…This Is The Fate of the Rest of Them -- He fell, not fighting, but fleeing. His pall is the mud spattered over him by our advancing columns.”).

And if McCombe’s pictures don’t tell the whole story of what war does and doesn’t do, then Hastings’s conclusion puts emphasis on anything left out: “Perhaps, when all’s said and done, the memory of what happened to that lovely Normandy landscape and its people is, for an Englishman, the most poignant
memory of all. You see, fighting in Normandy wasn’t like fighting in a foreign land. You remarked on it at every twist of the road, on every hill crest, in every river valley, in every farmstead, copse and pasture. The dust, the devastation, and the dead couldn’t blight it. The Norman countryside is like Southern England. … There are the same flowers and trees in the woods, the same creatures in the hedgerows, the same sleepy streams, the same luscious grass, the same civilized order in the landscape. Even now, from a distant view, you might easily mistake the Normandy countryside for West Sussex or the Weald of Kent. But not in close-up… Very soon now, there’ll come a time when nobody wants to hear about the war again. Certainly, I don’t want to write about it. But I pray that, deep down inside us, we remember the rape of Normandy because what happened here is what, by a hairsbreadth, this other Normandy was spared.”(2)

During the war, Picture Post never lost sight of a humanist approach to life in general. Quite apart from advice tendered by the Home Correspondent, Anne Scott-James, on how to make fashionable use of clothing coupons or to deal with the black-out, it was able to arouse curiosity on matters such as “Snowdonia -- should we make it a national park?” This became a topic of consideration in the same issue of July 1944 which portrayed the arrival of war in a Normandy village.

An earlier issue at the end of April that year had carried a red band at the bottom of the cover stating: “Last advice by military critics on the second front.” The photo above it shows a gamboling foal, whose parents - - Sun Chariot and Blue Peter -- had won all five classic races between them. The caption for one of the foal pictures in Robert Kee’s The Picture Post Album reads: “A Would-be Derby Winner Tries his Paces.” Inside the same issue is a five-page feature on fishing by Macdonald Hastings and Bert Hardy, who were later to cover the invasion together. An idyllic fishing picture shows two fishermen (one sedately standing in the water, one standing above him on the bank) in the midst of greenery with a few cattle grazing in the background; Kee’s caption is: “A War Elsewhere: Quiet Flows the Trout Stream.”

Kee also documents that period’s photographs with a five-picture spread entitled “War Comes to Normandy.” In the upper left quadrant of the spread, a British man (very much resembling Clement Attlee) has written on a small makeshift chalkboard, “The Invasion of Europe Has Begun,” while gripping a newspaper with the last three fingers of his left hand. The “chalkboard” is merely a piece of scrap wood affixed to an iron-spoke fence or gate by a metal folder clip.(3) The next photo, in counter-clockwise movement, is Leonard McCombe’s lead image from “The Road to Victory.” It’s a photo Tom Hopkinson chose to emphasize at the outset of the 1944 section in his Picture Post 1938-50. He not only showed the entire 26-picture spread from that story in his book; but also opened up with the McCombe cover-photo -- showing the Catholic chaplain mentioned previously offering a word of advice to an enlisted man. More dramatically, the caption that accompanies one picture in “The Road to Victory” reads: “On the Kill: The British Second Army Starts the Pursuit -- After ten grim weeks of fighting in Normandy, the German Seventh Army collapses. Along roads littered with German graves and German dead, in a choking cloud of dust, the British columns ride forward to victory.” (4) Again in Kee’s book, the next three pictures tell stories of the Allies in Normandy. The third and fourth pictures, in the counter-clockwise movement from the upper left quadrant of Kee’s five-photo layout, are familiar enough: They show the “padres” again by the feet of a dead German trooper, and the weeping priest of St. Germain’s. The fifth and final picture has a mixed message. Kee’s caption, for Allied wounded taking nourishment, reads: “Two for whom it Was Soon Over.”

Back at home, Picture Post was running articles by J.B. Priestley on “Britain’s Silent Revolution.” Hulton, still a nominal Conservative, had backed his staff on the Beveridge Report, even when Hopkinson claimed the plan had been “filleted” by the Coalition Government. A feature about what had happened after the end of the First World War concentrated on: “We’ve got to do better this time.” With the Labour Party in the Coalition, such thoughts could appear free from party spirit. When there were specific political issues to discuss (“Do we want more state planning?”; “Should we abolish the public schools?”), these were debated by a spokesman from each side. After all, the Tory Party itself was favoring reform, as was shown in an article which featured Peter Thorneycroft and Quintin Hogg, captioned, respectively: “The first thing is to win the war…” and “…Subject to that we press for reconstruction.”
The Butler Education Act, or the Education Act of 1944, fit into the equation regarding social, economic, and educational reform in Britain. Beveridge had said World War II was “A people’s war for a people’s peace,” and the Butler Act ushered in two fundamental reforms in British education. First, there was to be a requirement of secondary education for all -- a requirement that meant no school fees could be charged in any school maintained by Government authority. Second, there was to be the replacement of the former distinction between elementary and higher education by a new classification of “three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education, and further education.” To provide an adequate secondary education in accordance with “age, ability, and aptitude,” as interpreted by the Ministry of Education, three separate schools were: the grammar school, modeled on elite public schools, the less intellectually rigorous secondary modern school, and the technical school. In practice, 75% of the child population was directed to the secondary modern schools, for which the ministry advocated courses not designed to lead to any form of qualification; in the end, a twice-reformed system emerged a little further down the road. (5)

Changes in British education in the second half of the century, without changing the basic values in the system, extended education by population, level, and content; and minorities were given a great deal of attention. Picture Post championed the cause of education in 1944, and throughout the postwar years. And multiracialism and multiculturalism were topics dealt with regularly by it, in advance of the television age. Education was the broad goal of Picture Post from the start -- Education with a bit of profit motive thrown in. During the gloomy winter of 1943-44, Hopkinson had a little chat with Ms. Louys Boutroy and her mother, the owners of the Rischgitz Collection of pictures. Hopkinson had been inspired by the example of the big, glossy American magazines Life and Look, and was searching for an enhanced supply of pictures that could eventually bolster the Hulton Press’s chances against competition.

Hopkinson wrote: “After telling me a little of the collection’s history, they (the owners) invited me to test its (their collection’s) resources, which I did, asking them for portraits of Samuel Richardson, engravings showing the Great Fire of London, and photographs of John Ruskin and his home at Brantwood. After a brief whispered discussion as to where these would be found, the ladies dispersed, to return in a minute or two with all I had asked for. It was evident, as I already knew, that the collection was an excellent one, but also that it had little by way of a filing system. If we were to buy it, therefore, we should need to persuade its owner to work with us while the material was being reorganized to form part of a much larger library… Over a cup of coffee I suggested that if the ladies should ever consider selling their collection, Hulton Press would like to have the opportunity of buying it and employing Miss Boutroy as one of the librarians, proposing that if the idea interested them, they should talk it over with their advisers and suggest a price. This they did. It was reasonable indeed, and before long Hulton Press had become the owners of the Rischgitz Collection to which we added the Gooch Collection and one or two others, until I was confident that -- with the negatives and prints from our own cameraman (men and women), plus all the pictures from the Ministry of Information we had accumulated during the war years -- we would have the basis of the finest photographic and reference library in London”

Saved from fire in the last year of the war by Miss Boutry’s ingenuity, the Rischgitz Collection was finally and safely transferred to a disused warehouse near the magazine’s Shoe Lane offices once hostilities ended. Hopkinson concluded: “I was happy to see the work underway at last, never imagining that -- in little more than ten years’ time -- the library, known today as the Radio Times-Hulton Picture Library, would be almost the only part of our whole enterprise still in existence.” Today Getty Images owns that picture collection, the largest such library in the world. Hopkinson must have been proud of that work, before he passed away in 1990.(6)

Picture Post’s photographers were kept very busy by events at home and abroad in 1944. Politicians and troops were a mainstay, as were “ordinary” Brits and celebrities. Kee has published some of the best photos taken for the magazine in all those categories in The Picture Post Album, including Felix Man’s image of the famous American band leader Glen Miller in 1944, talking into a good-sized microphone in best military attire. In December 1944, Miller would disappear over the English Channel during a flight to Paris.(7)
But Picture Post wasn’t passing up chances to remind the troops there was a lot to live for once victory was achieved. Political matters at home, for one thing, were cause for lively debates among British people everywhere; and there was no telling what the future might hold, not only for the British, but for all the Allies. There seemed to be a great sense of promise in the air, though, by the end of 1944.
Chapter 20

1945, The End of World War II, Picture Post Begins to Find a New Role for Itself

“…its causes were clear, its necessity absolute, its management generally sensible, its ending final. And...this war (World War II) was reported as it unfolded, in spite of endless conflicts between reporters and censors.”(1)

“During the course of the Conference at Potsdam I had not so far sought to come to grips with Russia. Since Yalta she had behaved in an astonishing fashion. I had earnestly hoped that the Americans would not withdraw from the wide territories in Central Europe they had conquered before we met. This was the one card that the Allies held when the fighting stopped by which to arrange a level settlement. Britain sought nothing for herself, but I was sure she would view the vast advance which Russia was making in all directions as far exceeding what was fair. The Americans seemed quite unconscious of the situation, and the satellite states, as they came to be called, were occupied by Russian troops.” (2)

“In his 1945 Christmas Day broadcast King George VI addressed himself particularly to the young, and spoke of the fine spirit of service they had devoted to destruction of the country’s enemies. He went on: ‘You have known the world only as a world of strife and fear. Bring now all that fine spirit to make it one of joyous adventure, a home where men and women can live in mutual trust and walk together as friends. Do not judge life by what you have seen of it in the grimness and waste of war, nor yet by the confusion of the first years of peace. Have faith in life at its best and bring it your courage, your hopes and your sense of humour….Let us face the future with hope…’ British dead were officially: 296,521 soldiers, seamen and airmen, and 60,585 civilians killed in air raids; total British Empire dead: 466,035. American dead were 396,637. Of their allies, some 20,000,000 Russians had been killed; among others, 1,685,000 Yugoslavs. For the enemy the estimates of dead were 3,000,000 German soldiers, seamen and airmen, and 350,000 civilians killed in air raids; 1,219,000 Japanese… Four months after the end of such a war the hope was above all for peace. Forty years later in a reality in which the vision of the airman above Nagasaki and that of the monarch in his study had still to be reconciled, the hope was still for peace.” (3)

* * * * *

Hitler retained one hope in early 1945 -- a split between his enemies; but unity held, if only just long enough. Early in February, “the three puissant old gentlemen,” in Evelyn Waugh’s words, continued at Yalta their planning for the future. One of them (Franklin D. Roosevelt) had up his sleeve a weapon of such magnitude that it immediately shifted the world into a new dimension; but their planning continued to be in pre-war terms of territory and spheres of influence. Once again F.D.R. sided with Stalin against Churchill, and Stalin openly voiced his suspicions of the West. After the conference, Joseph Goebbels -- German Minister for Propaganda and Enlightenment -- made his prophecy of the iron curtain that would fall on a Europe divided between East and West following the defeat of Germany.
One by one, the war leaders began to pass on. Roosevelt went first, on April 12. Mussolini followed a fortnight later, executed by Italian partisans, his body hung up by the heels in the public square of Milan. On April 30, Hitler shot himself in his Berlin bunker. Goebbels immediately tried to make a separate peace with Russia, Admiral Donitz with the West. Both offers were rejected. On May 7, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies, still known as the “United Nations.”

In Britain, the Coalition Government began breaking up. Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin favored continuation of the war-time administration until after Japan’s defeat, but Herbert Morrison -- who had cherished hopes of replacing Attlee as deputy Prime Minister -- pressed for an early election. The election took place on July 5, 1945, thought the result, because of votes from servicemen overseas, was not known for three more weeks. Labour had fought largely with a program of nationalizing the Bank of England, fuel, transport, civil aviation and steel. The Conservatives were led by Churchill and his “evil genius,” the publishing magnate Lord Beaverbrook. The latter claimed to detect in the mild commuter from Stanmore who had led the Labour Party a person likely to introduce the Gestapo and concentration camps to Britain. When this failed to persuade, they discovered that behind Attlee stood the figure of Professor Harold Laski, chairman for the Labour Party then.

Like many before and since, Laski had tried to establish control by the party conference and executive over the parliamentary Labour Party. He had also written, some years before, a book which laid him open to the accusation that he advocated violent revolution. The Daily Express and a number of hecklers at Laski’s meetings exploited that charge, and Laski brought a libel suit, which he lost. Neither nationalization nor Laski was very popular with voters, particularly those in Britain’s Armed Services. They voted for Beveridge nonetheless, and gave their votes to the party they thought more likely to provide a better life. To Attlee’s surprise, and Churchill’s disappointment, Labour was returned to power with a majority of nearly 150 -- the first majority Labour Government in British history.

The Labour Party had fought the election under the banner “Let Us Face the Future,” and their members faced it with a Government consisting mainly of stalwarts from the war-time coalition, with an average age in the sixties. One of the newcomers, Emanuel Shinwell, Minister of Fuel and Power, complained that the party had been talking about nationalizing the mines for more than half a century, but it had omitted to prepare any plans for doing so.

Neville Chamberlain had sacrificed abstractions like honor and morality for the sake of peace, and when war came, he had tried to fight it so economically he laid himself open to attack for seeming most concerned to ensure Britain could pay the indemnity after losing. For his part, Churchill -- with the tacit consent of the people -- had thrown nearly everything into the fray: overseas investments, export trade, merchant navy, and borrowings of nearly three billion pounds.

Soon after the new Government took office, the economist Lord Maynard Keynes warned that Britain faced “a financial Dunkirk” without substantial American aid. Lend-Lease (or Lease-Lend, as it was known in Britain) was abruptly terminated with the defeat of Japan, and Keynes went to Washington to negotiate a large loan. There was a strong isolationist tide in the United States then, and some Americans were less than anxious to help a potential business competitor, particularly a Socialist one; but a loan of US $3.75 billion was granted, on condition that sterling would be made covertible. When the British House of Commons debated the loan, 71 Conservative and 23 Labour M.P.s were prepared to face the consequences of doing without it. The rest voted for the loan, and some complained of British subservience to the American policy that followed. Thus did the Labour Government set out to provide the better life demanded by the electorate.

Meanwhile, on August 6, 1945, a new world had been born. An American atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, killing between 70,000 and 250,000 people. New Prime Minister Attlee, who was deputy Prime Minister in the previous Coalition Government, had been told nothing of the atomic project, and thought it was just another big bomb. Three days later, another “big bomb” was dropped from the skies over Japan -- this time on Nagasaki. Picture Post was busy trying to put fast-developing events into perspective in early 1945, when it ran its story “Bertrand Russell on the Problems of Peace” in the April 21 issue. This three-
An essay's introduction reads: “One of the most provocative thinkers of our time analyses some problems of the post-war world, and suggests the kind of approach which will avoid another world disaster.”

A notable mathematician and social philosopher, by 1945 Russell was getting on in years, but still liked a good debate. One photo -- showing him smoking a pipe -- suggests his peace of mind. The caption reads: “The Seer of Trinity: At 73, Bertrand Russell is still the Protagonist of Fresh and Stimulating Ideas. Lord Russell -- is the third Earl, and grandson of Lord John Russell, who piloted the first Reform Bill in 1932. He has championed scores of unpopular causes and suffered persecution because of his intellectual loyalties.” Russell proposed “three steps to security”: “The first step was to create the necessary state of feeling. For this purpose, it should first be emphasized, by all the force of official propaganda, that great wars are a folly, and that, on a calculation of self-interest, a give-and-take agreement on disputed points is always more advantageous to both parties than war.

“The next step,” he said, “will be to allay the mutual suspicions which have unfortunately existed between Russia and the Western Powers. …But there has not, for a number of years, been any reason for this state of feeling on either side. Since the fall of Trotsky, the Soviet Government has ceased to support revolutionary movements in other countries, and co-operation between Russia and the West should now be as possible as between Mohammedan and Christian countries.

“The third step -- which can only be taken after the other two -- will be to establish a genuine and effective League against aggression, in which the Great Powers, as well as the others, agree to settle disputes by peaceful means, and to resist aggression even when perpetrated by a Great Power.”

Russell was not ahead of his time with regard to the “League” idea -- which, of course, became the United Nations we know today. Nor was he ahead of his time regarding the struggle of Capitalism against Communism, which lasted at least until the demise of the Soviet Union. As for his pacifist views, they seem both noble and naïve. And yet, there was a certain gracefulness about Lord Russell that appealed to his followers.

Previous to the magazine’s report on Russell, its staff was focusing as much on the war as possible. In the March 3, 1945, issue, its editors ran a report entitled “A Battle with the Rhine.” The introduction indicated which way the flow of this five-page, 10-photo essay was headed: “By flooding the flanks of the British positions east of Nijmegen, the Germans try to maroon our forward troops. But a spectacular amphibious operation by the Canadians beats the menace of the waters.” And the Canadians did find a way to overcome the floods. With one large photo -- of several landing craft moving onto and over some Dutch dykes -- across the bottom, the caption says: “The Fleet Which Is Winning the Battle of the Floods: ‘Buffaloes’ and ‘Ducks’ Crawl, Run, Paddle and Swim Once Flooded Fields, Muddy Swamps, and Broken Dykes of What Were Once Called ‘The Impassable Water Defences of Holland.’”

In another dramatic photo, flooded homes serve as a vivid reminder of what “Total War” can do to innocent homeowners. But the residents are long-gone, and only the British “Buffaloes” can be seen in the foreground, packed with troops freshly picked up and being brought to safety. Unfortunately for the homeowners, they’ve lost the battle with the sea here, which had been kept up by them miraculously for centuries. “The Dutch Village That Was Submerged” reads the caption beneath the story’s final picture; and so it was, submerged.

By the June 9, 1945, issue, the Labour Party was making news in “Labour Makes Its Plans for Power.” In this 17-photo essay, we see the best leaders of the party that would try to win the peace. Again photographed by Hutton, this report resembles some of the German-period photo essays by Stefan Lorant. Labour’s Bevin and Morrison are shown at the upper left of the first spread, in the midst of oration. The first caption reads: “‘Moscow, Not Munich’: says Bevin -- Labour would have sent its Foreign Secretary to Moscow in 1939. He stands for collaboration with Russia.” The next caption reads: “Great Changes in Our
A large horizontal photo across most of the bottom of the first spread demonstrates how crowds can be influenced, for the good or the bad of Britain. A wide-angle shot is used here, taken from a balcony, with a few silhouettes of people in the foreground, an ornate pillar in the middle, and a well-lighted hall filled to capacity beyond the balcony. The caption reads: “The Scene in the Empress Ballroom in Blackpool, Where Over a Thousand Delegates Assemble for the Most Enthusiastic Conference Labour Has Held for Many Years -- The vast hall is crammed with delegates who listen attentively to fighting speeches, both from the platform and the floor. Morrison and Bevin, stating Labour’s programme of jobs for all, houses for all, and peace for all, receive tremendous ovations. The Conference eagerly accepts Mr. Churchill’s challenge to fight a General Election, and ends with a Victory fervour.” Other photos show the delegates meeting top-guns. One candid picture, though, shows a young woman passing time with a newspaper and a young man looking over her shoulder. The caption reads: “Some Like to Read -- She’s a journalist who rests from her labours at the Conference by reading what others write.” It is a good glimpse of these people, made by a sensitive photographer of human moments -- Kurt Hutton.

Maurice Edelman was the essay’s writer: “…With a vast majority, the Conservative Party failed to give Britain work, failed to give Britain houses, failed to give Britain peace. Now, says Labour, it’s our turn. Capitalism has proved that it benefits only a few. We have a policy to benefit the whole nation. In the confidence that Labour’s Five Year Plan will build a new and better Britain, the delegates -- civilians and serving men -- returned to the constituencies to win the election.” Edelman’s “Hindsight” in Picture Post 1938-50 pointed to results: “…by 1950 when most of its ‘Let’s Face the Future’ manifesto had been translated into Acts, the Party had begun to run out of steam. Having exhausted its programme, it lost its self-confidence. Though it won the following election with a small majority, the Labour Party was already in the wilderness, led by old, tired and dying men. “When it returned to power in 1964,” Edelman continued, “it was a pragmatic and revisionist Party. But by 1970 it was once again looking for a framework of Principle, with its ideologists yearning for the spirit of 1945.” “The Spirit of 1945” had won a decisive general election at war’s end; but its vision was not grounded in reality sufficiently to keep Labour constituencies happy into the 1950s. Perhaps that’s why the “Churchill spirit” is remembered more fondly today than it was immediately after the war. (4)

Previous to the 1945 general election, Picture Post’s photographers kept busy with other events. Bert Hardy, for one, was overseas, and filing as many reports for the magazine as the Army would allow. During the Liberation of Paris, on August 26, 1944, the British cameraman captured the joy and the fear of Parisians, as Allied troops marched into the French capital only to be attacked by sniper fire from the roof of Notre Dame.

Several stories followed that “scoop,” but perhaps none was so rich in color and national pride for the British as Hardy’s story on the crossing of the Rhine River. That crossing occurred March 24, 1945, and the Army sergeant had early clearance to send these photos to Picture Post. Hardy described that crossing in Bert Hardy: My Life: “When zero-hour for the crossing came, it was difficult to imagine where so many soldiers had come from. I was crossing with the troops, going forward with them taking photographs, then returning and taking pictures of the largest Bailey Bridge being built… On one of these return trips General (Sir M.C.) Dempsey spotted me. He was just about to make history by becoming the first Allied General to cross the Rhine, and he wanted a record of the occasion. He ordered me to go with him.

“We went across in two small motor launches. I took a few photographs, and then went ahead, so I could get ashore and take pictures of him stepping out of his boat. Once these had been taken, we didn’t stop long on the far bank. On the way back, I got into the same boat as the General, and sat in the prow so I could get pictures of him against the far shore… When we were about halfway across, the Germans got our range with their mortar fire. Shells were landing all around us, sending up sheets of water…

“At last we reached the comparative safety of the shore. We were still being fired on, and General Dempsey and his entourage quickly took cover by diving into a shell hole. I was about to join them, but this
was one picture that looked too good to miss: GENERAL TAKING COVER FROM ENEMY FIRE. So I stood up on the rim and took a few shots. Dempsey spotted me at once... 'Sergeant! Get down here immediately!' ‘Yes, sir. As soon as I’ve taken this picture.’"

Dempsey didn’t know that Hardy was taking photos for Picture Post, but he did have final approval over the images sent back to the magazine. And Hardy’s shot of the General taken from the prow of his motor launch was used on the magazine’s cover. Hardy also took some strong photos when he helped rescue a group of Russian slaves from the basement of a burning, bombed-out building in Osnabruck, Germany; when he visited the just-liberated concentration camp at Belsen (“my most horrifying experience”); and when Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery met Marshal Zhukov. Following that, he was sent to the Far East and took many pictures just before and after the Japanese surrender. He was Lord Mountbatten’s personal photographer for a time there.(5)

In Picture Post 1938-50, Tom Hopkinson used a photo at outset of the 1945 section, one first printed in the January 5, 1946 issue of the magazine. It was a view of “The mushroom that would haunt mankind. On 6 August 1945 the world entered a new era. An atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. It knocked Japan out of the war and brought a new nightmare to mankind.” A new era had been born.

Three months after the West had dropped “the bomb,” Picture Post was doing something it had done so well during the war -- talk about the shape of Britain’s future. In the November 10, 1945, issue, an eight-picture, two-page story appeared, “Africa Speaks in Manchester.” Photographed by John Deakin and written by Hilde Marchant, it shows several leading players in the “first Pan-African Conference” -- including Jomo Kenyatta, Chief A.S. Coker, E.J. Du Plau, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois (from America), and a white man who argues for the Negro cause -- John McNair, General Secretary of the I.L.P. That story also includes a picture of Mr. John Teah Brown, a black man, and his white wife, Mrs. Mary Brown, at home in Manchester. Mixed marriage was taboo in 1945 Britain, and the Browns were extraordinary Brits.

The last two paragraphs of Ms. Marchant’s article indicated the effects the conference had on many white Brits: “…It was Wallace Johnson, the negro Trade Union leader, who put the whole case most sanely. ‘We turn,’ he said, ‘to the British Labour Movement to help us, and thereby help themselves. We do not want to be cheap labour, driven in competition against British workers.’… To such reasoning, this country will not be unsympathetic. But to creating a black bloc, to the use of force advocated by hotheads of the Federation, there will be immediate white hostility.”

In his related “Hindsight” piece for Picture Post 1938-50, Hopkinson noted: “Looking back on Hilde Marchant’s article with the hindsight of more than twenty years, one can see how much was left out. The article was written from the white standpoint natural at the time. There were mistakes. We called it the first Pan-African Conference, when in fact it was the fifth. We had never heard of Kwame Nkrumah, and we evidently supposed Jomo Kenyatta to be an Ethiopian. But the important thing is that the article was written at all, and that it was by no means unsympathetic.” (6)

With so much of the magazine’s time being spent on British social reform during and just after the war, it can be asked whether Picture Post had been doing all it could for the war effort. At chapter outset, Eric Sevareid makes his point about the American coverage (mainly) of the Second World War in resolute terms in the “Foreword” to Time-Life’s WWII. But what of Picture Post as a prime example of British coverage?

Most likely, Edward Hulton’s magazine was doing the best job of any British publication in covering both the Homefront (which was the basis to the British war effort) and the war zones British troops were involved in. Stuart Hall makes a good point that Picture Post was very much a leader in the “‘culture’ of the Home Front.” Hall wrote: “…the war made it possible for a weekly magazine like Picture Post to be, at one and the same moment, commercially successful and authentically populist in feeling and tone. The grey half-tones were a perfect visual equivalent for the mood of emergency which prevailed on the home front. The brisk, activist, resiliently cheerful note of the magazine, inscribed everywhere in its pages, paralleled the stubborn cheerfulness, the underplayed heroism, the wartime quips and repartee, the shelter
humour and the Blitz folk-lore which were authentic manifestations of a collective popular spirit; in essence, a ‘culture’ of the Home Front.” Hall concluded: “In such moments, it became possible for a certain authentic populism to invade and overtake the language and idiom of commercial journalism.” It was this populism that photographers like Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, Felix H. Man, Humphrey Spender, Haywood Magee, Tim N. Gidal, and others were able to express -- most crucially during the war years, but even into the fifties. Hardy’s work, especially, fit this description, and the best of his work reveals the cultural power of a people that dates back centuries. (7)

As for the war itself, neither Churchill nor Roosevelt foresaw the terrible tragedies the “cold war” would bring -- particularly to Poland and Eastern Europe -- because they did not recognize early enough the threat Soviet Russia posed to the new order of nations. But Churchill had filled a critical role for the British nation from 1940-45 (as had Roosevelt for the Americans): He had given expression to the deepest and most courageous sentiments the British people had within them.

Part of the new order of things was the “troublesome” (to the Allies because he was a Communist leader, and to the Soviets because he was an independent Communist leader) Yugoslav Marshal Tito. Several days after Churchill had commented in the House of Commons that Tito was his friend, Philip Jordan wrote in Picture Post: “It would be more correct to speak of the common-sense method of the Government which he leads, rather than to infer that he is a Dictator, for, if those who have visited Yugoslavia in this war...know anything for certain, they know that he is no more Dictator of Yugoslavia than Winston Churchill is Dictator of Britain. If any reliable measure of power were available, it might well show that Churchill is a freer agent than Tito....” Given 1990s events in Bosnia and Serbia, perhaps King George VI could honestly advise his subjects in 1945 to “…face the future with hope,” because Marshal Tito turned out to be a Communist leader the West could deal with peacefully. Subsequent leaders of new “Yugoslavia” did not turn out so well.
Part V

The Labour Government Takes Over for the Rest of the “Hopkinson Decade”
Chapter 21

1946 and the Magazine

“Most of the leaders of Britain’s Labo(u)rir Party, some of the country’s unions, and many of its diminutive radical socialist factions are of middle-class origin. But that cannot be taken as evidence that class lines are being dissolved. Those people belong to a tribe all their own -- the would-be working class, which even includes an aristocrat or two….Katherine Whitehorn, a perceptive columnist for the London Observer, notes(s), ‘Fleet Street (the British capital’s newspaper district) is full of people who hiss middle class with the intonation of nigger, who nonetheless pull in high salaries and own houses full of interestingly expensive objects; obviously they feel themselves working class in the sight of God.’”(1)

“(The) elephant -- the ordinary mass of simple human beings -- has been having a pretty thin time lately. Nothing has gone at all as he hoped, and everything only too much as he expected. The war, he hears, is ended -- but it’s quite uncertain if and when there will be any peace. The war ended in a loud bang; and the main concern of everyone since has been as to when and where the next bang will go off. Proposals for stopping the bangs altogether have so far proved to be only the occasion for fresh arguments and threats. The elephant loves a quiet life, and so far he’s had to work harder than ever in his life before -- or just as hard. But he refuses to despair, perhaps things will turn out better than they look like doing.”(2)

* * * * *

The Conservatives made a relatively rapid recovery from their greatest electoral disaster in 40 years. Their newly-appointed chairman was not only a good organizer, but a man whose self-made background was a good advertisement for the party’s claim that it encouraged careers open to the talented. Viscount “Uncle Fred” Woolton fit oddly into the Conservative graceland of Burke, Bagehot and the Marquess of Salisbury, but he deserves his niche just the same.

The Conservative Research Department under R.A. Butler recruited several capable young men with futures to make. Born a generation earlier, Reginald Maulding and Iain Macleod would have been Fabian Socialists. Enoch Powell was a pro-consul on the Curzon model, though with the obligatory middle-class background from which the others also sprang. They contributed a lively flow of progressive ideas from the thirties, the most dangerous being filtered out at a higher level by paternalists like Oliver Lyttelton. Only one unfashionable figure marred the Conservative New Look. In August, Anthony Eden, an aging heir-apparent, was writing anxiously to Lord Edward Halifax that Churchill seemed in the mood to proclaim his intention of leading the party at the next election. “Disastrous,” noted Halifax -- a view widely held in select circles, though little discussed.

Meanwhile, Labour reeled from crisis to crisis. Shortage of dollars caused rations to be cut even from wartime levels. The Minister of Food, John Stracey, was an intellectual whose political progress, from belief in Sir Oswald Mosley to a Popular Front with the Communists, spoke of the optimism he demonstrated in his belief that the shortage of fats could be overcome by growing groundnuts in East African bush. In July 1946, the nation suffered the traumatic experience of bread-rationing, which had never been required during even the darkest days of two world wars. Luxuries like nylons, whisky, and chocolate were mainly for export only -- a reality rubbed in by anti-Labour advertisers.
Almost the only experiment on which Prime Minister Attlee had ventured in forming his Government was to give responsibility for housing and health to the Welshman Aneurin Bevan, who engaged in a long struggle with diehard doctors over the formation of a national health service, and who had little energy left for the other half of his task. As few houses were being built, the homeless drew attention to their plight by taking over deserted army camps, empty houses and Central London hotels.

Abroad, Jewish insurgents blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, and kidnapped and flogged a British officer and three non-commissioned officers for whipping a Jewish youth. This and later outrages led to outbreaks of anti-semitism, and even riots in Liverpool and Manchester. It was not yet widely known that six million Jews had been murdered by the Germans. The British withdrawal from Empire proceeded no more smoothly in the Far East, where Indian Muslims refused to accept an independence placing them under the Hindu thumb. In Europe, negotiations over the peace treaties dragged on, while both sides consolidated the division foreshadowed at Teheran and Yalta.

In a speech delivered at Fulton, Missouri, Churchill signaled the declaration of the “Cold War,” and the birth of the “Iron Curtain,” by voicing suspicions about Soviet intentions. Some say he may have been acting defensively from weakness, rather than aggressively from strength. Russia had lost perhaps 20,000,000 dead in the war, many of them having been among the young and active. That nation’s industry had been wrecked, and the 1946 harvest was ruined by drought. Stalin was being kept informed by Communist sympathizers of the progress of American atomic capacities, and there were many in the West who went further than Bertrand Russell’s proposal that the threat of atomic war should be used to make the Soviet Union less intransigent.

Unfortunately, it was not until the end of 1947 that Ernest Bevin’s “Now ‘e’s gone too bloody far” marked a real break in British attempts to reach agreement with the Soviet leader; but the British Foreign Secretary was playing a difficult hand. He tried to convince the world that Britain still belonged in the group known as the “Big Three,” which in all likelihood it did not. Bevin was apparently afraid of an American withdrawal from Europe, as had occurred after the First World War, leaving a weakened Britain as the only real counterpoise to Soviet expansion. And there was the threat to British independence shown by the collaboration between Stalin and Roosevelt at Teheran and Yalta. The British decision to build its own atomic bomb, then, may have been influenced as much by fear of a pro-Soviet America as of Russia. By the end of 1946, William Beveridge and the better life seemed as far away as the Siegfried Line had seemed to British troops in 1940. But the Government and the British people hung on, and things did, though very slowly, get a bit better.

On the cover of its June 22, 1946, issue, Picture Post ran a dramatic photo of “Leaders in War and Peace” -- Prime Minister Attlee seated next to former Prime Minister Churchill. Both men were decked out with all the medals on their chests that each man’s jacket could hold. Churchill also sported a top-hat and cane; but both leaders appeared pleased with the event (perhaps Attlee’s installation during the previous year?). That particular issue was a “Victory Special,” and the magazine lent its weight often to such thematic ventures.

In the July 13, 1946, issue, “Life in a Holiday Camp”, Hilde Marchant is again the writer; and Charles “Slim” Hewitt and Kurt Hutton the photographers. The Butlin Camps run by Billy Butlin and attracting almost half-a-million people a year then were popular enough -- in terms of fun, discipline, and refreshment. As Marchant points out: “…as in all the best boarding-schools, the members of Kent and Gloucester house eat together, play together and compete together against other units in such competitions as the knobbliest knees, the camp ‘lovely’ and the mass keep-fit exercises….

“The normal day at Butlins begins at 7.45 when the camp radio gives a hearty rise-and-shine call to the camp. The voice is cheerful, but relentless, as it recites: ‘Good morning, campers. It is a lovely day and the sun is shining (or, the weather has let us down), so show a leg you lads and lasses, rub the sleep out of your eyes and prepare for another grand day of fun, another Butlin’s jolliday.’
“From that moment on, the radio keeps up a perpetual chant over the whole camp. It is informative, briefing the campers for the day’s whist-drive or gymnastics, it plays waltz time as the mass hike sets out for the villages around, it follows you round with song or, towards sunset, pours out the pink romance of a violin solo. It leaks through every door and window. It calls, croons, marches and agitates all day, until the final dance….

“Mr. Butlin is not worried by the critics. He turns down 600 applications every week for the summer, and now the campers have asked him to provide winter clubs for them. His shares have risen, and he has no staff difficulties because he pays excellent wages and bonuses.”

In addition, as a good example of what a Butlin camp can do for people in love, there is a decent photo of a young couple holding hands on a hilltop. The caption reads: “Two Who Find Quiet even in Butlin’s -- You needn’t always join in the organized fun. Quiet retreats along the coast are plentiful. The camp, in fact, is popular with honeymoon couples.”

Marchant then quotes Billy Butlin and concludes the text on a positive note, just below the young lovers’ picture. “‘They come back year after year. That is my test,’ he says. And he and his family wouldn’t dream of spending their own holidays anywhere else but in a Butlin camp.”

Also in the July 13, 1946, issue is the story entitled “The Happy Elephant,” photographed by Werner Bischof.(3) The lead-picture is a lesson in how to use photographs for political satire. Recall the photomontage (by Heartfield) of two elephants used in the October 15, 1938, issue of Picture Post -- sporting wings. The caption for it reads: “The elephants are happy. They are flying about in the sky. The elephants are happy because they have got peace. How long have the elephants got peace? Ah, that alas! No one can say.” That photographic cartoon was used to puncture holes in the optimism over Neville Chamberlain’s Munich Agreement with Hitler.(4)

The introduction to the 1946 essay, which serves as a kind of caption for the photo above it, of an elephant playfully lying down in a stream, is satirical, as well: “Yes, he’s heard of the atom-bomb. He knows all about the breakdown of the Conference -- of all the (peace) conferences. You can’t tell him anything new about bun-rationing. But just now the elephant’s thinking of his holiday. It’s a good many years since he had the last one, and he means it to be good.”

Think for a moment about all the layouts discussed from the war years. Never a mention of holidays. Only in 1938, a mention of “happy elephants.” But there has been a kind of playfulness to some of the Picture Post photo essays, nonetheless, or at least a resilient cheerfulness; and now that the war is over, there’s plenty to be playful about. As the text indicates: “The elephant hasn’t had a holiday for some years, and there are some members of his family whom he scarcely knows by sight. This year he means to get away and get to know them. For a week or a couple of weeks, you can count him out. He’ll be down by the sea or in the country, rolling in the water, basking on the sand. For a week, or a couple of weeks, he won’t be worrying -- and the best thing anyone can do about it is just to let him be…..”

The newspaper cartoon character Andy Capp comes to mind. If only AC had the chance to go on a holiday from his “Missus.” Never to be? Well, maybe someday he will, for Andy (the elephant) is a “simple human being,” as the story goes, and he just may be able to swing such a thing -- if his pint hits him right, and the wife doesn’t. Are they all wet -- Andy and the elephant? Well, the elephant appears to be. But then, he’s going on holiday; and Andy isn’t -- at least not yet!

To interpret, the elephant may be playing Labour for the fall-guy. And that is something Attlee had to worry about, because nobody really expects the “ordinary” Brit to be a patsy for any person or group, whether he or she calls himself or herself Labourite or Conservative. And because Churchill was out for the time being, and Attlee in, it apparently becomes the Labourite’s role to take it on the chin. Or is it the country that’s on a much needed holiday and Mr. Attlee just happens to be in power at a time when people
aren’t watching his Ps and Qs meticulously? Or perhaps the “common man” is merely “in his element” this time, with Mr. Attlee. (5)

Photographer Bert Hardy was born and raised in a section of London that has changed dramatically over the years: the once-notable Elephant and Castle district just south of the Thames. Many “Basic Brits” used to live in that portion of the capital, and “The Elephant” proved to be a focus for hundreds of Hardy’s best pictures -- including a famous photo he took in 1939, of a just-released convict and the prostitute with whom he’d spent his first night out. That photo was used by Edward Steichen in the famous “Family of Man” exhibition that toured the world in the mid-fifties.

Back to 1946. Picture Post continued with ever-more-popular themes during the remainder of the year. In the August 3 issue, it ran “England’s Captain,” about a British cricket team, and its captain, traveling to Australia for the first time in 10 years. Cricket in England in 1946 was a symbol of return after the war to an England of peace and normality. And during the sunny Compton-Edrich summer of 1947, crowds flowed nostalgically and excitedly to the grounds where the best cricket games were played. Since then a more technically informed, perhaps less generous, approach to the game has transpired. And yet, 120 nations are today recognized as cricket-playing nations by the International Cricket Council. (6)

Walter Hammond was made captain of England in 1939. His statistics are legendary. As the story noted: “Walter Hammond was, in fact, only 24 when he equaled one of W.G.’s (Grace’s) records by scoring 1,028 runs between May 1 and May 28 in the season of 1927 -- two years after playing his first match for England…. In terms of figures, everybody knows Hammond. Every schoolboy can tell you that it was way back in 1935 that he completed his hundred 100’s in First Class cricket; that it was in ’33 and ’37 that he made thirteen individual centuries. But, statistics apart, Hammond is a little-known figure; though his outward appearance is familiar and memorable to anyone who has ever once seen him at the crease or in the field. The dark blue St. George-created cap drawn over the right eye; the rock-footed stance; the lofty back-lift of the bat; the punch of the bull shoulders; the catapult momentum that comes from the wrist.”

The story’s writer, Patrick Campbell, added: “There are things you don’t forget.” Hewitt’s pictures alongside Campbell’s text are memorable, too. They show Hammond “padding up”; having a cup of tea; revealing “The Shoulder-work of England’s Most Forcing Batsman,” “The Unorthodoxy of Genius,” “The Certain Four to the Long-leg Boundary,” and “the Most Effective All-rounder of Our Time.” Later, he’s viewed in conference with Colonel Henson, a cricket club secretary; and finally, outside a bar -- “With Another Century in His Pocket, England’s Captain Goes Off Home.”

During the upcoming winter, Hammond was to lead the British team “down-under” on his fourth Australian tour. The final caption reads: “When that’s all over, Wally Hammond thinks he may feel like retiring.” The conclusion of Picture Post’s text (plus the variously “tame” to action-packed layout) pay him tribute: “Today, among a certain section of the Press and public, Hammond is coming to be referred to occasionally as ‘the Old Man.’ Look up his record again in ‘Wisden’....The Old Man, indeed! Was there another man in Britain who, this year, could have been a sensible alternative to Wally Hammond as the man to lead England in Australia? But then, perhaps the title of Old Man has little to do with age, nothing to do with decrepitude, and everything to do with the affection and admiration that Englishmen feel for one of their finest sportsmen.”

Turning from the popular pastime of cricket to another subject Americans have long wondered about -- how British poets pay their way -- the magazine’s August 10, 1946, issue took up that burning issue in “A Nest of Singing Birds.” The story’s introduction reads: “Even a bad novelist can often live on the money his books bring in. But poets, even good poets, find they have to have jobs, as well. A number of them feel that the B.B.C. offers the kind of jobs they like.” This three-page photo essay contains some portraits of the “singing birds; and the captions assist the pictures. Beneath the first slightly angled view of a bespectckled, bearded, speaking man in this caption, “William Empson: News Editor, Eastern Services -- Born in 1906, Empson has been a lecturer in English Literature in China and Japan. He returned to this country in 1939. His poems are inclined to be cynical and fatalistic, at times almost willfully obscure. Often his work has a
tragic beauty, especially he is concerned with emotions rather than with ideas. But it is usually complex and intellectual.”

Also found among the BBC’s members is a Welsh poet. At a table with plenty of brew on it, wearing a plaid jacket, and looking in the general direction of the photo of “John Arlott: Talks Producer, Eastern Services,” he reminds one of nothing so much as a youngster. The caption reads, “Dylan Thomas: A Non-Staff Reader and Writer -- Born in 1914, Thomas made a reputation as a poet before he was twenty. He has written for newspapers and films. He is one of the few modern poets proclaimed as a genius by critics generally. His themes are the old poetic themes of birth, love and death which he regenerates in exciting language which has a lot of the Bible and the singing of his native Wales in it.”

Later, on October 12, 1946, the magazine ran a story more Brits could take interest in: “How Laurence Olivier Plays King Lear.” The introduction reads: “The Old Vic Company present ‘King Lear’ at the New Theatre, London. Laurence Olivier produced the play and acts himself the difficult and tremendous part of Lear. In doing so this great actor adds another to his list of masterly Shakespearian portraits.” Written by Lorna Hay and photographed by Kurt Hutton, this three-page, seven-picture layout is properly dramatic. Used under the title is a good-sized, two-column view of a somewhat desperate King Lear. Its caption reads: “The First Betrayal, and the First Fear of Madness -- Cordelia is banished; Goneril has betrayed him. Lear kneels and prays: ‘O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!’

Taunted by his other daughters (Regan and Goneril) following Cordelia’s banishment, Lear encounters someone he can somehow trust. The caption for two pictures reads, “The Unique Quality in Laurence Olivier’s King Lear: the Touching Gentleness with Which he Plays the Quieter Scenes. Lear -- now mad -- with the Earl of Gloucester who has been blinded for befriending him when he was driven out into the storm by his daughters. To moments in this scene, to the scene in which Edgar feigns madness, to the Fool, to moments in this scene, to the scenes in which Edgar feigns madness, to some of his scenes with the Fool and with Cordelia, Olivier brings a really beautiful and touching quietness, which throws up the splendid high-lights of his rage.” The final (full-page) photo brings down the essay and is the play’s climax. The caption reads: “Lear at the Height of his Madness: One of Shakespeare’s Most Overwhelming Scenes Gets the Acting it Demands -- Too many Lears rant their way through, tearing themselves to fragments over their interpretation. Olivier moves through this exacting part with power, but power always in control. He has great dignity -- but it is the dignity of a humble man who is a king, not the assumption of royalty by a hollow shell.”(7)

The Lear photo essay brings home the dangers of monarchy; but it also glorifies the good king. James Cameron, who would write well for Picture Post in 1950, would do a piece entitled “The King Is Dead” for Illustrated’s February 23, 1952, issue, just after George VI’s death, where he laments a real-life king’s passing. Cameron’s and British feelings generally are summed up in the first paragraph: “When a King dies, we, who have to put into words the strange grief and grievous strangeness of the time, then know how ill we have served ourselves over the years. While the King lived we spoke of him as this, and as that, endowing him with all the remote virtues of an infallible man; such men do not die. But the King died; and we found somehow a different thing: that we loved him. When the King dies, the worn words are empty; there is nothing left to say.” (8) That sense of love and loyalty permeates even a tragedy like “King Lear”. George VI must have been a heroic monarch -- to have even Churchill bend a knee to HM. They were the two keyest men who led Britain to victory in the Second World War.

The years from 1945 to 1950 were years of consolidation at Picture Post, following the drama of the magazine’s launch and the period of war, during which it generally sold all the copies it could print. When competition was becoming fiercer (for many journals were faltering and some had already collapsed), the sales of Picture Post were rising. This indicates the choice and mixture of subjects used by the Post were fairly apt for its audience.

In August 1945, Edward Hulton had written a resounding welcome to PM Attlee’s new Labour Government: “The great victory of the Labour Party at the General Election was a surprise to everybody, to Labour people almost as much as to anyone else. We now have, for the first time in British history, a
Labour Government in power with a large majority. Wise men have long realized that Labour must some
day come to power; and it is well that it should do so unfettered. More will be relieved that the form of
Conservatism, represented by Lord Beaverbrook, and aided and abetted by Mr. Churchill in his latest
phase, has been flung indignantly overboard….

“I am not personally a Socialist; I do not think that nationalization will produce a ‘universal panacea,’” still
less am I a materialist. Yet I rejoice that latter-day Conservatism has been overthrown; and that we now
have in power a party which is pledged to improve the social services -- Beveridge if you will -- and to
provide the houses, and the land for the houses, without which there may well be a revolution.

“I am more delighted than I can say that Mr. Ernest Bevin has gone to the Foreign Office….At the
Blackpool Conference he stolidly refused to dub every Pole a Fascist, and it is reasonable to assume that he
will be as firm with Russia as with the United States.”(9)

By printing a “Victory Special” on June 22, 1946, Hulton and his staff proved they were firmly behind
Labour. And if that publisher’s view would change by 1950 -- due to the failure of Labour’s economic
strategies -- he was on-board in the mid-1940s. The magazine reflected his peace of mind; and the editorial
policy and practice of Picture Post were in sync with each other. It may help to recall what Norman Gelb
wrote about the difference between the British and American presses: “If the Fourth Estate, with it
insatiable hunger for new, exciting stories and its propensity for thriving on scandal and disaster, did
genuinely become as influential a force in Britain as it is in the United States, British society would be in
for a considerable shock.” It’s clear enough others might hold the opposite view -- that American society
would be in for a shock if its media covered news in as bold a fashion as the British press does.

There is a photo by Merlyn Severn in The Picture Post Album that says a lot about the magazine and 1946.
It shows the great ballerina Margo Fonteyn dancing far to the left of an open stage. 1946 was a good year to
see the ballet, life’s ballet, and Picture Post was there to record its wonders.
Chapter 22

1947 and the Magazine

“I got the journalist to talk to him…and to tell the truth the interview was rather dull and it was nearly finished and I was bit worried I’d got nothing striking out of it. Then by chance Nehru, while talking, leaned to pick a rose and smell it and put it down. In that moment I had my picture. It has been used all over the world. It is a picture that looks as if it had the whole of India’s history behind it away back to the Mogul emperors.”(1)

“One of the more ludicrous aspects of the ending of the Empire is that quantities of ink have been spilled, and legislative, judicial, and journalistic energy used up, in trying to define exactly who the British are. After the Second World War a Labour Government came to power under Clement Attlee pledged to end British rule in India. Independent India and Pakistan were born, with their own heads of state and government, membership of the United Nations, and all the other trappings of nationhood, including -- perhaps more important than anything else -- the ability to define their own citizenship….While India and Pakistan, in 1947, went their own way, the Attlee Government decided to retain the link with the former Empire by making every citizen of any Commonwealth country, as well as the British in Britain and the citizens of the remaining colonies, ‘British citizens.’”(2)

“In autumn 1947 Paris launched the ‘New Look.’ All through the war, woman’s dress had been drab, economical, military in cut. Now all that was to be swept aside. At one blow woman was to become feminine, mysterious, above all luxurious. Costly materials -- velvets, brocades, furs and lace -- used lavishly and often with the most intricate cut, were the marks of the new styles. The new look was inaugurated by a new genius, Christian Dior. Corsets, bustles, padded hips and busts were back as well….But in Britain clothes were still severely rationed. And over most of Europe they were unobtainable.”(3)

“Hopkinson’s principle that captions must enhance the picture and not just describe it had always been an essential part of Picture Post’s character. The touch did not have to be intrusive. The caption to an agency picture of some happy Easter chicks in April 1947 ran: ‘The Easter symbol of hope after Europe’s worst winter since the Middle Ages.’ Another undemanding agency picture carried the simple narrative: ‘The first course in a chameleon’s breakfast and the last second in a grasshopper’s life.’ Regular coverage of the arts, particularly plays, films, and opera, emphasized a sense of balance. Above all the paper had that supreme journalistic asset: the character of an old friend whose behaviour was nevertheless unpredictable.”(4)

* * * * *

On January 1, 1947, plaques were placed at the entrance to every British coal mine, announcing “This colliery is now managed by the National Coal Board on behalf of the People.” It was an emotional day for veterans of the Labour Party, who had spent a lifetime working for it. To the miner, it meant only that “the boss,” now serving a remote organization in London, seemed less able to make decisions than before
nationalization. The miners were a somewhat tired and aging force, with a stormy industrial history; and there was a great deal of absenteeism among them, apparently.

Snow, which had begun falling in December 1946, went on falling through the first weeks of January. By the end of the month parts of the country were paralyzed by drifts 14 feet deep, transport was at a standstill, and the inadequate stocks of coal at power stations were nearly used up. It became an offense under Defense regulations to keep home electric fires burning during hours when factories were working. Early in February, industry in the south, the midlands and the northwest had its electricity cut altogether. Unemployment rose temporarily to more than 2.5 million laborers without work. Exports fell to very low.

The Big Freeze lasted until the middle of March, followed by floods that devastated arable land and drowned thousands of cattle. The previous year, inflation had led to a substantial rise in prices for imports from America, and by June 1947, only 250 million pounds remained of the U.S. $3.75 billion American loan from 1946, and 125 million pounds of a later dollar loan from Canada. In July, under the terms of the loan agreement, sterling had to become a convertible currency.

In February, as the probable development of events became apparent, Britain warned America she could no longer continue the economic aid she was expending on Greece and Turkey, without which it was feared they would collapse into the Communist camp. On March 12, U.S. President Harry S. Truman appeared before Congress to announce the Truman Doctrine, and elaborate on not only American aid for Greece and Turkey, but for any free people “who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” Three months later, the U.S. Secretary of State, General George C. Marshall, offered aid to any government willing to assist in the recovery. The offer was accepted by Western Europe, but rejected by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies.

The effects of the Marshall Plan were not immediately apparent to a Britain drying out in summer after the winter of freeze and floods. Convertibility doubled the drawing rate on the dollar reserves, and had to be suspended after only a month. Drastic cuts were made in dollar imports of tobacco, gasoline and newsprint. Meanwhile, the meat ration fell to 1s.2d. worth a week. Attlee told the House of Commons, “We are engaged in another Battle of Britain,” and his Chancellor, Hugh Dalton, reinforced the point by raising the price of cigarettes from 2s.4d. to 3s.4d. for twenty smokes.

Abroad, Attlee hastened disengagement in Asia by setting a time limit for Indian leaders to reach agreement on partition. On August 15, King George VI yielded his imperial Indian crown, and power passed to the self-governing dominions of India and Pakistan. Massacres broke out, in which hundreds of thousands died, but war had hardened many men’s minds to those deaths. Burma and Ceylon followed India and Pakistan to independence, and Burma withdrew from the Commonwealth.

In Palestine, a U.N. Special Committee recommended an end soon to the British mandate, as well as the partition of Arab and Jewish states, which should be politically independent, though economically interdependent. Some Arab countries, however, prepared to sweep the Jews into the sea as soon as the British withdrew. The Jews made preparations, too, which proved sufficient to their defense.

Generally, the British withdrawal from empire passed more smoothly than that of the French withdrawal; France was still fighting a costly war to hold Vietnam and Laos; and the Dutch fought a “police action” in what became Indonesia. But there were Churchillian thunderings about “scuttle” and “surrender,” added to the discontent spread by increasing austerity and rising cost of living.

Amid so many problems, there was also Europe’s dilemma over war refugees. Millions of people displaced by war were still milling about the Continent. They were collecting into vast camps, from which they would slowly be returned home or resettled elsewhere. Even in Britain there were thousands of refugees and other immigrants arriving, and with other stresses, too, the combination was hard to handle easily.
At year’s end, the British received some much-needed reassurance that their world had not altered beyond recognition. Six reigning monarchs, plus many ex-monarchs and princelings, assembled in London for the wedding of the heir to the Throne, Princess Elizabeth, to Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten R.N. It was one of the largest gatherings of royalty this century, and a distinguished foreign guest was able to tell the world, “A country which can throw such a part as that will never go under.”(5)

Picture Post was covering all pertinent developments as deliberately as it could in 1947, including the royal wedding that year. Then too, the situation in India was also important. The magazine sent its best photographer, Bert Hardy, and a good writer, Sydney Jacobson, to that British colony late in 1946, and published their story on February 8, 1947. As Hardy later related, he was just recently home from the war, and “It was good to be back at work for Picture Post at a period when the paper was at its greatest.” Tom Hopkinson almost immediately sent the two men to India for the opening of its first Constituent Assembly.

Hardy noted: “Before the opening of the Assembly, Mr. Nehru granted us a ten-minute interview. Nehru was a fine man for whom I had a tremendous respect, but people’s characters only emerge in their actions, or in certain facial expressions, and the photographer has to wait and hope for these to come. Sidney was talking to Nehru, and I was shooting away quietly when Nehru absentmindedly picked up a rose from the bowl on his desk and sniffed it. I took the picture instantly: it was what I wanted. It said something about Nehru, and it made the cover of Picture Post. Tom thought very highly of these pictures.”(6) The cover for that issue reads: “We Visit India -- Historic Pictures.” It shows Nehru smelling the rose, with a quotation off to the left and below: “‘We want to be friends with Britain’ -- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.”

On March 22, 1947, a different sort of photo was part of a stand-alone essay. Its title is “After the Thaw, the Problem Remains,” and the picture shows a steamroller standing idle in a snow drift. Its caption reads: “A Symbol of British Industry Today? Steamroller on a Coal-Site after one of Winter’s Many Snowstorms.” Below, the text tells the story: “Only in July of last year was the American Loan approved. By February 24 of this year, with a large part of British industry at a standstill, well over a quarter of the total amount of 937,500,000 (pounds) had already been spent….

“Meantime, the machinery of British industry -- battered and bombed, overworked and under-tended during six years of war -- was being called upon to produce as never before….

“Government, employers and workers have now to find a line on which they can pull together as they have never pulled before. Our industries have got to be modernized -- and modernized while working at top speed. The days in front will in some respects be tougher than the days behind. The alternative? A few more months of smoke-puffing and gum-chewing -- followed by ‘austerity’ on a scale unknown here for a hundred years.” The gauntlet had been cast down.

On April 12, 1947, an unusual five-page, 11-picture essay -- photographed by Charles Hewitt and written by Lionel Birch -- appeared in Picture Post. “One Outlaw Returns” tells the story of Frederick Madigan, 24, a deserter during the Second World War. His predicament was highlighted because he is one of the “good outlaws.” As the introduction indicates: ‘In January of this year a Government announcement called on the 20,000 deserters to give themselves up. Eight weeks later, 837 had done so. Here is the story of one of these few.’

Fred’s day began at home with his wife putting some last things in order for him. He was going back to Germany, where he’d deserted. The essay follows his progress back to his old unit’s German headquarters, through his court martial, right up until the time he is put behind bars. The final photo shows him handcuffed to a guard, standing behind bars. The caption reads: “The First Week-end of the 18 Months’ Sentence: He is taken to the Unit’s ‘cage.’ After the week-end he will go to the detention barracks. His sentence will be reviewed at least every three months. Much of it is likely to be remitted.” Fred’s last remark in the text sums up the problem with the treatment of deserters: “Is this (his 18-month sentence) supposed to encourage the others?” he asks. The question may be legitimate. But then war, and its aftermath, isn’t easy on any fighting man or woman.
In the July 12, 1947, issue, something new is tried -- a roundtable discussion, much like those we see on television these days, with debate among four leaders over Palestine. “Palestine: Can Deadlock Be Broken?” brought together Edward Atiyah (Secretary-General of the Arab Office in London); Thomas Reid (66-year-old Labour MP for Swindon); R.H.S. Crossman (Labour MP for Coventry East); and Prof. Martin Buber (Professor of Sociology at Jerusalem University).

The introduction reads: “On these pages we begin an entirely new journalistic experiment. We are inviting leading authorities on controversial problems to come together and try, in talk, to hammer out the greatest common measure of agreement. We are asking them to leave fixed opinion behind and come to the discussion with an open mind -- hoping to convince, but willing to be convinced. We begin with perhaps the toughest problem of all -- the controversy between Jews and Arabs over the right to live in Palestine. We believe readers will find here -- as we did -- not only an exceedingly high level of discussion, but a notable readiness to understand the other man’s point of view.”

Four equal-sized photos (taken by Felix Man) of the individuals in mid-discussion are shown atop the first spread. The Arab representative appears the most accusatory, the Jewish speaker the most conciliatory. In their comments -- the first legalistic, the second more pragmatic -- both voice strong viewpoints. Atiyah said: “From my point of view it is quite enough to say that in 1917, when the whole problem was created by the Balfour Declaration, Palestine was inhabited by a population which was 90-per cent. Arab in the sense that it was part of the whole Arab community that inhabits the Middle East, that it was Arab by language and culture, and that this population had been the indigenous population of the country for centuries.”

Buber said: “My own point of view is not a legalist one. I am asking myself this question only: what has been done by these people in this land? What co-operation has there been between the land and the people? What were the fruits of this co-operation? The particular link between the people of Israel and this land is the link of a unique productivity. This is not a legalist point of view, but for me it is the decisive one. If a people in a certain land was creative, as Jewish people have been in Palestine, in the days of old, and our days, too, it constitutes a special right. It is the manifestation of the spirit.”

Meanwhile, Crossman supported partition and Reid opposed it. There is little common ground seen in this discussion, but at least the two sides are speaking to each other. Richard Kershaw’s “Hindsight” article in Picture Post 1938-50 sums up the continuing problem of the Middle East: “Edward Atiyah really said it all in 1947: ‘I think an agreement between the Arabs and the Zionists is absolutely impossible.’ I am afraid that is not only still true, but may be true two decades hence.” The problem remains with us today.

Jumping ahead a bit, we come upon a five-page, 17-photo essay photographed by Savitry and Geiger, and written by Marjorie Beckett, entitled “Paris Forgets This is 1947” (September 27, 1947). What follows are stylish pictures of models in the new clothes of that year. The “look” is fine, the models beautiful, but the introduction suggests there are some unanswered questions attending the new styles. It reads: “Straight from the indolent and wealthy years before the 1914 war come this year’s much-discussed Paris fashions… They are launched upon a world which has not the material to copy them -- and whose women have neither the money to buy, the leisure to enjoy, nor in some designs even the strength to support, these masses of elaborate material.”

After describing the fashions as “echoes,” a “secret assignation,” the new “Little Dress,” “The Shape That Paris Would Like to Give You” (i.e., pregnant), Beckett states all are “economically impossible.” She concluded: “Designing these sensational new fashions, it would seem that the couturiers have forgotten that they need the ordinary Parisian woman to show the world how to wear them. But, like ourselves, the ordinary Parisian woman has neither the leisure nor the money for clothes such as these.” These high fashions emerged in the midst of post-war rationing.

Moving backward to the August 23, 1947, issue, there is “No Need for Panic About Infantile Paralysis” -- a five-page, 11-photo essay. Above the title is a half-page picture of a tight-lipped youngster looking into a
mirror, a specially placed mirror. The caption reads: “The Fear that Haunts Parents: But the Baby in the ‘Iron Lung’ is a Rare Case in an Uncommon Disease.” The introduction reads: “The daily press gives little but the barest figures about the present disturbing outbreak of infantile paralysis. To allay unnecessary anxiety among parents, Picture Post has carried out an investigation, and is able to report that, terrible as the disease can be in a small minority of cases, it is usually not nearly as serious as people imagine. 50 out of every 100 cases make a complete recovery; a further 30 are left with only minor muscular defects.”

The Kurt Hutton-photographed, Fyfe Robertson-written coverage went on to show many youngsters hoping to recover from the illness that had afflicted Franklin Roosevelt. The final paragraph gives friendly “advice to parents: Insist on great personal cleanliness, never allow food to be handled with dirty hands, wash dishes well, keep flies from food. See that children have adequate rest, for fatigue seems to increase the likelihood of infection -- this, and the possibly true belief that victims are oftener the brighter children, are unexplained mysteries. In areas where poliomyelitis has occurred, postpone if possible operations on throat or nose, for they increase danger. Don’t forbid play with regular companions, but keep children from crowded places, for apart from the greater chance of contacting a carrier there, it is wise for everyone’s sake to avoid ‘making new herds.’ And having taken these precautions, forget about infantile paralysis, which will largely die with the summer.”

Robertson, the writer of the polio story, was a new “find” of Hopkinson’s. Salvaged from the magazine’s administrative department, Robertson proved his worth as a writer. And in the midst of the world’s many political problems, Hopkinson found a man who could lend lyrical perception to even the tsetse fly. Confronted by this tiny creature, Robertson finds himself “seized with a ridiculous respect, a legitimate awe. For there was the real ruler of tropical Africa. More than wars, or governments, or missionary zeal, this disease-bearing insect has shaped the development of a continent….” Robertson could turn his hand with equal responsibility to matters which carried political edge. Working with staff photographer Raymond Kleboe, he made a devastating analysis of shortcomings in the Labour Government’s East African Ground Nuts Scheme, which strengthened criticism in Parliament.

Parliament also paid attention to Picture Post after the magazine had discovered a member of the new East German diplomatic team destined for London to have been an admirer of Hitler, whose treatment of the Jews, he believed, would be brought “into perspective in fifty years.” The man did not come, after all.

Under the inspiration of Hopkinson’s leadership, it had always been the strength of the magazine that it could leaven earnest concern with a lighthearted streak, without diminishing the concern. Penguins, pandas, dancers, starlets -- who sometimes rose to the cover, only to sink without trace -- had always managed to remain in harmony with the rest of the magazine, and continued to. Such things reflected Picture Post’s own enjoyment as much as that of the people who bought it.

Of course, there were dull numbers occasionally, and issues in which the magazine’s character seemed formulaic. There were also occasional mistakes. A picture feature in 1947, suggesting an analogy between Adolph Hitler and French President Charles de Gaulle, now seems unfortunate.

Elsewhere, though, Picture Post was on the mark. When, in May 1947, the magazine published a picture of crowds two years before, celebrating VE Day in London, the caption ran: “The day we thought our troubles
were over! What has gone wrong?” Economic troubles were causing the Labour Government much pain by mid-1947, and Picture Post often saw those troubles for what they were -- products of mismanaged and unwise Labour policies.

It had gradually become apparent with Picture Post’s consolidation after the war that the proprietor, Hulton, was drifting away from the direction in which the rest of the magazine moved successfully. Mostly this was apparent behind the scenes, where Hulton, a devotee of London clubs (he belonged to six) in which the progressive slant of his magazine would have been viewed askance by many members, complained to Hopkinson occasionally about the tone of some articles. These included a report in 1947 by Sydney Jacobson and Bert Hardy on Poland, where, despite Communist domination, they found a spirit of reconstruction. (8) Obtaining the help of a Polish newspaper, which placed a jeep at their disposal in a country with few cars, Hardy found this tolerable. He wrote: “We were now able to see the hard work the Poles were doing to reconstruct their country from the rubble of the war. We were also deeply impressed by the huge consumption of alcohol: it was about the only thing of which there didn’t seem to be a shortage, and many men took full advantage of the fact. They used to carry around little half bottles of Spiritus, a type of concentrated vodka which you were supposed to dilute 3:1 with water, but which they swigged straight. In one station, we saw an engine driver being pulled free from his train, completely knocked out by the stuff.”

Another story gave readers reason to pause with relief. “Later that year,” as Hardy related: “England had one of its periodic fits of royalty fever: the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Philip at Westminster Abbey. There was a rota system, which meant that certain photographers were given set positions, and these had to make their pictures available to all newspapers.” He continued: “On the day (November 20, 1947), it was just as well I was a miniature cameraman: I was crammed into a tiny gallery over the West Door between two agency men, each with three plate cameras on tripods. We arrived at seven in the morning, and had to wait until the early afternoon with no chance to leave our positions, and only a thermos flask to relieve ourselves into…..

“But when the Princess and her bridesmaids arrived, I immediately had an advantage over my colleagues: with my small camera, I was able to lean over the edge of our perch, and take a quick picture as they adjusted her train. Conditions were very difficult: it was dark, and there was a lot of movement. Using my Contax with an f1.4 lens at speeds of about one-tenth of a second, I was able to bring out the softness and fluency of the Princess’s wedding dress, and the movements of the bridesmaids around her, like a ballet. I had now come to use the expressive value of movement in pictures…..” Hardy’s best photo of the bridesmaids attending to the Princess’s gown was used by Life Magazine in America. Picture Post, too, mined his pictures, as it so often would.(9)

1947 may not have been the grandest of years in Britain, but it must have seemed so, to many British people on that royal wedding day.
“...in March 1948, his (Edward Hulton’s) views had hardened further since he ordered me to dismiss Bert Lloyd, who had now been on the staff for nearly eight years, on the ground that he could not have someone on the paper who was an admitted member of the Communist Party, adding that he had no wish himself to be regarded as a ‘fifth columnist’ or ‘sent to the Isle of Man’ in the event of war with Russia. I was determined not to lose Lloyd, who was an excellent writer; nor did I think it would improve the image of Picture Post if we were to sack a capable reporter for his political convictions. I therefore offered to write Hulton a formal letter saying that I was aware Lloyd was a Communist, that he had never made any secret of the fact, and that I accepted full responsibility for continuing to employ him and for ensuring that his views did not colour any articles of his we printed, nor influence the paper’s attitude in general. This offer was accepted, and so from month to month and year to year our uneasy collaboration was maintained.” (1)

“In the summer of 1948, an official of the Conservative Central Office, actuated no doubt by the highest patriotic motives, called on the head of the Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard to acquaint him with distressing rumours of wholesale corruption at the Board of Trade. The police investigation came to the notice of the President of the Board, the Rt Hon. Harold Wilson, who, acting with characteristic speed and circumspection, asked the Lord Chancellor to set up an inquiry. The result was a tribunal under Mr. Justice Lynskey which sat for several weeks and produced a 50,000-word report that uncovered a spectacular mare’s nest. It also introduced to an austerity-weary public the charismatic figure of Sidney Stanley.” (2)

* * * * *

In August 1945, Edward Hulton had praised Ernest Bevin, Labour’s Foreign Secretary, for refusing “to dub every Pole a Fascist,” but 18 months later, following an article which he felt was unduly sympathetic to the transitional government in Poland, he wrote Tom Hopkinson a long memorandum: “I am totally at a loss to know why Picture Post should become more Soviet than the Soviets themselves....I must ask you in future to submit all political matters to me. I cannot permit editors of my newspapers to become organs of Communist propaganda. Still less to make the great newspaper which I have built up a laughing-stock.”

By 1948, the situation between East and West grew tenser. Hopkinson wrote later: “My employer’s concern over what he felt was imminent war with Russia increased and I received numerous memoranda accusing me of ‘appeasement,’ of ‘reiterating Soviet propaganda’ and publishing ‘weak and foolish’ articles which did not make the national peril sufficiently clear to our readers.” Hopkinson continued: “Moreover I had lately lost the only person on the management side with whom I had been able to talk freely and whom I felt I could count on for support. For in 1948 W.J. Dickenson had relinquished, or had been persuaded to relinquish, his charge of the company’s finances, though he continued to hold the title of director.”

The difficult situation mentioned in this chapter’s lead quotation, regarding Bert Lloyd’s Communist tendencies is put into perspective. Dickenson, apparently, was that rare breed of executive that Hopkinson could deal with. He wrote about Dickenson also: “Despite our hardly having an idea in common and never meeting outside office hours, a relationship of affection had grown up between us. This was based on my
side in an appreciation of the strength of character and warmth of feeling which underlay a certain unscrupulousness and readiness to exploit all situations to the full. In a sense, this unscrupulousness was a measure of his devotion to the family he served and not to his own interests. When I wrote to tell him what I felt about his leaving, he ended his reply with the words, ‘I have been in the Hulton family thirty-six years now and perhaps I’m a bit possessive, so to relax may be a good thing.’ He had named the house in Leatherhead where he and his family lived ‘Hulton Way.’” (3)

Hulton’s own earlier radical tendencies -- he had at one time advocated an upper limit on income for the rich -- dwindled during the Cold War, which, he felt, should become the principal concern of Picture Post. The magazine had always been one in which political attitudes were not militantly assertive. Indeed, just because of this, when Hulton himself wrote an article in the summer of 1948 headed “Why I Am Not Supporting Labour,” it seemed out of keeping with the magazine’s character. (4) Hulton was not the only Briton not supporting Labour. And life was getting difficult for that party. New developments were keeping the press’s thoughts off the legitimate achievements of the Attlee administration. One such case was that of Sidney Stanley.

Stanley had come to England as a refugee from Poland before the First World War, had entered his own idiosyncratic kind of business when he was 16, and had soon obtained his first bankruptcy. After the Second World War, he acquired a flat in Park Lane and, describing himself as a ‘business agent,’ let it be known he had influence in Government circles, which, for a consideration, could be placed at the disposal of businessmen short of the Government permits necessary for many activities.

Stanley added verisimilitude to an otherwise unconvincing narrative by his acquaintance with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, an ex-railway clerk named John Belcher, and other minor Labour stalwarts. He entertained them, bought them suits, gave Belcher a gold cigarette-case, and in a flight of ambition sent Ernest Bevin some cigars -- though the Foreign Secretary’s loud denial he’d ever received them could be heard in Moscow. Promoters of football pools, importers of amusement machinery and similar figures appeared before Mr. Justice Lyskey’s tribunal to describe their dealings with Stanley, who was able to persuade them he was paying Belcher 50 pounds a week, had the austere Sir Stafford Cripps in his pocket, and was addressed by Dr. Dalton as “Dear Stan.”

The gullibility of some of Britain’s businessmen excited comment then. The tribunal found that most of the rumors had no basis outside Stanley’s imagination, but that Belcher had received small gifts and favors from Stanley and others, and had intervened on their behalf in a number of cases. Belcher, of course, was ruined and had to resign. Stanley sold his memoirs to People for a reputed 10,000 pounds, and soon transferred his talents to the new state of Israel. It was perhaps inevitable that an anti-Labour press starved for newsprint should devote so much space to Stanley and his relationship with the Government.(5)

In July 1948, the National Health Service began operation, after rearguard opposition by the British Medical Association, representing family doctors. Many people celebrated by having all their teeth pulled out and replacing them with free dentures. People who had previously rummaged through stacks of spectacles to find a pair that focused could visit an optician for National Health specs. Women who had paid six pounds to a doctor for the delivery of their baby at home, got the service free. But all this cost much more than Labour bargained for, despite its being cheap, relative to other nations’ systems of health care and insurance.

The landscape of British towns, with their smoking chimneys, their Victorian terraces and their bomb sites, was a grim backdrop to the exhortation that in the rapidly changing postwar world Britain could “make it.” With Germany and Japan temporarily out of commission, British industry did enjoy a postwar boom, but there was little in the shops because everything was needed for the export drive. Rationing continued in the 1950s, encouraging the black market and the “spiv.” It was like during the war right after the Blitz, but without an easily recognizable enemy. One result of people’s having more money in their pockets but few consumer goods to spend it on was a surge of enthusiasm for various entertainments. The late 1940s saw the all-time peak in cinema-going and football crowds. People went out often, for radio never appealed in quite the way television does today. (6)
But bad as life may have seemed for many Brits in 1948, by summertime the foundations of the Welfare State had been firmly laid in a series of social security acts, and the Government could genuinely claim the worst extremes of poverty had been abolished. There was full employment then. New houses were being built at the rate of 200,000 a year, and New Towns were coming into being which had their defects, but which did enable mostly young skilled artisans and their wives to raise families in an environment far removed from the twilight rows of urban cottages. Rationing was still severe -- though bread rationing ended in July -- but subsidized milk and orange juice lavished on sometimes reluctant children were producing a populace fitter than ever in Britain.

The “good news” had been accomplished against a background of almost unbroken crisis, continuing throughout the year, with war between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, Communist guerilla campaigns in Malaya and Burma, and civil war in Greece. In February, Czechoslovakia vanished behind the Iron Curtain after a Communist coup d’état. In June, Yugoslavia emerged from it, having been expelled from the Cominform for various heresies. The barriers worldwide built up: these included the Warsaw Pact, the beginnings of a North Atlantic Treaty, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation to administer the Marshall Plan, and unofficial talks about a United Western Europe -- the latter supported by Churchill, and rejected by Attlee, since it cut across plans for Atlantic unity.

In June, the Western allies prepared to extend the division of Germany by setting up a West German Federal Government. The Soviet Union retaliated with an attempt to cut off supplies and fuel from West Berlin. For a short time, it seemed the West would either have to withdraw from the city, or go to war, but the R.A.F. and the U.S. Air Force mounted an airlift that maintained basic supplies to Berlin for almost a year, until the Soviets somewhat sheepishly lifted what had never been more than a partial blockade.

At June’s end, fears about Soviet intentions led to an American request to station atomic bombers in Britain, a move that excited alarm in the Soviet Union. The Americans were apprehensive about British public opinion, but Bevin immediately accepted the request on the British people’s behalf, and the bombers arrived in July. In fact, Bevin’s four-square, John Bull stance to the Russians probably delighted his fellow-countrymen as much as Philip Snowdon’s anti-French stand had done 20 years before. But it antagonized the articulate Left Wing of the Labour Party, which has traditionally provided many of that party’s most active workers. The introduction of selective military service in the United States was followed in November by raising the period of conscription in Britain from a year to 18 months. Forty Labour MPs voted against the measure; about 100 more abstained.

Also on the homefront, the Cabinet was suspected of being “soft” on steel nationalization, which had been left until last in the party programme, and which was believed to be opposed by Herbert Morrison and the leaders of the steel unions. By year’s end, a Government of weary men -- many of whom had been continuously in office through five years of war and three years of difficult peace -- was beginning to show, for all its majority, obvious signs of decay. Into this odd mixture of political circumstances, Picture Post introduced a controversial question in its May 1, 1948, issue. “Why Should Anyone Still Follow Mosley?” a four-page story using 10 Charles Hewitt photos, presents the British Fascist in an unflattering light.

The introduction, as usual, says a great deal about this story: “Seldom in man’s history has any creed proved more obviously disastrous to its followers than Fascism. Even if they have no regard for mankind as a whole, surely they might learn from what has happened to their fellow-Fascists! Yet here is Mosley starting up again. How is it possible for anyone still to believe in such a leader? How is it even possible for the ‘leader’ to believe in himself? This is a subject not for political invective but for scientific investigation, and Picture Post has asked a well-known Harley Street psychologist to try and find the answers.”

Picture Post had never been sympathetic to Fascists or Nazis, either before the Second World War or during it. Just after the war, then, what would its stance be? The words add to the pictures. The writer stated: “Wherever many are concerned, Fascism solves the problem of unruly wills by reducing all to one,
Within the person of the Leader. There is no alternative, and so no freedom. But the solution of right relationships allows no such destruction of individual will and responsibility. Organic partnership, or ‘marriage of the opposites,’ exploits neither but includes both within the common ring and shared purpose of the welfare of the whole.” The writer concluded by asking a question: “It would greatly simplify our lives together on this awkward planet if we could accept the fact that we are all members of one great family, brothers and sisters, children of one Father. But if we cannot yet put our trust so simply in Him, need we promote our very earthly brother to be our Heavenly Father, expecting him to save us?”

Taking on newer questions was also part of Picture Post’s mix in 1948. The eight-page, 13-photo essay written by A.L. Lloyd and photographed by Bert Hardy, “The Life of a Prison Officer” (November 20, 1948), is a discussion of the question of the potential rehabilitation of prison inmates in the midst of crowded, difficult conditions. Its introduction reads: “Our prison system is out-dated. Public and prison officials agree. But with prison populations doubled by post-war crime wave, any progress demands more prison officers. And recruitment is tragically slow.”

The first photo reveals a small guard dwarfed by the huge vaulted ceilings of the prison he works in. The caption reads: “At 6.30 a.m., Strangeways Prison Has a Dead and Ghostly Look -- Prison Officer Davidson, just arrived on duty, surveys his dominion. Row on row, the cells are silent. At any moment, the dreams of 880 prisoners will be shattered by the rising bell.” Moving through a day in the life of Officer Davidson, we see him in the reception room with new prisoners, fingerprinting a newcomer, “slopping out” prisoners in the “sanitary recess,” watching and helping prisoners make mail-bags and untie postal string knots, feeding the inmates, “rubbing (them) down” (or making sure nobody has a sharp instrument after returning from a work party), overseeing exercise, locking the prisoners into their cell at 5 p.m. for the night (a stunning full-page photo), checking on them there, and even engaging in a cell search.

Hardy’s pictures tell a humane story involving Officer Davidson, but a negative tale about prison conditions in the historical Strangeways facility; and A.L. Lloyd’s text accents it, concluding: “One result of all this (violence and escape-mentality) has been that, instead of prisoners getting more rehabilitation training, workshop hours have had to be reduced so that prison officers may give more time to searching prisoners and their cells. Like his colleagues, Officer Davidson wants to see our prisons made happier places. He believes it can be done. But, he says, far more prison officers than we’ve got at present will be needed if the prisons are to be run as decent folk feel they ought to be.”

In his “Hindsight” article, C.H. Rolph wrote that one sentence from the 1948 article could be the opening for his own piece: “The notion of educating men in gaol and giving them a sense of purpose, is winning small success because prisons are overcrowded (so that rooms for leisure are turned into cells), and there just aren’t enough prison officers to tend men outside their cells after tea-time.” Rolph continued that conditions have gotten worse or at least stayed the same in British prisons since Picture Post’s feature. He concluded: “Reading this 1948 account is a bit depressing. But reading history always is, for the only thing we ever learn from it is that we never learn from it.”

A lighter story, “Holiday Jockey,” in the September 25, 1948, issue told the tale of 12-year-old Lester Piggott, a good jockey at any age, but especially at his tender age. The top photo in this one-page, three-picture layout shows the youngster atop a wooden fence, riding whip in hand, chewing something. The top caption reads: “The Youngest Winning Jockey We Can Remember -- He is Lester Piggott, twelve years old, four feet six, and a straw-chewer with the best of them. At Haydock Park recently, he showed he can ride winners too. But so far it’s only a holiday pastime. He won’t be a serious jockey till he leaves school.”

A smaller photo shows “An Illustrious Grandparent -- One of Lester’s grandfathers was Ernest Piggott, thrice National winner (twice on Poethlyn, above). Other grandfather won a Derby.” The third, moderate-sized picture, below left, shows Lester with broom, buddy, and stabled horses. Its caption reads: “Even the Horses Have Their Eye on Him -- Riding is in his blood. Horses are all his life. His out-of-school time is spent helping in his father’s stables at Lambourn, Berks.”
The text begins with the best part of Lester’s story: “When Lester Piggott booted home a horse called The Chase at Haydock Park the other week, he was cheered as the youngest boy to win a flat race within living memory. At twelve years old, he had beaten some of the craftiest jockeys in the North, to gain his first victory in five races this year.”

Then, on October 23, 1948, the magazine printed a story about a world-class pair (Ingrid Bergman and her tour guide, Alfred Hitchcock). “Ingrid’s Last Look at London,” photographed by Kurt Hutton in eight pictures over three pages’ shows both celebrities taking in the sights and enjoying each other’s company. Ms. Bergman was in London then, working on the movie “Under Capricorn,” with Hitchcock, Joseph Cotton and Michael Wilding, among others.

The text begins: “When Ingrid Bergman arrived in London, three months ago, to work under Alfred Hitchcock’s direction on the latest Transatlantic Pictures film, Under Capricorn, the first thing she noted with pleasure was that nobody bothered her. Wherever she moved in California, she had been very aware of being reported. But here, in restaurants and nightclubs, nobody cared. ‘You can go and dance where you please, and though people may notice you as you walk in, they don’t worry you; and there’s nothing in the papers the next day.”

Bergman and Hitchcock were first seen in Hutton’s photo near the Thames River. The lead caption reads: “A Cockney Shows His Star the Town -- Before Ingrid Bergman leaves for a short holiday in Sweden, Film-director Alfred Hitchcock, who was born within sound of Bow Bells and was married at Brompton Oratory, takes her round his London.” The next picture shows them walking arm-in-arm, backs to the camera, down an empty street. The caption reads: “Busy People in a Busy Street -- Lombard Street on its weekly day-off. And Bergman and ‘Hitch’ on their first real day-off for months.”

The next spread contains six photos: the two at top left show the pair at famous London sites. The first caption reads: “‘This is Where the Police Force Began…’ -- Hitchcock, the first director to make the English policeman a convincing figure on the screen, takes Miss Bergman along to Bow Street.” The next caption reads: “‘That’s Where Heads Used to Roll…’ -- on Tower Green, Hitchcock shows off the site of the scaffold where so many famous English men and women were beheaded.”

Below left, a trio of photos show Bergman explaining to Hitchcock how she came by a notable skill. Bergman points at “Hitch” in the first picture, saying “‘So He Said: ‘Shoot…’” -- ‘You play darts?’ asked Hitch. ‘No, but Gary Cooper taught me to shoot,’ said Bergman.” In the next picture, she indicated a small space with her hands: “‘So I Picked up the Rifle…’ -- ‘He said “Just pick it up and point it straight at the target, that’s all.”’ The third picture in series demonstrated an expository use of hands as she said: “‘And it Went Into the Bull…’ -- ‘The first time was fine. But after that I could never hit a haystack.’”

In a full-page final photo, we see Bergman inspecting a pewter mug as Hitchcock looks on. The caption reads: “Conversation-piece in ‘The George,’ at Southwark: ‘That’s Another Thing About the English: They Like Warm Beer’ -- ‘Under Capricorn’ is the third film in which Alfred Hitchcock has directed Ingrid Bergman. The other two were ‘Spellbound’ and ‘Notorious.’ This is the second film -- ‘Rope’ being the first -- that Hitchcock has made for Transatlantic Pictures, which is owned by himself and Sidney Bernstein.” The Bergman story isn’t heavy, but brisk and vital. The British were interested in Ms. Bergman, and their “Hitch”.

Not all the magazine’s stories were light in 1948. Picture Post visited the Gorbals in Glasgow, Scotland, where conditions might have shamed a Victorian Government. Photographer Bill Brandt, who some claim was the greatest British artist-photographer ever, with some accuracy, had been sent there early, for a full-scale treatment of poor areas. Bert Hardy would complete the assignment. Hardy noted: “As a contrast to my more exotic jobs, I went to the gloom of the Gorbals, the slum area of Glasgow. Knowing Bill Brandt’s feeling for atmosphere, Tom (Hopkinson) had sent him up to get a set of pictures of the slum. Bill returned
with his usual contrasty pictures of the backs of policemen standing at the ends of streets, but nothing which really showed the human side of poverty. Tom decided to send me with Bert Lloyd, to see if we could do any better.”

Hardy continued: “The poverty was much worse than anything I had known around Blackfriars, and that was saying something… One day, when we were walking around, a woman standing outside her home called out to us, ‘If you want to see a bonny mess, come and look in here.’ Outside the back window we could see children playing on piles of stinking refuse. Like everyone else, they had to leave their gas-jets burning at nights to keep the rats away. No one took much notice when I started taking photographs… There were two rooms: in the front room, a girl aged about sixteen, obviously pregnant, sat at a table covered with dirty cups, and a Sifta salt packet, while her brother slept in a bunk bed behind her. In the next room the man who lived with the girl’s mother lay drunkenly sleeping, at eleven in the morning, in a bed with filthy sheets.” Picture Post used on page of photos from Bill Brandt; the rest belonged to Bert Hardy. And the latter’s entry of his series (including his famous portrait of two street urchins off on a lark) in the Encyclopaedia Britannica Photographic Awards competition won him the Photo Sequence Award.(8)

If Picture Post was making news with its blend of amiable to hard-hitting features, it would eventually also make news for internal conflict. And if Edward Hulton was getting tired of reprimanding Tom Hopkinson, perhaps Hopkinson was getting a bit tired of hearing from Hulton, despite both their attempts at bridging gaps. In any event, 1948 was another year of change at the magazine. 1949 was to bring even more difficult adjustments for its policies and staff.
Chapter 24

1949 and the Magazine

“On 22 January 1949 Chinese Communist troops entered Peking -- an event little noticed in the West, preoccupied with its own crisis over Berlin. Shanghai fell in May, and by September the red banner with its five-pointed gold star representing the Communist Party, and its arc of four satellite stars representing workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie, waved over most of mainland China. On 1 October the People’s Republic of China, with Mao Tse-tung at its head, was formally proclaimed before a crowd of two hundred thousand in the Square of the Gate of the Heavenly Peace in Peking. The Nationalist Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek withdrew to Formosa, announcing that the Third World War had begun.” (1)

“In 1949, Hulton Press had been transformed into a public company. It had at the time been tentatively suggested to me that I might become a director of the new company. But I had during the last few years become disturbingly aware of the conflict between an editor’s various loyalties; the first, in my view, was to the readers and the second to the staff, most of whom, as it happened, I had taken on. The third was to my employers -- and, though I did not know much about business and finance, I knew enough to realize that their interests and those of the shareholders were by no means always identical. Not wanting to add another to an already oppressive list of loyalties, I showed no enthusiasm for the offer, which was not proceeded with.” (2)

* * * *

Following the Chinese Communist takeover of mainland China on October 1, 1949, their new Government was immediately recognized by the Soviets, whose technicians and military experts were already at work in the country. And in mid-December, Chairman Mao was received by Stalin in Moscow with every appearance of friendship, though with many private reservations. Britain and Norway alone of the Western countries recognized Mao’s China, and a request for recognition by the United Nations was refused. The Soviet representative on the Security Council was thereupon instructed to take no further part in its work while the Nationalist Chinese representative remained -- a decision which was to have important later consequences.

Just previous to this, on September 22, the American, British and Canadian Governments announced the Soviet Union had recently exploded an atomic bomb. The news was not unexpected, but the Soviet Government denied the announcement, saying it had only been engaged in large-scale blasting operations. Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley forecast that if no agreement on international control of the bomb could be reached, the United States would have to invest in defensive measures on a vast scale; and reports spread that the America was making a hydrogen bomb a hundred to a thousand times more destructive than the atomic bomb.

Throughout the latter half of 1949, the apparent solidarity of the Communist Front was broken by the trial and execution of Eastern European Communist leaders on charges of spying for Yugoslavia and Western “imperialists.” Less publicized was Stalin’s purge of “enemies of the people” in the Soviet Union, which
included the chief economic planner of the Politburo, and which almost engulfed Stalin’s eventual successors, Malenkov and Khrushchev.

In the West, a German Federal Republic was formally proclaimed, with Dr. Konrad Adenauer as elected Chancellor. The German economic miracle had begun. Proclamation of the East’s German Democratic Republic followed in October. East and West accused each other of rearming their own half of Germany, denials followed, and both East and West Germany rearmed.

In Britain, springtime brought mild euphoria. The end of sweet rationing was triumphantly announced in April, followed by a holiday bonus of gasoline, and the President of the Board of Trade proclaimed a “bonfire” of controls, which removed the need for nearly a million licenses and permits a year, including those over such exotic items as hairnets and veilings, pine oil, and raw goatskins. It was revealed that export targets for 1948 had been exceeded, and Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor, celebrated by taking a penny a pint off beer in his budget, though he added a halfpenny on each box of matches. He also spoke ominously of the need for some special charge on the health services, to bring home to users that they had to be paid for out of taxation. The cost of the services had risen by 40% over the original estimates.

Springtime did not last. In April, a series of strikes began in the docks and on the railways, which held up the flow of exports and led the Government to declare a state of emergency, with the use of troops to unload perishable foods. The Prime Minister and others found in the strikes evidence of a Soviet-inspired plot to undermine British recovery. The small British Communist Party did exercise an influence out of all proportion to its numbers, through the willingness of its members to attend union meetings and undertake the routine work of shopfloor organization. Without them, and the political opposition they stirred up, the British trade union movement would have been moribund.

In any event, British recovery was sabotaged less by strikes than by a minor U.S. recession, which hit dollar exports and caused what the Minister of Fuel and Power, Hugh Gaitskell, called “a day of supreme crisis for the Government.” The Government’s gold and dollar reserves plummeted by 66 million pounds. It met the crisis by reintroducing sweet rationing, and once again by cutting dollar imports of tobacco, timber and paper. Sir Stafford Cripps denied there was any question of devaluing the pound, and a 30% devaluation two months later consequently came as no great surprise. Most of the West followed the British devaluation, so that the advantage was lost almost immediately.

Then, in autumn, another crisis; Cripps announced cuts in housing, education and capital investment, together with a shilling charge on National Health Service prescriptions. The same man had assured a large radio audience that devaluation would not alter the internal value of the pound; but prices rose, and Sir Stafford proclaimed a policy of wage restraint, which the T.U.C. accepted on behalf of eight million trade unionists, people who had not been consulted and who had different views.

Astonishingly, the Government had not lost a by-election during its four crisis-haunted years, and it began its preparations for a General Election with a confidence unshaken even by summer’s events. A new programme was presented to the Labour Party conference, under the title Labour Believes in Britain, which included proposals for nationalizing industrial insurance, cement, the sugar industry, and water supplies. The list seemed to stop short of what Aneurin Bevan called the commanding heights of the economy, and did little to inspire party workers disillusioned by the party’s rightward trend. But it did stir up opposition from the industries concerned.

Soon, the Man from the Prudential, with bluff man-to-man honesty, was assuring the reader of advertisements that private insurance delivered the goods, and few housewives could escape the notable appeal of an engaging character called Mr. Cube, who appeared on every pack of Tate & Lyle’s sugar putting a voter’s cross through the “S” in “State.” Herbert Morrison warned that the large sums spent on
By July 2, 1949, Picture Post was covering other things. In its controversial article “Is There a British Colour Bar?” writer Robert Kee and cameraman Bert Hardy set out to answer that question. In this six-page, 13-photo essay, we see black leaders and “ordinary” black people, struggling to make livelihoods for themselves and kin. Kee’s first paragraph indicates the problems they are up against: “It is not possible to find out the exact number of colonial coloured people in Great Britain. There is no registry of people with black skin, any more than there is a registry of people with black hair. And there you discover the first important fact about the colour bar in Britain: officially it does not exist. . . . (the) official lack of discrimination is echoed categorically by all government departments, professional organisations and trade unions. But offices and organisations are run by human beings, and inside the minds of human beings, both in and outside offices, strange fogs of ignorance and prejudice can be at work.”

The lead photo below the title and text-start reveals a man on a mission. It shows him speaking with his hands. The caption reads: “On the Curb of a Liverpool Pavement a Coloured British Subject Expresses the Indignation of His People -- Officially there is no colour bar in Britain. But from restaurant-keepers and landladies, employers and employees, even from the man in the street, says Nathaniel Ajayi, he and his people meet with considerable colour prejudice. Ajayi has lived in five European countries, was a British Prisoner-of-War in Germany, but says he knows of no European country where the coloured man is treated with more unofficial contempt than in Britain.”

Other Hardy photos demonstrate the mainly sorry fate of Britain’s “colonial coloured people” then -- from the plight of would-be seamen, to overcrowding of tenements, to the lamentable situation of a stowaway from Lagos, to tentatively working blacks, to racial segregation, and on even to some successful white-black contacts. The concluding pictures shows two white girls and two black girls playing a game of tag. Kee’s “Hindsight” article sums up what that photo means: “Today I see the question of whether or not one wants an integrated multi-racial society as more clearly a matter of deliberate choice about life itself. Do you find the continually changing nature of life and society in itself something interesting, or something dreadful? I happen to find the spirit of life as expressed in Bert Hardy’s picture on the last page of this article an ideal to be worked for rather than a ‘danger’ to be feared.”

On August 27, 1949, the magazine asked another controversial question in “Europe: Dare We Face Real Union?” Photographed by Felix Man (using 13 photos over a six-page layout) and written by Lionel Birch, a thorny subject is taken up. The introduction reads: “A real Union. Not simply a continuance of the present
loose co-operation in economic affairs, in which the sovereign States need only co-operate while it suits them. But a real political Union, leading to a real European Government, to which all states would surrender some of their sovereign rights. Who is for such a Union? Who is against? And could any such Union be any good at all without Germany? And – with which Germany?"

Man’s photos blend well with Birch’s text and captions. The lead photo is a good one – of two notable leaders chatting in an off-moment. Its caption reads: “At the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Meet Two Illustrious Fathers of the Movement for Greater European Unity – Edouard Herriot was associated with Briand from 1925 onwards, in his drive for European Unity. Now, at the inaugural session, he acts as Provisional President of Europe’s Consultative Assembly. He is greeted by Winston Churchill, today’s most resounding advocate of United Europe.” The rest of the story outlines the comings and goings of the leadership and delegates to this session. Are they merely co-operating; or are they beginning to unite? Time will tell.

Previously, Rt. Hon. Hugh Dalton had spoken up for Labour in 1948 at Scarborough when he addressed the issue of European Unity: “Let us keep our feet on the ground,” he said. “It must be made quite clear, I think, that we are not going to have chance majorities of reactionaries who might be thrown up from any part of Western Europe having the power to decree that we in Britain shall go back to the inter-war years of trade depression and all the rest of it.” Birch poses the concluding question: “What could convince a sufficiency of Germans that this as-one-European-to-another business is a reality, and not just a trick of words?”

Then Birch’s answer: “…the true political Union of Europe does seem to be the one great beneficent and magnetic counterattraction capable of drawing a sufficient number of Germans away from the malign magnet of a resurgent Nationalist Germany. If we don’t like the idea of a United European Government, or if it seems too difficult to arrange politically, then -- for the German reason, if for no other -- I’m inclined to think we’ve had it. Which last is something that is not difficult to arrange politically, at all.”

Europe today is beginning to unite, with the European Union. If it cannot find a way to perpetuate peace in our time, then those who believe Europeans can set a useful example by co-operating with each other, will be proven wrong. Europe may be as difficult a place to achieve federation as any portion of our world, but it just may be worth the candle.

But Picture Post was not forever a magazine of issues -- as it demonstrated well in its January 29, 1949, issue. With “Elizabeth Takes Another Lesson,” the magazine takes a leap toward movie-related immortality by covering the famous 16-year-old starlet Elizabeth Taylor. Photographed by George Konig in seven pictures on three pages, and revealing an appealing young woman -- the same young woman who had starred in National Velvet -- Elizabeth is seen going through her paces on the set of Conspirator (with Robert Taylor) and on London’s streets (with other associates), which “have a lot to teach her,” perhaps as much as her three hours of history, psychology and sociology lessons daily do.

One street photo shows the smiling Taylor looking right with a crowd of young people. The caption reads: “There’s Always Something to Stare At -- A band? The Lord Mayor’s Show? Or just another adventurer climbing Eros? A London crowd will look at anything. But it won’t always recognise the film star looking with it.” The conclusion put Taylor’s British sojourn into perspective: “Before the war, Elizabeth went to a kindergarten in Highgate, London. Although she is an American, the daughter of Americans, her parents lived in England for some years and her father, Francis Taylor, kept an art gallery in Bond Street. Every year the Taylor family travelled to America to see Elizabeth’s grandparents. In 1939, when she was only seven, they promptly decided to stay there. This is her first visit to London since then. And since then, without any let-up in her education programme, she has established herself as a star with her role in National Velvet and other films.” Having toured London one busy day, Taylor and her mother enjoy their rest in the last (a barefoot) photo. The caption reads: “Now She and Her Mother Can Put Their Feet Up -- She’s walked the streets of London till her feet hurt. She’s seen the sights, the crowds, the processions and she’s even waved a flag. It’s the end of yet another lesson.”(3)
1949 was a time when public entertainments occupied people’s time. A caption to an arrangement of photos in Gavin Weightman’s Picture Post Britain showing everyday Brits enjoying themselves reads: “The late 1940s were the peak years for all kinds of public entertainment, from drinking in pubs to watching football. It was a time before television became widespread, and when people had money in their pockets but few goods to spend it on. So the modest wealth of the demobbed soldier and the factory worker tended to go on cinema tickets, beer and football: crowds at Ibrox Park, Glasgow (above and right) and Wolverhampton (below), in 1949. Entertainment was still more public than it was to become in the relatively affluent Fifties.”

The people in the latter pictures seem to be enjoying themselves a lot, whether young in age or young at heart. Not everyone in 1949 Britain was so fortunate. A heavy-set older woman with dog-on-leash is shown in another photo. She is not necessarily put-upon then; but the viewer can imagine her being so at other times. Dressed in light-colored smock and turning to be on her way, she maneuvers in front of the H. McSweeny Newsagent & Tobacconist shop.

That shop’s window delineated where Britain was headed then. The products available to Britons in 1949 are in the advertising. The signs read: “Cadbury Chocolate -- Ideal Milk”; “Lyons -- Cocoa”; “Wills’s Woodbines” (Cigarettes); “Al” (Cigarettes); “Tizer -- The Appetizer”; “Player’s Weights Cigarettes”; “Batek -- Lemonade, Soda Water, Ginger Beer, Kola & One Quality the Best”; “Everybody’s -- Get Your Copy Now”; “John Bull”; “Weekly Illustrated”; and “Illustrated,” among many.

The Picture Post Britain photos are part of a section entitled “The New Jerusalem?: 1945-1951,” and they tell of people doing their best and depending on the “Spirit of 1945” to carry them through. Goods were not often plentiful; and they relied on the few items available (on a limited basis) from America, like tobacco, gasoline and newsprint, or from their own farms and colonies, like milk and chocolate -- to keep their minds off their dilemma.(4)

Late in 1948 and 1949, the dilemma of the people of Bert Hardy’s native Elephant and Castle district became fuel for his flame again. Assigned to do a story with Bert Lloyd in which they could wander about as long as they needed, Hardy and Lloyd were soon connected with a prostitute named Maisie. Hardy wrote: “We were walking round the back streets one day when I saw a young couple sitting on the steps of a house, obviously very much in love...I asked them if I could take some photographs, and they agreed. As I took my pictures I heard a voice from across the street calling out ‘Ow about taking a picture of me, love?’ Thinking that at least we had found a contact, I asked: ‘What are these places like round the back?’ ‘Without a second’s hesitation, she replied: ‘Bleedin’ awful. Come and see for yourself.’

‘...Bert and I followed her down a narrow passageway to a tiny yard about ten feet square, where everyone hung out their washing. I looked around and saw, through a window, a young couple half-lying on a sofa just inside. I then said to Maisie, ‘What’s it like inside?’ She said, ‘Come and have a look.’ ... I went inside and asked if I could take a few pictures. They seemed totally unconcerned. When I set up my camera and tripod, they watched me blankly, without moving. In the end we discovered the reason: the girl was also (as was Maisie) a prostitute, and the man was a Canadian who had been released from prison the day before; they had spent a hard night in bed celebrating his release.” (5)

Hardy and Lloyd’s photo essay was published in 1949 in Picture Post, and Hardy’s photos earned him his second Encyclopaedia Britannica Award; but the photo of the couple-on-couch received more publicity. It was used by Edward Steichen in the “Family of Man” exhibition that toured the world and was published in book form; and it’s also been used in many other publications, too.(6) And among those uses, was The Listener’s in its September 1, 1977, issue, with caption: “Bert Hardy’s Elephant and Castle couple: ‘this was the start.’”(7)
Bert Hardy’s pioneering photojournalism appears in pictures like his Elephant and Castle couple -- where his humanism and compassion (which, combined, made his populist photoart special) shine through -- not to mention in his provocative images, like the atrocities pictures he would take in 1950 Korea. The Communist takeovers in Europe and Asia soon after the end of World War II contributed a great deal to human knowledge of what tyranny (from the Right or Left) cannot do during wartime or peacetime, as Hardy’s pictures can. That is, give democracy its due.

Edward Hulton decided tyranny of the Left was coming to dominate affairs by 1948-49. Meanwhile, his staff was equally concerned about tyranny of the Right. Tom Hopkinson and his staff quickly grasped the delicacy of their situation. Perhaps Hopkinson should not have been so cool, then, to the Hulton Press’s offer for him to sit on the Board of Directors for that newly public company in 1949. But there would have been some conflicts of ethical interest for him afterward, and Hopkinson did not want to give the appearance of impropriety.

Perhaps that’s why Hulton made his company a publicly-held enterprise when he did. He knew there would be a battle for readers in future. And because Hopkinson believed in the democratic impulses of his readership, it could well be Hulton wanted to put his editor’s theory to the test. After all, Hopkinson had made his publisher a lot of money in the past. He could still make Hulton a good deal of money in future -- if he were working from the “right” perspective.

Hopkinson’s views, however, made Hulton more uneasy by 1949; and 1950 would bring the straw to break the camel’s back.
Chapter 25

1950, The Korean War, And the End of an Era at Picture Post

“The winter of 1949-50 passed quietly enough, but early in 1950 I began to be bombarded with complaints, first, the familiar ones from Edward Hulton expressing anxiety over the Communist danger and his conviction that Picture Post was ‘too left-wing.’ He had, though I did not know this at the time, rejoined the Conservative Party around the time of the February general election and it did not accord with this that Labour MPs -- one or two of them distinctly left of centre -- should be writing in his magazine…. There may have been some justice in these criticisms. Looking back, I can see a number of mistakes, and it is all too evident from the replies I wrote -- and kept -- that I was touchy and resented criticism…. (Hulton) hated disagreement, would accept a proposal he disagreed with rather than engage in argument, and found it easier to dictate long memos through his secretary than to meet objections face to face. Nor did I see what concessions I could make to his changed outlook which would not involve betrayal of the paper itself -- of readers, staff, and my own principles. Since I have never claimed to possess many, I clung all the more closely to the few I had.” (1)

“The human degradation reminded me of the scenes I had witnessed at Belsen. Our enquiries drew the answer that these were ‘political prisoners’ -- not North Koreans, but people suspected of having the Wrong Views…. At intervals, a batch of them would be separated from the rest and herded into the back of a lorry which then drove off. Our impression was that they were being taken off to be shot. We were appalled, and decided that we must try to do something about it. (2)

“…in all the pious announcements, in all the international attitudes, and likewise in the minds of men, this was a United Nations show if it was anything, and if the bell tolled in Pusan, it tolled for us. …when the tide had turned and the offensive begun, even The Times newspaper was recording: ‘All the complaints against the People’s Government of North Korea could be levelled against the democratically elected South Korean Government. Acts of persecution and reprisal have been committed under both. The only difference is that at present men and women accused of being Communist or of collaborating with the People’s Government are being killed or imprisoned under the United Nations flag…. In South Korea the defence of the local brand of democracy has been no less vicious than have the atrocities committed in the cause of Communism.” (3)

“During their time in Korea Hardy and Cameron made three picture stories, the most dramatic of these being the record of General MacArthur’s landing at Inchon, the port of Seoul.” (4)

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The 1950 General Election is notable as the last to be decided without television. The announcement of polling day was accompanied, amid Conservative cries, by news that the bacon ration was to be increased from four to five ounces a week, and the sweet ration from four to 4-1/2 ounces. Almost simultaneously,
the West German Government announced the abolition of gasoline rationing and an end to all food rationing except sugar. The British people wondered out loud who’d won the war.

Polling day on February 23 fell almost exactly on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Labour Party. It had travelled a long way from the obscurity of Farringdon Memorial Hall, and John Burns’s stirring declaration that he was tired of working-class boots, working-class houses, working-class margarine and working-class parliamentary candidates. The party in 1950 wouldn’t have disappointed him. The Prime Minister himself was Haileybury and Oxford, 255 of the party’s 617 candidates had been to university, and 258 described themselves as professional men. The Liberals, hoping to cash in on the prevailing mood of disillusionment and discontent, put 475 candidates into the field, 319 of whom lost. A hundred Communist candidates, including one Old Etonian, amassed between them fewer than 100,000 votes. In spite of disappointments, the working-class vote held in the Labour strongholds of the north -- the total Labour poll was actually two million higher than in 1945. It was the middle and lower middle classes of the London suburbs who swung enough to turn the scale.

At the end of the first day’s counting, Labour had a majority of 60. Then as the delayed results came in from the countryside, the Labour majority dwindled until by mid-afternoon, Conservatives and Liberals, combined, had drawn level. It seemed the Government had fallen; but there was a dying spurt, and Attlee crept back into Downing Street with a majority of six.

For the old Labour Party, in which Attlee and most of his senior ministers were rooted, it was the end of the road. The young -- healthier, better educated, strangers to mass unemployment, living in New Towns and new housing estates -- were more interested in the Affluent Society Now than in the Socialist Commonwealth Hereafter. They had many admirable qualities, but they hadn’t yet learned the awe-inspiring patience and resilience of their elders in the face of disappointment and defeat.

The Government, limping back into power, went on limping from crisis to crisis. During the excitement of the election, the arrest of an atomic scientist, Klaus Emil Fuchs, on charges of communicating secrets to Russia, had gone nearly unnoticed. His trial in March was the forerunner of others that sowed distrust in America about the efficiency of British security -- indeed, it has been suggested Fuchs and the others, having served their purpose, were betrayed with that in mind. It also provided a plausible world background against which the U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy was able to work his black magic.

Fuchs’ trial, and sentence to 14 years in prison, coincided with the opening of a Washington investigation into McCarthy’s allegation that 81 security risks, including 57 Communists, were or had recently been employed by the State Department. The first victim was Professor Owen Lattimore, whose sinister advice was said to be responsible for the loss of China to the Communists -- an allegation, some thought, too flattering. Soon, Secretary of State Dean Acheson was declared a security risk by McCarthy; and from these doubtful beginnings, the junior senator from Wisconsin proceeded on a witch-hunt that made it impossible to voice even mildly liberal opinions without being declared “soft on Communism.”

It was amid these circumstances that, in the early morning hours of June 25, 1950, North Korean troops armed with heavy tanks and other Soviet-made equipment crossed the 38th Parallel and steamrolled south over the South Korean capital, Seoul. Korea, annexed by Japan in 1910, had been promised independence after the Second World War. As in Europe, “independence” took the form of a Russian occupation north of the 38th Parallel, and an American one to the south of it. The occupation troops withdrew in due course, leaving a Korean People’s Republic in the north and a Republic of Korea in the south, each breathing fire and slaughter against the other and claiming the right to reunify the country under its own domination.

Since the withdrawal of foreign troops, there had been sporadic skirmishes along the 38th Parallel, and the situation had caused the United Nations concern. The North Korean invasion, well armed and planned, followed a formal alliance concluded between the Soviet Union and China, and led to the credible Western supposition that the attack resulted from an agreement between them. America asked for an immediate emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, from which the Soviet representative -- under order to
boycott the Council because of Nationalist China’s presence -- was absent. Without the Soviet veto, the Security Council passed a resolution enabling President Truman to send American sea and air forces to the help of South Korea, and to put the U.S. General Douglas MacArthur in command.

By end of July 1950, despite the commitment of U.S. land forces, MacArthur, with his back to the sea, had only a toehold left, in southeastern Korea. He mounted a brilliant seaborne landing behind North Korean lines, though, recaptured Seoul, crossed the 38th Parallel, and headed for the Manchurian border. The Soviet Union warned that if Manchurian airfields were bombed, its air force would retaliate. Meanwhile, China put more than 200,000 “volunteers” into Korea, who pushed MacArthur back beyond the 38th Parallel. Then, in answer to questions at a press conference, Truman indicated the United States would take whatever steps were necessary in Korea, including use of the atomic bomb. Five years after the end of one devastating war, the world seemed to be on the brink of an even more destructive period of combat. The British Government had limped behind its impetuous senior partner during these events, but at the beginning of December, alarmed by Truman’s announcement, Attlee flew to Washington, and apparently dissuaded the American President from extending the war. One says “apparently” because Truman later implied his atomic bomb answer was only saber-rattling, under pressure from MacArthur and right-wing groups. The Korean War did not extend beyond Korea; but the first half of the 20th century ended with both East and West employing modern technology to lay waste to an already poor country, whose inhabitants were butchered by ideologies on either side among their fellow countrymen. So much for human progress in the centuries since Tacitus’s Germans had made a wilderness and called it peace.

And what was Picture Post’s staff doing in 1950? Well, they still had celebrities to get on film -- from South American political aristocrat Eva Peron; to electioneering Hugh Dalton. Along the way, they also tried to make a few social points, too. The story printed on May 6, 1950, kept to the magazine’s role as guide to proper conduct. “Films Your Children See: Can’t We Do Better Than This?” is a five-page, nine-picture layout that casts an inquiring eye on the “mindless” sex and violence seen by British youngsters in films then. The introduction sums up the approach taken by Picture Post: “Five to fourteen year-olds go to Children’s Matinees at the local cinema every Saturday morning. A photographer attends one, and takes pictures of them watching a typical ‘suitable’ programme. He uses infra-red, so the children are unaware that he is photographing them.”

Maurice Ambler’s images reveal children in awe of what they see on the big screen; but do they really present a good case for children not being allowed to view dubious films? Perhaps. But while some of the children look frightened, the two images of an actress in distress may not send shivers up the reader’s spine. Still, parents can sympathize with Derek Monsey’s text, which ironically (in terms of what Hopkinson opposed in Hulton’s political self-censorship) calls for “a more rigid system of censoring.” Monsey sets out his argument from the start; not everyone will choose to agree, but he does make a good case against the then-prevailing ratings system.

He stated: “Let us have a look at the elementary facts and the fundamental difficulties. In forty years of progress, the film has become the most effective social weapon for good or evil the world has known since the era of religion. In Britain alone, about thirty million people buy seats at the cinema every week. What they see in black-and-white or glorious Technicolor is, if repeated often enough, what they come to believe in. Seeing is believing. The social habits, the speech, the dress, the ideas of high life, low life, love and violence, of the last two generations have been influenced by that too often distorting-mirror, the screen.”

He continued: “We need a classification of ‘suitable for children’ based on a careful psychological and aesthetic understanding of what is suitable. But until we get it, we should at least demand that cheap, horrifying films that have the nightmare effect on boys and girls shown in the pictures on these pages should not be given at children’s matinees. There should be some limit to the amount of harm parents and film exhibitors are prepared to do to the minds of our next generation.” Monsey’s points are well taken; but are they progressive? It’s hard to say. They do precede more recent, similar arguments against sex and violence in films children view.
Kenneth Allsop writes in his “Hindsight” article: "Picture Post may have reformed those Saturday morning saturnalias. The manageress of my local cinema says they dropped theirs because of shrinking attendance. What sort of stuff was shown? ‘No horror films,’ she said. ‘Cowboys and comedies; Tommy Steele, or Laurel and Hardy, Shirley Temple.’ Was that why the little customers stopped coming -- because there was stronger meat and zingier poison at home on the telly?” asks Allsop. It isn’t easy to answer that question fully, but television did soon make some shows that could appeal more strongly to young audiences than the movies of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The big story in 1950 Britain, though, besides the anti-climactic General Election, was the Korean War; and Picture Post did put its best foot forward at the start of that conflict. All three stories presented to the publisher for publication by Bert Hardy and James Cameron -- the photographer-writer pair sent to South Korea after the death of Post writer Stefan Schimanski (Stephen Simmons) in a plane crash -- were solid. “The Road to Hell” and “Inchon” were published by the magazine soon after they were sent back to London. The third (although second in terms of chronology of information) story, “Terror in Korea: We Appeal to U.N.,” did not meet the same fate.

What was to emerge as the magazine’s most difficult assignment to date was the intended publication of the story on South Korean atrocities. Picture Post’s best story until that time may also have emerged from Hardy and Cameron’s six weeks in Korea. But the latter essay, “Inchon,” unfolded sometime after the notable incidents that occurred in Pusan just prior to the MacArthur-led amphibious counterattack on Seoul’s port along the Korean west coast.

Pusan is the southeastern port of South Korea; and it was to that place in September 1950 that U.N. forces were forced to retreat, just before they launched their famous counterstroke against the North Koreans at Inchon. Hardy and Cameron retreated with them, and after covering the events at Pusan, including the arrival of trains of wounded in that port city, they came upon a scene at Pusan Station they would not forget. Hardy narrated in his autobiography: “…as we were leaving the station we were stopped in our tracks by the sight of another type of human cargo which had come down from the North, and was now filling the square outside….

Cameron continued in Point of Departure: “…they were political prisoners of the South Korean Government -- they were not prisoners of war; their uniform was filthy and indescribably ragged kimono….They were skeletons -- they were puppets of skin with sinews for strings -- their faces were a terrible, translucent gray, and they cringed like dogs. They were manacled with chains or bound to each other with ropes. They were compelled to crouch in the classic Oriental attitude of subjection, the squatting, foetal position, in heaps of garbage. Sometimes they moved enough to scoop a handful of water to drink from the black puddles around them. Any deviation from their attitude brought a gun butt on their skulls. Finally they were herded, the lowest common denominator of human degradation, into trucks, with the numb air of men going to their deaths. I was assured, by a willing attendant, anxious to make a good impression, that most of them were. Sometimes, to save inconvenience, they were shot where they were.”

Although Hardy and Cameron tried to persuade the Red Cross and U.N. Command to do something about the apparent political prisoner executions, it’s unclear if they were stopped; they may have been. Once Hopkinson saw the materials the pair had shipped back to him, he knew he’d have a job yet to see the story through to publication. The full report would not see light of day in the magazine; and that effort to publish by Hopkinson was the straw to break the camel’s back.

Hopkinson kept Cameron busy editing his writing as soon as he and Hardy returned to London. Cameron worked very hard to pare the less complimentary (in terms of UN Forces) passages. The author of many excellent non-fiction books once said he “never worked so hard to write so badly.” The Post’s introduction to the four-page, five-photo story rejected by Hulton before it could be published, because it would have given “aid and comfort to the enemy,” contained political (not military) propaganda.
It reads: “James Cameron is now home. We publish his final article written in Korea because we believe that the cause of the United Nations is best served by recognising some of the ugly things which have been happening under its flag. We believe that once these things are known, U.N. will certainly take vigorous action to see that they are not repeated. That is why we have sent the text and pictures to the General Secretary of U.N. and to Mr. Kenneth Younger, who leads the British delegation at Lake Success.”(10)

Hopkinson was nearly forced to resign then. In the end, he was unceremoniously “sacked”. The United Nations did very little to correct many of its abuses during the Korean War; North Korean abuses are legendary for being even worse. Picture Post’s duo may have forced a few reforms, in that regard. The Communist Party’s Daily Worker published most of Cameron’s aborted text on November 1, 1950, probably due to the pilfering of the original essay by a printer. Cameron and Hopkinson long regretted “Owner Bans Korea Exposure: Picture Post Editor Is Sacked,” in the Worker, but there was little they could do to stop that publication, once the Worker’s staff had obtained the materials. Almost as deadly was the sidebar title on Hulton that ran with piece: “No Comment: He Was Dining with Princesses.” (11)

But the Korean War was newsworthy in many respects; and Hopkinson made sure Hardy and Cameron’s two other stories were printed in Picture Post. For one, “Inchon” (October 7, 1950) is a notable contribution to the art of the photo essay in war-time. Its introduction set the stage: “A little before dusk on the evening of September 14, the most formidable Allied landing force ever assembled since the invasion of Normandy, fought its way ashore at Inchon. Inchon was the port of Seoul, and Seoul was not only the South Korean capital, but the key communications centre for all North Korean armies attacking in the south. The United States 1st Marine Division were the first to go in at Inchon. With them went James Cameron and Bert Hardy, the only British journalist-cameraman team to get themselves on to the scene at this tremendous climax of the war.”

This nine-page, 21-photo story hit hard. The lead picture shows the convoy of U.N. landing craft heading away from the battleship they’d come from. The first caption reads: “Thirty Minutes Before H-Hour, in the First Great Counter-strike of the Korean War -- Into the Bay of Inchon, 262 ships of the Allied navies have disgorged their amphibious tanks and tracked vehicles. Now the vehicles skid round in the water and the troops wait for the high tide that will rumble them up against the sea-wall.”

The rest of Hardy’s photos are solid in content, composition, and historic import. His photos of “ordinary” South Koreans going about their business, U.S. troops grilling suspects, South Korean soldiers shaking down their countrymen, and U.N. doctors treating the wounded are as good as this conflict would evoke. And the final photo is a landmark in the reporting of civil wars. In that still, we see an old man, wounded in the forehead, ambling for mercy up the street, ostensibly towards U.N. soldiers. He’s followed by one little girl who may be his granddaughter, and another girl further back, the latter with her “hands up.” Other South Koreans are also standing and walking along that road; and the smell of war seems to permeate the air. Its caption reads: “This Is What Happens to Humanity When It Is Liberated Twice Within Three Months -- When humanity gets given ‘the works,’ in mid-twentieth century style, it passes beyond tragedy. Its old ones caper round like crazy goats, its young ones put out more crazy flags in a confused desire to please, its crazy infants surrender in advance, and its spokesmen utter their final crazy verdict: ‘Sank you!’ Which, being interpreted, means that humanity, with the best will in the world, can stand no more liberation like this.”

“Inchon” does not remind one much of the American TV series M*A*S*H*, except it does reiterate Hawkeye’s perpetual message that warfare is senseless, especially when one enters combat in a civil war from outside the nation under attack. Whether or not Britain, America and the United Nations should have been involved in Korea’s civil war is still a debatable point; but it goes without saying that language barriers are not the only obstacles to progress in our world. So, too, are the military dreams of tyrants -- whether they are Capitalists, Communists, or Fundamentalists.

Cameron’s early paragraphs indicate the mixed thrill of the attack on Inchon. But a later section stands out: It may even suggest added comparisons with M*A*S*H*: “Now the twilight was alive with landing-craft, tank-landers, marshal-craft, ammunition-carriers things full of cranes and guns and lorries and bull-dozers
and Marines...all whirling round in an intricate minuet -- and in the middle of it all, if you can conceive of such a thing, a wandering boat marked in great letters ‘PRESS,’ full of agitated and contending correspondents, all trying to appear insistently determined to land in Wave One, while contriving desperately to be found in Wave Fifty. The LC bounced and heaved the spray....I decided that I was too frightened to be seasick....It was a hard matter to rationalise at that moment.... We headed into the heavy bank of smoke, and there we were. By some extravagant miscalculation we reached the sea-wall ahead of the Marine assault-party, who came blazing in behind us, making retreat quite out of the question. I scrambled ingloriously up the stones and over the parapet and instantly fell on my face into a North Korean defence trench most happily empty of North Koreans....That was the landing....The fact that in our flurry we had reached an unscheduled area, that we had in fact hit entirely the wrong beach, were considerations that moved us only when we were told, some time later...."

Tom Hopkinson said he was pleased to publish “Inchon” -- including the sequence that won Bert Hardy an Encyclopaedia Britannica/Missouri Pictures of the Year Award -- one of that editor’s last regular Picture Post tasks. It marked the end of “The Hopkinson Decade.” As for James Cameron, he said in his “Hindsight” article for Picture Post 1938-50: “As for Inchon -- for me, the record stands.”(12)
Part VI

The Beginning of the End, Intoned Slowly Over Time
Chapter 26

What Tom Hopkinson’s Dismissal Meant to Picture Post and to the New Editors at the Magazine (1950-57).

“There was of course no immediate effect on the paper. What Hopkinson had built up was too strong for that. He secured agreement from the management that his long-standing Assistant Editor, Ted Castle, should be allowed to succeed him for a minimum of six months, and the only discernible change at first was the appearance of Castle’s name instead of Hopkinson’s on the mast-head. But just as many natural cataclysms have been long prepared underground, so what eventually happened to Picture Post had its origin in the dismissal of Hopkinson.” (1)

* * * * *

Since Tom Hopkinson had taken over as editor of Picture Post from Stefan Lorant during the summer of 1940, until that infamous day late in October of 1950 when he was fired by Edward Hulton, Hopkinson had done almost everything he could to make Hulton’s magazine the best picture magazine anywhere. (2) Starting with the handful of people Lorant had left him in 1940, Hopkinson built up the magazine’s staff considerably, taking on even Labour and Conservative MPs as writers, as well as many famous authors. And his photographers were soon the best in Britain, perhaps even in all of Europe.

As for the actual editing of the magazine, Hopkinson often left the layouts to a succession of skillful art and picture editors. But, as with the Hardy-Cameron “Inchon” story during the Korean War, he occasionally did the layouts himself. He later wrote about that essay, “As I turned over Hardy’s prints when they first came out of the darkroom, I knew that I had never had a better picture story in my hands, and decided that no one but myself should select the photographs to be used and lay them out. I made nine pages of them, doing the work quite rapidly though I had been prepared to spend all day on it, and feeling as I did so that they would surely win the most important honour then open to a magazine cameraman -- the Encyclopaedia Britannica Award for the finest picture series of the year; which indeed, a month or so later, they did.” (3)

Hopkinson’s ability to deal with Hardy’s Inchon pictures, was most likely a result of the 1938-40 period, when Lorant edited the magazine. “Lorant’s way of working was both a revelation and a nightmare. He would let picture stories accumulate while I pleaded with him to tell me which ones he meant to use so that I could get the articles written.... ‘How can I tell you which ones I am using when I don’t know what’s going in the paper?’ he would snort and glare.... Then suddenly late one evening he would gather the whole bundle of material under his arm and migrate to the little Lilliput office in Chancery Lane which he had retained. After a couple of hours a rain of rough lay-outs would start pouring out, covered with scribbled instructions. ‘Tom -- get H.G. Wells to write this article. Explain to him what we want!’ ‘This one must be very funny (underlined).’ ‘Hore-Belisha (Minister of War) has to see these pictures. He will help you with the captions,’ and so on.... Often there was not time to find anyone to write articles, and I would cook up whatever I could myself....One night in December 1938 I sat down at ten o’clock to write 118 captions before morning, historical captions, calling for checking of names and dates and places.... Sometimes we were a day late going to press. Sometimes we were two days late. Once when I remonstrated bitterly with Lorant that it was hardly worth going to press now as we were so late, he replied: ‘You are quite right, Tom. We take our children to the circus.’ So we did....”

Hopkinson added, “Though I cursed over difficulties which I felt could have been avoided, it was Lorant’s sense of timing which made the magazine. He had to feel inside himself just what was wanted. A magazine is quite different from a newspaper. The newspaper comes in over the tape machines; it’s largely a matter
of choosing and editing whatever news there is. But for a magazine which is sold ten days after it goes to press, the one thing fatal is to follow news. It’s better to be capricious -- to make a number out of life on Mars, or footballers or mini-skirts -- than to construct next week’s number out of today’s events. Anything can be right, provided it sells enough copies and -- a point later at times forgotten -- provided it does not harm the paper’s image, and so destroy its future in order to try to boost its present.”(4) Hopkinson had been inspired by Lorant, then, and by the great mission of The Picture Magazine, before he took over the helm at Picture Post. Like Lorant, Hopkinson had a genius for timing, although not as perfect as Lorant’s. He also had a gift for knowing how to delegate authority and use his staff well. He was even better, in this regard, than the famous Hungarian had been.

The editors-in-chief who followed Hopkinson may have been decent men, but they possessed little of the flair for editing that Hopkinson and Lorant had exhibited. And none seemed as inspired by Hopkinson’s editing as Hopkinson had been by Lorant’s. Hulton’s infringement of the editorial independence of his magazine’s staff, especially at the time of the South Korean atrocities episode, left future editors to wonder just what authority they held.

Hopkinson’s 10-year editorial control of Picture Post was skillfully played by any standards; and his presence was missed after 1950. But perhaps Hulton’s decision to fire the man who had created a “Hopkinson Decade”, may have been inevitable. Hopkinson was clashing more and more with Hulton; and not all of it was Hulton’s fault. Hopkinson had been pushing for ever-more leftist involvement in the magazine; and Hulton had joined the Conservative Party by 1950. Hopkinson’s decision to hire MPs from both sides of the aisle, then, was something his boss didn’t want to tolerate, because the world was once again becoming a dangerous place.

And yet, one has to wonder what might have been if Tom Hopkinson would have remained in command of Picture Post during the 1950s. Perhaps it would still be an influential magazine; in 1949, its circulation had been nearly 1.5 million copies per week. And profits (209,097 pounds in 1949, as compared with 15,000 pounds in 1952) were at an all-time high. Hopkinson later wrote: “When the news of this (Korean) disagreement got around, most of the editorial staff wished to resign. I was against this, considering the paper’s future much more important than that of any individual. Finally almost everyone agreed to stay on, provided Mr. Hulton would guarantee that the paper’s policy would remain unchanged. As earnest of this the staff insisted that Ted Castle, the assistant editor, should take over. Ted, who had intended to resign, finally accepted, since without the assurance of his presence, the rest were not prepared to stay. He was given a guarantee of six months’ tenure, during which time he did his utmost to maintain the paper’s continuity.” (5)

Robert Kee wrote: “Even after the management had failed to renew Castle’s contract at the end of six months (disliking his close connection with the Labour Party) and had replaced him with an able man from advertising, Frank Dowling, there were few observable symptoms of decline at first. Only a couple of months into his regime one of Bert Hardy’s pictures of the maltreated South Korean prisoners actually appeared in the paper in an article by James Cameron on the first twelve months of the War; it was accompanied by the picture of the humiliated American prisoner (in Pyongyang) which Hopkinson had intended to place in the (original) story (for balance). Of course the very fact that it was obviously now considered uncontroversial enough to be printed, itself signaled a depreciation of the paper’s journalistic values.”

But it was not a depreciation that was as yet all-consuming. Possibly there began to be more pretty girls in the magazine. But then there had always been pretty girls in the magazine. Possibly more of them were more undressed than before; possibly there was a little more frivolity; but then these “penguins,” a year after he had left, were creatures of which Hopkinson himself had always been fond. And no one could say that the old seriousness was not there, too. In the latter category, a series called “Sex and the Citizen” appeared over a number of weeks, edited by Fyfe Robertson. (“The Bread Racket” and “Where are the Downland Sheep?” were to be further targets for his robustly compelling zeal.) The Guardian theatre critic, Philip Hope-Wallace, wrote in 1951, with certain reservations, about the new young actor Richard Burton,
playing Henry V at Stratford. And A.L. Rowse wrote about England’s queens when Elizabeth II ascended the throne, while Sacherverell Sitwell contributed four articles on the life and death of George VI.

Also, some solid younger writers started working for the paper then: Kenneth Allsop, Jenny Nicholson, Brian Dowling (the Editor’s son), Trevor Philpot and Gordon Watkins, to be joined by Robert Muller, Cynthia Judah and Gavin Lyall. Macdonald Hastings and Hilde Marchant continued to contribute as they had done since the earliest days. Denzil Bachelor continued sports coverage which, in the best Picture Post tradition, was as much about life as sport. Also, Foreign Editor Sylvain Mangeot joined the magazine. Hulton himself was found pontificating like his early ventures into writing, though with a different political orientation and less editing of his own work, apparently.

Meanwhile, the price of the magazine, which had once risen to 6d., was lowered again in August 1952 to 4d. And the appearance, in the same cheaper issue, of a feature by the intellectual Geoffrey Grigson on Wiltshire, with Hopkinson’s old photographer from Mass Observation days, Humphrey Spender, made a case for reconfirming 1930s’ values. Nearly all the photographers who had given the paper its great name still worked there: Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, Haywood Magee (who had come with Hopkinson from Illustrated at start-up), Grace Robertson (Fyfe’s daughter), Charles (“Slim”) Hewitt, Godfrey Thurston Hopkins, and Carl Sutton (who invented an “action sequence camera” mounted on a rifle butt, able to shoot fifteen pictures per second).

That group of reliables was joined by some younger men, talented in a similar tradition. Two of this new group -- John Chillingworth and Frank Pocklington -- had worked their way up from the Picture Post darkroom, where wonders were still being performed under the presiding genius of Edith Kay. The traditional high quality of the magazine’s layout, originally established by Lorant, had been consistently maintained under different art editors -- Edgar Ainsworth, Harry Deverson, Michael Middleton and Henry Fuller -- and also seemed to survive even the departure of Hopkinson. Indeed, there were times when one might not believe his touch still present.

A feature in the October 15, 1952, issue about the English autumn by Macdonald Hastings hit the note of stylish charm that had distinguished the magazine of old. “The biggest news of the week,” ran its introduction, “is printed in small type, almost apologetically, at the top of the page (where the date was). It’s October.” Lionel Birch, who, with Hastings, had been in Lorant’s day, one of the paper’s first reporters, was back again by the end of that year, before long to succeed Frank Dowling as “Executive Editor.”

But the trouble with imperceptible-at-first problems is they often become perceptible. In the same month as the October feature, there appeared in the Post a Horlicks advertisement set out exactly like a double-page Post article. “Conquest of Stress and Strain,” it was headed, “by V.H. Mottram M.A., late Professor of Psychology in the University of London”; and to one side was a good Picture Post feature-type photo of a girl relaxing. It was almost as if it had been commissioned under the benevolent eye of Fyfe Robertson.

This and related developments were early straws in the wind: The management was relying on the selling of advertising to keep the magazine afloat rather than on its editorial character and content. A year later, a special feature on “Heat and Light in Your Home” with “Ten pages of practical suggestions for maintaining your home brighter and warmer this winter” appeared surrounded by ten pages of the very things that might help you do so, plus the shops where you could buy them. At the same time, the continually extended use of color gave the impression the magazine was striving for popularity, whereas in Hopkinson’s time the popular features had not done that. The now regular pretty girl on the cover was too often duplicated by a double-page center spread of the same girl in color showing more of herself than on the cover.

None of these changes in theory interfered with the talent that communicated text and pictures. But it did suggest the talent was no longer the magazine’s only asset, as had seemed the case under Hopkinson’s editorship. Now the magazine seemed under alien control (Birch was only “Executive” Editor). As time passed, for all the still sometimes superb use of words and pictures, the character of Picture Post became
weaker, less recognizable. And it had been its individual character that had been the whole point of Hulton’s leading publication.

The changed tone in Hulton’s own articles, now that he saw himself as in control, increased the change in the magazine’s personality. A condescending note foreign to Hopkinson’s populism crept in: “No doubt,” Hulton wrote, “you have read of the gold-plated Daimler of Lady Docker. But have you ever seen it? Well, now you can at least get an impression of it from our double-page picture…”

The publisher could occasionally revert to a more heartfelt radical stance, as when, in a report he made on a French holiday camp, he wrote: “Before Britain can provide the leadership which the world requires, British youth must be rescued from frustration, and given a chance in the sun, the sea and the snow…” But Hulton’s attempts to keep pace with the changes in society were less happy: “One of the strongest modern phenomena is the sudden rise of so many singers in such a short time.” It was just the sort of phenomenon in which the old Picture Post would have been interested, but the sort of phraseology with which it would not have approached the topic. Nor would the old Picture Post have spoken of itself in the terms the management used on October 1, 1956: “Forgive us for boasting but the magazine you are now reading is the most up-to-date picture paper in this country. Forgive the boast -- we think it good…” But did they really think anything about it except that they wanted to sell it? And if it were good, would the reader need to be told so, directly?

Most of the talented staff who were still at work felt that by then the management hardly knew what it was doing. No wonder the old-style Picture Post readers had been falling away in numbers. And such new-style readers as management may have been seeking now had something else to look at: television. Undoubtedly, the magazine had a real problem to face with the arrival of commercial television in 1955 as a competitor for advertising. But it went deeper than that. The competition of Independent Television was made the official excuse for the paper’s demise. The word “competition,” however, implies the possibility of either side winning, and perhaps Picture Post no longer believed it had a real chance to win. Tom Hopkinson may have said it best in noting: “A magazine has a special character of its own and it has to keep to that character. It is for that particular character that the reader buys it and it is this character which keeps the staff enthusiastic and united….Picture Post lost its sense of direction and wandered off into the fog.”

Stefan Lorant, when he started the magazine in 1938, had been, as Hopkinson would recall, “Like a great comedian who sees himself united with his audience in a mysterious relationship. They expected certain things from him and it was his job to see they got what they expected.” There could be no better definition of a successful editor’s role. Hopkinson himself had most skillfully taken on the role which Lorant had bequeathed to him. He had given the public not so much what they wanted as what they expected from him, and they found that was what they wanted, both during World War II and in the time afterwards. Whether he could have continued to do the same thing in the more complex social and international climate of the next two decades must remain an open question.

Not least of the new difficulties was that television was a new, popular medium which, quite apart from competing for advertising after 1955, was doing much the sort of thing that Picture Post had always done. It was to be no coincidence that so many of Picture Post’s staff of the magazine’s last ten years (Macdonald Hastings, Fyfe Robertson, Slim Hewitt, Trevor Philpot, Kenneth Allsop, James Cameron, Cynthia Judah, Frank Pocklington and Gordon Watkins among them) were to go on to successful careers in television. Whether Hopkinson or another man of his caliber could have kept such people on a popular magazine that was not just a supplement to another publication, as some popular picture magazines are today, but an important journalistic venture in its own right, is still an open question, too.

Lorant, then living in the United States as a writer, to whom Nika Hulton (Edward’s beautiful, young wife) offered the editor-job again during Picture Post’s death throes, turned it down. Hopkinson, after a time as Features Editor on the liberal daily News Chronicle, went on to achieve a Picture Post-style success in a quite different milieu with the African magazine Drum.(6)
Bert Hardy has his own view of the aftermath of the Hopkinson decade. He noted: “Although things quietened down after Tom’s sacking, they were still not back to normal. At that stage it was impossible to guess just how much the paper had lost when he went. Looking back on it, it seems quite clear that without Tom’s social commitment, Picture Post lost its edge and its popularity. Contrary to the opinion still held in Fleet Street, people aren’t only interested in pictures of pretty girls when they buy magazines.”

Following a long-jaunt to Tibet in January 1951 that may have been intended to temporarily get rid of Hardy and Cameron, another assignment took them to Spain, where they tracked labor strikes. As Hardy noted: “Cloak-and-dagger activities were not confined to Spain: back in England, on the First of May, Ted Castle was sacked from his job as editor, and the Managing Director of Hulton Press, John Pearce, called a meeting of the staff to explain the situation. The new editor appointed to replace Ted Castle was Frank Dowling. Frank Dowling had once run a small advertising agency; a tall man, with a shock of fair hair, he liked to live well. He had a house in the country and a flat in town, and had a chauffeur-driven car to take him about. Although he was in a completely different mould from Tom Hopkinson, I got on well with him. I got on still better when, not long after he got the job, he gave me a rise in salary of 500 (pounds) per year, backdated to the day he started.”

Hardy continued: “Later in the year (1951), with the magazine’s circulation declining, and some fairly startling stunt needed to boost sales, Frank decided to run a 10,000 (pound) competition for amateur photographers (with a huge first prize of 1000 ((pounds)). I was to launch the competition with an article on how to take a picture. Somewhere in my article I made the statement that it doesn’t matter what sort of camera you’ve got: even if the man standing next to you has a flashy chromium-plated job, and you have a box camera, it’s the person behind the camera that matters, not the camera.

“Having printed my article, Frank now said I was going to have to prove it. He arranged for me to travel up to Blackpool, where I would be presented with a Box Brownie by the Lord Mayor. I would then have to try to make a really good story…. As per instructions, I travelled up to Blackpool with Brian (Dowling’s son), and was presented with a Box Brownie. But no sooner had we booked in to our hotel than Harry Deverson, the picture editor, phoned: he wanted me to get to Manchester Airport as soon as possible and fly to Ireland to do a story with Derek Wragge-Morley on an island off the West Coast. I had only time left for one trip up the beach and one trip back before leaving. With a standard-issue Box Brownie and a close-up lens plus yellow filter and an improvised cardboard viewfinder, I roamed the Golden Mile looking for suitable subjects. In the end I got a couple of showgirls from the pier theatre to help me. The picture I eventually took of the two girls sitting on the railings with their skirts blowing up has been one of my most popular photographs. People who have hardly even heard of me will suddenly remember that picture: ‘You’re the man who took the picture of the two girls on the sea-front at Blackpool!’”

At about Christmastime 1951, Frank Dowling came under a cloud at Picture Post, and went off on a long holiday. By November 1953, he was out of a job. Hulton himself took over the top editorial spot, and he named Len Spooner, formerly the editor of Illustrated, as his assistant. From that point, as Bert Hardy writes, “The decline of Picture Post went into top gear.” Hardy continued: “Under Hulton’s editorship, I now found myself doing stories with titles like ‘Frankie Howerd Rescues Three Pretty Girls,’ or photographing Eva Gabor, Zsa-Zsa Gabor’s sister. One of Hulton’s ideas was a series called ‘Personality Girl.’ A different girl was featured each month, and it wasn’t normally her personality that distinguished her. They were usually bright young things, and often seemed to have double-barrelled names. I had a bit of fun with Miss Jocelyn Wardrop-Moore by getting her to scrub the steps of her Kensington mews cottage for the picture. I think she enjoyed it too, and I’m sure it was a novel experience for her.”

But all was not dim for Hardy: “One compensation for staying on at Picture Post was that by this time I knew the Hultons well, and was friendly with them -- particularly Lady Hulton. At the end of the year (1953), Len Spooner and I were invited to go with them on a ski-ing holiday in Switzerland. I bought all the latest clothing and equipment on expenses at Simpson’s in Piccadilly, but I never actually learnt to ski. The funniest moment came when Lady Hulton persuaded Len and me to go to the top of the slopes on a ski lift, and then had us brought down again on accident stretchers.”
To be sure, Bert Hardy was under pressure at times to keep his history-recording photos coming -- as was the case in the war in Cyprus and in civil conflicts in Africa. But he also had to be a friend to the Hultons’ and he found himself taking a lot of pictures of them or their enterprises. He was also a friend to Lionel Birch, the magazine’s Executive Editor; and that would eventually pay dividends on one trip to America for them, when they did a book on the Cunard Lines’ Queen Elizabeth in 1964.(7)

Meanwhile, more and more of the Picture Post staff found themselves out of favor with the Hultons, or simply decided they wanted to work elsewhere. And as Tom Hopkinson began to right himself by taking on other work, in a “gradual by gradual” fashion, so too did people like James Cameron, Kenneth Allsop, Frank Dowling, Ted Castle, and many others. And if Bert Hardy and Kurt Hutton, among others, stayed on until the “bitter end”, at least they did so knowing they were part of a publication that had once been among the best in Britain, perhaps even in all the world. Profits could still be had by some organizations in the picture magazine industry in Britain; but by 1954 only a handful of the Picture Post staff still did well for themselves staying on.

The editorial lead Lorant and Hopkinson had given the entire staff of Picture Post for so many years, then, was beginning to falter. And the magazine’s talent, where it still existed, became more frustrated. That frustration would result in failed spirit de corps and thematic continuity, albeit gradually diminished. Edward Hulton came to know this, and so did the rest of, what finally became, his under-appreciated and poorly utilized staff. The genius exhibited by so many good journalists at the outset would meet a sad fate with Picture Post. But not without a few more glimmers of former greatness first, and signals for other great careers to commence.
Chapter 27

The Roles of Photographers, Photography, Writers and Writing at Picture Post

“You treat these cameramen like bloody royal children!” Denzil Batchelor, our new sports reporter, objected, coming back from his first assignment. ‘They seem to think I’m there to hold their hands and wipe their noses.’ ‘Not royal children,’ I said, ‘more like racehorses. You don’t expect racehorses to make their own travel arrangements -- and when they get to the course they need looking after, too. If the cameraman gets his pictures, and you miss your story because you were helping him -- that’s okay, we’ll get the story somehow. But if there are no pictures we’ve got nothing.’” (1)

“The basic unit of photojournalism is one picture with words.’ -- Wilson Hicks….To demonstrate faith in photography, it is not necessary to forsake rationality. The wordless picture story may have an aesthetic rigour but words can enhance both emotional and cognitive values. They are not competitive; they are complementary. They identify people and places, the first essential. They explain relationships. They fix the time. They may elaborate on what is happening. They can point to an elusive detail. They can attempt to counter our irritating perversity in each drawing different, even contradictory, meanings from the same image. They can confirm mood. And with a single photograph only words can explain how the event occurred or what its effect might be.” (2)

“Tom (Hopkinson) added some very distinctive qualities to the paper which no one else, I think, could have done at that time. He added a social conscience in relation to British affairs, home affairs. He added a very high quality of writing, which he insisted upon the whole time, and for which Picture Post really became famous. He was always against the trick headline, the meaningless caption, the glib piece. He didn’t underestimate the reader. He held the reader in high esteem.” (3)

* * * * *

Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson, Picture Post’s first two editors, were men equally at home in the related media of words and pictures. Both men prove they knew what to do with good photos, and both knew what to do with good writing. They had worked too long as writers whose words depended on “pictures” (mental images and/or photos) to shun either art form. And neither man can be said to have slighted either function. In the pages of Picture Post, both men found a ready and profitable home for their abilities. So, too, did their staffs -- mainly made up of writers and photographers, with picture editors, copy editors, researchers, support personnel and darkroom assistants, as well.

Hopkinson made a good point in the first lead quotation here: Picture Post depended on good picture-taking as no other magazine in Britain before it had done, at least successfully. Although each layout was varied and dramatic enough to appeal to a wide range of readers and its writing a complement to the pictures, neither professional could have performed their duties without the pictures used in the magazine. Thus, Hopkinson was correct in saying to Denzil Batchelor: “If the cameraman gets his pictures, and you miss your story because you were helping him -- that’s okay, we’ll get the story somehow. But if there are no pictures we’ve got nothing.” Hopkinson was not downplaying the role of the writers on his magazine; he was upgrading the roles of photographs in it.
Perhaps that’s why James Cameron wrote in his “Hindsight” article accompanying “Inchon” in Picture Post 1938-50: “One of my enduring memories of that strange occasion (the Battle of Inchon) is of Bert Hardy on the seawall of Blue Beach, blaspheming among the impossible din, and timing his exposures to the momentary flash of the rockets. That is the difference between the reporter’s trade and the cameraman’s. His art can never be emotion recalled in tranquility. Ours can -- or could be: the emotion is easy; the tranquility more elusive.” (4)

Every good magazine writer has needs to respect what photographers can do; and every good photographer knows a few well-chosen words can enhance almost all of his or her photos. At Picture Post, the greatest photographs of staff like Kurt Hutton, Felix Man, Bill Brandt, Bert Hardy, Humphrey Spender, Gerti Deutsch, Charles (“Slim”) Hewitt, Haywood Magee, John Chillingworth, Thurston Hopkins, Carl Sutton, Leonard McCombe, Raymond Kleboe, Tim Gidal, Grace Robertson, Frank Pocklington, Bill Brandt, George Rodger, Maurice Ambler, and David Steen went so well with the inspired words of the great writers who shared the magazine’s pages.


Photographers and art editors sometimes can be snooty about headlines and captions (sometimes called cutlines in American newspapers). The great French photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson once said that if a photograph is really evocative, it carries its own message and the only caption it needs is a label of when and where. “The who or what and the why are incorporated in the subject -- or should be -- and the how is unimportant,” he noted. However, Wilson Hicks, the late executive editor of Life magazine, knowing what he had to contend with in the fifties, said words were not a subordinate but an equal partner of the photograph. He was stretching the point a bit, but it was then -- and is today -- a necessary antidote to the idea that words pollute photos.

There are photos we see as unequivocally and completely as a painting and which do not need a title. They may be a visual illustration of a verity that words render into a commonplace -- that wars or famine cause human misery -- or confirmation of a known event (like the conquest of Mt. Everest), or they may make a point merely by their striking composition (as any number of good photos do). But rarely, with the overwhelming mass of newspaper, or even magazine photos, are we satisfied by such simple statements. Our curiosity requires more information, information that can be supplied only by words. This does not mean we are dealing with an inferior photo.(6)

Words and pictures can complement each other, then, as long as the camera operator returns with good photos. What made Picture Post special was the way in which the photographers invariably came back with “something” (that is why Hopkinson treated them like racehorses) and the way the editors, writers, and designers, made that something seem even more special, as presented in the context of solid layouts and wording. It’s wise to recall what Susan Sontag wrote in On Photography: “We have a modern notion of embellishment -- beauty is not inherent in anything; it is to be found, by another way of seeing -- as well as a wider notion of meaning, which photography’s many uses illustrate and powerfully reinforce.”(7) If it is true that photography is a new and different form of seeing -- the “fresh” visual appearance of things that have been described before, which Sontag also alludes to -- then that craft, art or skill has a special way of
extending its peculiar hold over us, as it did in the pages of Picture Post. And words can enhance every new way of seeing, especially when they are used alongside photos.

Lewis Hine said, “If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn’t need to buy a camera.” It is also true that if there hadn’t been a few words used in conjunction with his photos, his camera skills would have been virtually meaningless. John Szarkowski put things into further perspective: “Photography is a system of visual editing. At bottom, it is a matter of surrounding with a frame a portion of one’s cone of vision, while standing in the right place at the right time. Like chess, or writing, it is a matter of choosing from among given possibilities, but in the case of photography the number of possibilities is not finite but infinite.” Thus, photography has a few more prospects than writing or chess; but taken together, these three skills (including “chess”) can contribute to masterful picture-word layouts. (8) Cartier-Bresson said something just as pertinent: “To me photography is the simultaneous recognition of an event, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as a precise organization of forms which give the event proper expression.” (9)

All these experts hit upon elements contributing to a useful dialogue between writers and photographers. Photography (at Picture Post and elsewhere since the 1930s) has been a different and special creative form that depends upon the camera operator’s capacity to see an infinite range of possibilities, and upon his or her ability to choose the real significance-maximum possibility of an event, “in a fraction of a second,” with a precise aesthetic organization. What words can do for photography, once the latter is realized and perhaps before as well, is to place an event or series of events in context, in figurative focus if you will, and to beg certain questions. We may be coming close to a definition of photography akin to Berenice Abbott’s: “I have yet to see a fine photograph which is not a good document.” And if we accept that fact from Abbott, then maybe we can also agree with Harold Evans, who wrote about one legendary American photographer: “Edward Steichen, who did not give a hoot in hell about the photograph as art, wanted it to explain man to man. That was, he recognised, the most complicated thing on earth, ‘and also as naive as a tender plant.'”(10)

If a photograph is called upon to explain human to human, as it was in the pages of all the leading picture magazines of the 1930s, ’40s and ’50s, it was essential that good captions, and good stories, accompany the photos. The better English-language picture magazines -- like Picture Post, Life, Look, The Saturday Evening Post, and National Geographic -- have always made sure their writers were first-rate craftsmen. Of course, they all have occasionally called upon literary greats to do their share for those magazines; and Picture Post did, too. But the crucial idea behind getting first-rate writers to work with fine photographers goes back to what Wilson Hicks has defined as the basic unit of photojournalism: “one picture with words.” His magazine, Life, and Picture Post, made certain there was sufficient talent in both categories for the creation of great photo essays. Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson agreed with the editors of Life that the basic unit of the picture magazine is one layout (complete with words and pictures), and that is still the formula the world round.

But if presenting workable, even impressive, layouts to readers was the goal, how did Picture Post’s readers expect to be impressed then? And what was the true function of writers and photographers on that magazine? J.B. Priestley indicated the general answers in his book The English, in 1973. Priestley hinted that although some of his countrymen were interested in the nitty-gritty of intellectual, “vital” causes, “…most people are not on fire with ambition; they are not wondering day and night how to get on in the world: they want if possible to enjoy a little importance in their own circle; and that is all; for the rest they like to take it easy. This may not raise the gross national product to impressive heights: but they are more likely to find themselves living in a reasonably happy society.” (11) If Picture Post’s layouts did anything, then, they represented what the British could do together -- i.e., fashion for themselves a “reasonably happy society.” And the team spirit with which Britain’s greatest picture magazine was put together must have been due, in large measure, to its large readership, and also to its fine staff.

Stuart Hall hits upon a good point in his ground-breaking essay “The Social Eye of Picture Post.” There, he alludes to the team spirit that held the magazine’s staff together: “Hopkinson describes (his) team as ‘a talented, individualistic, somewhat hard-boiled group of journalists, distrustful of authority, not apt to...
accept slogans or to swallow without examination the assumptions of power politics. So far as it had a common political alignment, this would be left, though not very far left, of centre.’ This team, under Hopkinson’s guidance, offered, in print and picture, a staggering visual record of the imprint of mass warfare and its aftermath on a civilian population.” (12)

Simply because “The English” wanted a “reasonably happy society,” then, does not mean they did not want to read about the effects of mass warfare on themselves and those around them. In fact, they wanted to read about those effects precisely because they wanted the type of society outlined above. And the writers and photographers of Picture Post gave those people exactly what they wanted for most of the magazine’s life. From Bert Hardy’s collaboration with Bert Lloyd on “The East End at War” even to Fyfe Robertson’s work with Raymond Kleboe on the postwar Labour Government’s East African Ground Nuts Scheme, there was always something that related to the basic socio-politico-cultural life of the British people -- “close-up” or “far-away.”(13)

It was always important to the lifeblood of Picture Post that the writers not be placed in higher esteem than the photographers, as they had been in most journalistic situations prior to 1938. With that very egalitarian adventure in journalism, there was a great deal of power-sharing among all the various staff professionals. If Picture Post was to be a team effort, everyone had to carry his or her weight. Thus, if Maurice Edelman, A.L. Lloyd Robert Kee, Fyfe Robertson, Anne Scott-James, Sidney Jacobson, and Macdonald Hastings were the leading writers for the magazine, it was also crucial that its leading cameramen over time (Hutton, Man, Brandt, Hardy, Hewitt, Chillingworth, and Magee, for starters) also be given their due. Beyond them, the picture editors, editorial, darkroom, research, and clerical assistants, business people, printers, and, of course, the editors-in-chief and publisher, deserved credit, too.

As for the faith that Lorant and Hopkinson put in their magazine and staff, some more history is useful. Hopkinson started working with Lorant on the ill-fated predecessor of Picture Post, Weekly Illustrated, which was begun in 1934 and lasted four years. Hopkinson claimed he learned two things there: “First, that Lorant understood photographs as no one else I had ever met understood them….Second, I had come to recognize photography as a journalistic weapon in its own right, so that if like myself at that time -- you are determined to promote causes and affect conditions, photographs can be a potent means for doing so. Hopkinson continued: “During the four years I was on Weekly Illustrated, having no Jerome Chester (a former boss) driving me, I started to write stories. I had not the concentration, nor indeed the theme, on which to write a book, which would also have taken too long to be of help in the money troubles which soon gathered round Tony (his wife) and myself as the last of our 500 pounds melted away. In a single weekend, however, telling myself that as a writer I must surely be able to earn something, I wrote three stories. One went straight into the wastebasket. The second, a story about climbing based on memories of the Lake District and called ‘Mountain Madness,’ was at once accepted by Blackwood’s. The third, which I called ‘I Have Been Drowned,’ would take months, even years, before I could consider it complete. So all the arduous weekend had produced in the present was seven guineas, though the last two stories would be reprinted again and again, earning enough to have solved our money troubles several times over had I been able to draw cheques on the future.” (14)

This detail from Hopkinson’s life, recorded in his autobiography, indicates the tools the Oxford graduate and son of an Anglican minister would exploit so well on Picture Post. Add to that mix his long-held belief in the righteousness of socialism, and Hopkinson was ready by 1940 to take over the editorship of Hulton’s best magazine. The staff he had helped put together was soon working wonders on his and Hulton’s behalf; and Hopkinson was satisfied to be working with the people that motivated him so positively for so long.

Picture Post’s socialist message -- stated in terms the British middle classes could understand, and expressed through an appealing union of words and pictures -- is what Hall said contributed so notably to that magazine’s success. As Hall writes in the essay mentioned, including quotations from Walter Benjamin, “Picture Post ‘transmitted’ with a striking fidelity and impact. Especially in the war years its sheer transparency to reality was remarkable. What it could not do was to ‘alienate the apparatus of production (i.e., photography, the magazine) from the ruling class in favour of socialism, by improving it.’
The fact that most modern examples of the rhetoric of the still photograph are even further away from this aim and purpose gives us some standard by which to measure Picture Post’s true achievement.”(15)

Whatever achievements Picture Post realized was likely due to its interest in the economic, social and cultural fate of the British nation. But Hall seems to be myopic toward the capitalist contributions to that magazine’s greatness. A modified socialism was important then, but Picture Post would not have accomplished much at all had it not been for the entrepreneurial efforts not only of Edward Hulton, but of the rest of his staff, as well. Professionals like Hardy and Scott-James, in particular, were great merchandisers of their talents, and superb journalists. Hardy appealed to the populist side of Britain -- which wanted a fairer distribution of wealth, but the side that also wanted to “enjoy a little importance,” in J.B. Priestley’s phrase. And Scott-James positively motivated new consumers, who were perhaps led most by the women of the nation, who did the shopping, and who had control of the purse strings. There was plenty of room for the middle-class success of Picture Post during the 1940s, because the British were looking for a “reasonably happy society.” And they found it eventually -- with the help of some socialism, but with the attitudes and structures of capitalism also still sufficiently intact.

Perhaps someone else will have to write the financial history of the great picture magazines; but suffice it to say both the writers and the photographers at Picture Post were paid relatively well during the 1940s. And a few notable journalists made a very good living until the magazine’s last issue. The picture editors, knowing Lorant and Hopkinson, must have been paid decently, too. As to what the editorial, darkroom business, research, production and clerical assistants earned, they must have made out passably well.

If Picture Post’s photographers were “racehorses” in Hopkinson’s view, the rest of his staff consisted of an owner, handlers, trainers, jockeys, business managers, and even a stable boy or two. And as much as team spirit was put to use on behalf of the magazine, there were some on the team who would remain stars throughout their time there. Hutton, Man and Jacobson fell into that category early; and Hardy began emitting his own stellar light not long before he entered the army in 1942. Kee, Hastings, Cameron and many others would do so eventually, as well.

It’s been said often, a picture can be worth a thousand words; but seldom has that phrase meant a thousand words should accompany a good picture or series of pictures. And yet, that is exactly what the best picture magazines have concluded generally. A feature story isn’t complete unless the photos complement a decent text or the text complements a few well-chosen photos. Either way, photos and text are important when used together.

One picture worth more than a thousand words, and “equal” to that metaphorical figure, as well, is Bert Hardy’s photo of Prime Minister Nehru smelling a rose. Its status (on the cover of the February 8, 1947, issue of Picture Post) is deserved, and the cover captions (“‘We want to be friends with Britain’ -- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru” and “We Visit India -- Historic Pictures’) are suited to that photo and the essay inside. Harold Evans made a good point about what Hopkinson and Cameron have written about -- the lack of repose a photojournalist can enjoy on assignment. Evans wrote that a photographer seldom gets a second chance to snap the perfect photo(s). He noted: “The writer has a second chance, the photographer rarely. If the writer forgets a question, he can telephone or search the clippings. If he misses an event he can reconstruct it by interview. The photographer, to catch the story-telling moment, has to worry about light and angles and lenses, and reconcile the need to be unobtrusive with changing his camera position.” At Picture Post and elsewhere, photographers found it helps to have a companion writer on coverages. The give-and-take between interviewer and subject often presents opportunities for good pictures. Whether the subject is directing traffic in a busy workplace as he or she talks, or is simply using his or her hands to make a point in an office interview, there are chances for good story-telling pictures.

Writers and photographers have been working together since the birth of photography; and the situations that photo essays describe are ones writers and artists have been dealing with for centuries. “High technology” has been dealt with for countless generations; and “socialism” has been talked about since before the birth of Christ. Cultural, racial and socio-economic stigmas, and love, birth and death in all their tragicomedy have been dealt with, as well.
Photography, then, is happily wed to writing when “fresh” views of old issues and scenes are successfully “revisited.” It’s a curious business, putting words and pictures together; but that task was done well by Picture Post’s staff for 19 memorable years. “Stirring” was the key, as Hopkinson said, both at the time pictures and interviews were executed, and later, when two elements (words and pictures) became three, in effective layouts. These are some of the key elements making for photojournalistic magic, that and the people involved make a great deal of difference.
Chapter 28

Women on the Staff of Picture Post, Their Inestimable Contributions

“The cover of the first issue of Picture Post which hit the streets on 1 October 1938, featured two exuberant women leaping in the air. The final issue, published on 1 June 1957, showed the same two women. It was appropriate, for in the nineteen years of its existence Picture Post held up a mirror to British society and, in the reflections in its pages, it was often women who held centre-stage.(1)

“She must be free to leap nimbly through fire lines, dodge missiles at a strike, board a liner from a swaying ladder, write copy calmly in the heat of a Senate debate, or count the dead in a catastrophe. She never takes time to wonder why someone does not find her a chair, change the ribbon on her typewriter or hold smelling salts to her nose as she views a scene of horror.”(2)

“Within weeks we were down to five people trying to produce the magazine. Fortunately I was able to persuade Charles Fenby from the Oxford Mail to become assistant editor, bringing a much more thorough journalistic background than I had ever acquired, and a wide range of acquaintances in almost every field of life whom he could call on for articles or advice. Honor Balfour, who later stood for parliament as a Liberal, had been recruited already by Lorant….Our first women’s editor was Anne Scott-James…. There was plenty to do. The collapse of France had released tremendous vitality in Britain. Men and women gladly worked overtime by day and sat up ‘fire-watching’ all night.(3)

“Since the 1920s,… as women have moved into increasingly important roles throughout society, a growing number of women have taken up photography as a profession and as a means of artistic self-expression. Today, women are among the leaders in such diverse areas as portraiture, photojournalism, fashion photography, documentary photography, advertising photography, and fine-arts photography.”(4)

* * * * *

The first quotation above derives from the importance of women -- as subjects and as staff -- for Picture Post. They were essential in both roles -- more than that, they spread the egalitarian ethos of that magazine as no other magazine in Britain (and perhaps anywhere) had done before it. To be sure, the sex appeal of that first cover also helped sell men the magazine. The second quotation derives from an old, yet intriguing history written by Ishbel Ross, entitled Ladies of the Press (1936). It is mainly the account of women journalists in America up until that time, and is packed with spell-binding details -- from Nellie Bly’s trip around the world to Dorothy Thompson’s interview with Adolf Hitler (which she published in her book I Met Hitler). (5)

British women, too, were involved early on in journalism; so, when several women journalists were eventually taken on by Picture Post, it was not all that surprising to see them do well. Honor Balfour, whom Stefan Lorant hired at the magazine’s startup was its first woman reporter, while Anne Scott-James was its first women’s editor.
Honor Balfour, the journalist, broadcaster and Liberal politician, was modest about her achievements; there are no memoirs, no biographies, authorised or otherwise. The first pupil from her Liverpool school to go to Oxford, Balfour was also the first woman to be elected to one of the University's political societies (as President of the Liberal Club) and one of the handful of candidates who stood for Parliament during the Second World War (at Darwen in December 1943) in defiance of the wartime electoral truce. She was also one of the very few women to write and broadcast regularly on politics and current affairs for nearly 40 years, working as one of the founding journalists on Picture Post (the only woman on the original team), where she wrote “Lives of the Great Artists” among many contributions, as a regular contributor to the Observer and Guardian newspapers and BBC radio and, from the mid-1940s until her retirement, as a staff journalist first on Life and then on Time magazine.

Balfour was a resourceful, independent spirit and her papers (at Oxford’s Bodleian Library) include a packet relating to the Darwen by-election, annotated by Honor: ‘£193 gift from Mama - last of her savings & first on which I fought campaign’. And there is a photo of Honor wearing the gown and tiara she wore to report on Queen Elizabeth’s Coronation for Time (an assignment that involved a 6 am start and a climb up scaffolding to the press seats). She wrote about her travels to America, the Far East, India, and East Germany. Among her friends were Iain Macleod, Hugh Gaitskell and Hugh and Dingle Foot (who introduced her to African nationalist leaders Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya). She was close to the older generation -- as with Lady Megan Lloyd George, Lady Violet Bonham Carter and Clement Attlee. Reminiscing about the John F. Kennedy birthday party at which Marilyn Monroe sang 'Happy Birthday Mr President', she recalled Monroe as “quite, quite enchanting -- a human snowflake, light, dazzling, beautiful”. Ms. Balfour was living in Oxfordshire at her death, in 2001 at age 88.

Anne Eleanor Scott-James was born on April 5, 1913 (in the same year as Bert Hardy). She was educated at Somerville College, Oxford; and she long made her home at Rose Cottage, Aldworth, Reading, Berkshire, England. Very much interested in issues of concern to women and families while she worked for Picture Post, Scott-James made a reputation there as a compassionate and intelligent reader of consumer trends. “Why Women Don’t Have Babies: An Enquiry” (1943) and her reports on how to make fashionable use of clothing coupons or to deal with the black-out kept British spirits up during the Second World War; they also illustrated some of the potential problems for postwar Britain.

Bert Hardy spoke about Scott-James’s early days with the magazine: “Anne Scott-James was one of four women journalists working on the magazine at that time (1941). She was tall -- almost as tall as Mac Hastings, which I suppose was why she eventually married him -- elegant, and terribly refined. As a woman, she was put in charge of a Picture Post scheme for readers to knit woolly socks and mufflers for the armed forces, which we then presented to them. She was very conscientious: when I used to beg her to let me have a particularly nice scarf, she always said a very firm ‘no’.

“Eventually she took all these things up to Harwich to present to the crew of a ship moored there, and I went with her to photograph the occasion. The sailors were very touched, and as a gesture in return, gave us each a pack of 200 cigarettes…. I didn’t know she smoked, and carefully packed both lots of cigarettes in my bag…. Later, the two of us rode back together in the train. We were alone in the compartment, and I was rearranging my bag when I suddenly heard a woman’s voice saying: ‘You dirty rotten thieving bastard!’ At first I thought it must be someone in the next compartment -- I couldn’t believe that such an elegant lady could let go with such a mouthful. But it was Anne Scott-James all right. I gave her back her cigarettes very quickly.” (7)

Scott-James worked for Vogue; Picture Post (1941-45); Harper’s Bazaar; the Sunday Express; Beaverbrook Newspapers; and the Daily Mail, and wrote many articles as a freelancer. Her books include In the Mink, M. Joseph, 1952; Sissinghurst: The Making of a Garden, M. Joseph, 1975; (with former Picture Post staffer Osbert Lancaster) The Pleasure Garden: An Illustrated History of British Gardening, J. Murray, 1977; A Gardener’s Dozen, BBC Publications, 1980; and Gardening Letters to My Daughter: With Some Replies by Clare Hastings, St. Martin’s Press, 1991. (8) Scott-James knew she could fill a niche -- writing about issues and topics women have long felt either compelled by. And if Ishbel Ross predicted in 1936 that women should soon be in the fray (inclusive of combat reportage), then Scott-James also helped lead the way.
Indeed, just because women correspondents were not being sent off to combat zones, British troops were engaged in does not mean that women journalists back in Britain during World War II were doing any less for the Allied war effort. Women journalists were taking their turns as “fire-watchers,” or serving as volunteers of other sorts, during the Blitz and its immediate aftermath. From September 7, 1940, until mid-November, the Luftwaffe sent an average of 163 bombers over London each night and dropped a total of more than many thousands of tons of bombs and no fewer than 12,000 incendiary canisters. (9) But German losses continued to mount, while British morale remained firm. And the nation’s women, inclusive of its female journalists, helped.

Other women contributed their talents to Picture Post -- as full-time and part-time employees of the magazine, or as regular free-lancers -- especially writers Hilde Marchant, Marjorie Beckett, and Cynthia Judah; photographers Grace Robertson and Gerti Deutsch; and darkroom director Edith Kay(e). The Marchant articles mentioned previously -- “Africa Speaks in Manchester” (1945) and “Life in a Holiday Camp” (1946) -- ran the gamut, from the soft latter feature to the potentially explosive report out of Manchester on race relations. Marchant was gifted at bringing out “light” and “dark” elements of life.

Another story that stands out is the day in the life account of a Birmingham shopgirl, which Hardy photographed, called “Millions Like Her.” Bert Lloyd had been working as its writer when Tom Hopkinson was fired. As soon as Lloyd heard his editor had been let go over the Hardy-Cameron atrocities tale, he rushed back to London and turned in his resignation. Marchant then took over the writing of that essay.

Earlier (“Millions Like Her” was published in 1951), Marjorie Beckett had been busy depicting other dilemmas in postwar Europe. “Paris Forgets This Is 1947” is a critique of new Paris fashions, and as indicated already, Beckett seemed not fond of the rich, heavy fabrics French fashion designers were putting on the female backs of the world then. (10) And when she teamed up with Hardy on the “Grand Hotel” story, she proved her genuine femininity could add greatly to the journalistic approach.

As Hardy told it: “Marjorie Beckett was very refined, and quietly beautiful. When we arrived at the (Imperial Hotel), we looked around a bit, thinking of possible angles for the story. I got talking with the head chef and asked him all about this business of dressing for dinner. ‘You don’t want to worry about that,’ he said. ‘They’re just a bunch of toffee-nosed gits.’… That evening Marjorie got into her fine evening dress, and I put on my woolen sports jacket, and we went down to dinner. She looked lovely. When we sat down at our table, everyone was staring at us, thinking ‘who does he think he is, coming down to dinner in a sports jacket?’ but then the head chef came through the doors of the kitchen and straight to our table, to discuss our meal…. You could see the change over people’s faces: I must be a very important chap to wear a sports jacket to dinner and have a personal visit from the head chef. This happened every night we were there. No one found out that as soon as dinner was over, the chef and I used to nip around the corner to the local pub for a pint together.” (Their story was published in April 1947.) (11)

Cynthia Judah also wrote articles for the magazine. From Picture Post, then, she went on to a successful television career; and she married (in 1960) and gave birth to three children by Robert Kee, before their divorce in 1989. (12)

In terms of photo output, there were several key female members of staff. Grace Robertson and Edith Kay stood out. And the photographer Gerti Deutsch also took some memorable pictures for the magazine -- one notable image, of a large woman laughing over a cup of tea, was used at the outset of Gavin Weightman’s Picture Post Britain. (13) Grace Robertson -- Fyfe’s daughter -- was a very great photographer. She was a regular freelancer for the magazine from 1950 until its demise. Her book Grace Robertson, Photojournalist of the 50’s, tells an evocative story about what life was like in postwar Britain for women journalists.

For a country supposedly exhausted by the Second World War, there was a lot of life in Britain during the 1950s! Perhaps the high points of Robertson’s book, then, are two essays done for Picture Post and Life on mothers’ pub outings. There, the photographer accompanied groups of generally overweight, middle-aged mothers into the countryside as they spent fun-filled days away from their families. These women drank,
danced, and aired their knickers. Some of the photos convey an almost Bacchanalian abandon. Also, Robertson’s text describes her rising career as one of the few women in photojournalism then. The unforced, warm, and compassionate tone of her words is reiterated in the mood of her photos -- which put one in mind of the works of the great Life photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt or even master storyteller, Charles Dickens. Robertson’s photo essays, whose subjects ranged from childbirth to Welsh sheep shearing, are characterized by textured emotions and responses. Very often, dead-center in a Robertson shot, is an active human being.

In a booklet entitled The Picture Post Portfolio: Celebrating 150 Years of Photography, produced by the Hulton Picture Company, two of Robertson’s images are included. One of them was also reproduced in Robert Kee’s 50th anniversary tribute, The Picture Post Album. It shows a group of children scouting grassy terrain, with woods in the background. Kee’s caption says: “A picture for which no room could now be found: This wonderful picture of children on Wimbledon Common by Grace Robertson (not a join-up as could be supposed) was taken in 1954 but remained unused until the paper’s demise in 1957.” The spaciousness of its subjects’ placement makes the photo unique. The other Grace Robertson photo in the Hulton Picture Company booklet reveals two women on a pub outing. One of the women sits in the other’s lap wearing a floral crown, and as the pair join hands (in song?), they laugh mightily. It’s reminiscent of Gerti Deutsch’s similar photo already mentioned. Robertson and Deutsch were women who were and worked with some of the best photojournalists alive. They can be considered in the same category with the famous American photojournalists Margaret Bourke-White, Eve Arnold, Susan Meiselas, and Mary Ellen Mark, for they provided their viewers with compassionate views of what it was like to grow up during complicated years of the 20th century.

But the work of men and women photographers alike would have gone for naught on the magazine, if it had not been for the wizardry of Edith Kaye, the director of the Picture Post darkrooms. The story of how she got that job warrants retelling. Born in Germany, Kaye arrived in Britain at the same time as many of the first 35mm cameramen, like Kurt Hubschman (Hutton), Felix Baumann (Man), and Tim Gidal. It seems Gidal had done a story using 35mm film, and was looking for someone to process it, when Kaye’s name was mentioned. He telephoned her and made an appointment to meet her under the clock at Victoria Station.

Kaye, slightly worried by this strange approach, went along, but took a friend with her. Gidal gave her the films, and she went away and processed them. When Gidal went proudly along to Editor Stefan Lorant and asked him what he thought of his pictures, Lorant looked at them closely and said: ‘Never mind your story, who did your printing for you?’ Lorant contacted Kaye straightaway and hired her to run the Picture Post darkrooms, where she remained until the magazine closed in 1957. By that time she had taught many talented printers their jobs.

Another story connected with Kaye relates to some unflattering pictures Bert Hardy took in the early 1950s. Hardy wrote: “Back in London, not long before Christmas of 1951, I was at the Empress Club in Piccadilly. The Duke of Edinburgh was the host at a party given in aid of the National Playing Fields Association, and among the guests were Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. For some reason, I was the only photographer allowed in. Naturally I wanted to get pictures of the husband of our future queen, while, just as naturally, he tried to avoid being photographed. In the end it almost turned into a sort of game, with me dodging from pillar to pillar while he tried to keep out of my viewfinder. However, I did manage to get some interesting pictures of him dancing rather closely with Ava Gardner. To my disappointment, when Edith Kaye in the Picture Post darkroom developed the pictures, she said there was only one thing to do with them, and destroyed the negatives.” Only the most compromising images were done away with, though, and Hardy used two pictures of the party’s three principals in his autobiography.

Also, a good look at the photos in two collections of Picture Post images, The Picture Post Album and Picture Post Britain, indicates women staffers did a lot. There, one can find valuable documents of de-rationing in Britain, taken by Grace Robertson. Three views stand out. One photo (of a truck driver throwing candy off the back of his truck) is used on a single page, along with a facsimile of a February 4, 1953, letter from Batger’s in Clapham Common, announcing sweets will be given away to hundreds of
children to celebrate de-rationing. The store’s publicity manager noted: “There is a story for you in this.” The second photo shows a shopgirl apparently dispensing sweets inside a store. Eager children and one or two interested adults crowd round to take advantage. The third photo shows a man pointing towards a side of beef, with a man in white coat (a butcher?) and two men in suits and hats standing alongside them. Everyone seems interested in the man pointing, not necessarily in the side of beef. All three photos are rich in historical detail. Aside from the clear value in seeing the types of clothing people wore then, there’s also the relevance of the large-format camera a newsman inside the candy truck was using; the corner of an old scale in the candy store; the lights and gleaming hooks in the meat-plant; the hairstyles in all three photos; and the hats people wear -- from business hats worn by the men to scout (or school) caps worn by the youngsters.(18) Another Robertson image worth comment is her photo of a cub scout making the scout sign. That picture appears in The Picture Post Album with the Robert Kee caption: “…they often managed to look less glum.”

Meanwhile, Gerti Deutsch was busy earlier in the magazine’s history. In Kee’s book, two that catch the eye are her views of two different women knitting -- one of them in somewhat plain dress, the other in stylish coat, hat, and spectacles. We also see Deutsch’s photo of a bald man changing a baby’s diaper. That picture is placed along with images of togetherness, and with the continuing Kee caption reading from the previous page to that one: “Picture Post caught characters in a moment of their own…without imprisoning them within it.” The man’s handling of the child and diaper is ever so delicate. The man balances the child on his lap, as he sits upright in a wooded chair. It is a marvel the baby doesn’t fall off.

Another Deutsch photo is her view of Dame Gladys Cooper (1888-1971). Cooper, who was a stage and screen star of great appeal, made two films in the same year (1948) as the photo was taken: “The Homecoming” and “The Pirate.” Cooper’s face launched correspondences, apparently, as 400 different retail postcards graced by her likeness appeared during her lifetime.(19)

And yet the pictures in Picture Post wouldn’t have been worth half as much without the apt writing accompanying them. Scott-James’s words in “Why Women Don’t Have Babies: An Enquiry” ring as true for some parts of our world today as in 1943 (November 13): “…something more…has got to happen if the larger family is to come into fashion. We have got to feel that children are a good thing.”

A different topic inspired Hilde Marchant on the race issue in “Africa Speaks in Manchester” (November 10, 1945), as she drove her argument home with tough language. “It was Wallace Johnson, the negro Trade Union leader, who put the whole case most sanely,” she wrote. “‘We turn,’ he said, ‘to the British Labour Movement to help us, and thereby help themselves. We do not want to be cheap labour, driven in competition against British workers.’ Marchant replied: “To such reasoning, this country will not be unsympathetic. But to creating a black bloc, to the use of force advocated by hotheads of the Federation, there will be immediate white hostility.”

And how can we neglect Marjorie Beckett’s “Paris Forgets This Is 1947”? “Straight from the indolent and wealthy years before the 1914 war come this year’s much-discussed Paris fashions,” she wrote. “They are launched upon a world which has not the material to copy them -- and whose women have neither the money to buy, the leisure to enjoy, nor in some designs even the strength to support, these masses of elaborate material.”(20)

The women writers, photographers, editors, technicians, researchers, and business and clerical support personnel of the magazine made headway against any sexual discrimination they may have encountered at Picture Post or beyond its offices; and even if Bert Hardy did try to “steal” Scott-James’s cigarettes (and got caught), neither did the men on the staff take the women for granted -- at least not for long, and not in the end. And the men learned quite a few things from the women staffers: They learned good taste, manners, fellowship, and positive professional and personal practices, generally.

To be sure, there were problems among Picture Post’s staff at times -- as with any modern periodical. But there was also sufficient insight gained into the workings of human nature to warrant several books on the
subject. “A woman’s touch” is not something to be scoffed at generally; And the men who knew their business at Picture Post knew that they needed the support of both female staff and female subjects to bring about the successful publication and sale of the Post. The well-chosen word, the expertly taken photo, and the shrewdly compassionate appraisal of other staff and subjects by the magazine’s women were elements contributing to the character of Picture Post. Throughout its pages and history, female staff was especially relevant because female subjects were essential for the magazine.

The history of Honor Balfour, Anne Scott-James, Hilde Marchant, Marjorie Beckett, Cynthia Judah, Gerti Deutsch, Grace Robinson, and Edith Kaye, among many, were only part of the incredible mix that made things work at Picture Post.
Chapter 29

The Crucial Role of Bert Hardy at Picture Post (1938-57)

“Think of Picture Post and you are almost certain to think of Bert Hardy; conversely, think of Bert Hardy and you think of Picture Post. The two are practically synonymous -- it might almost be said that Bert Hardy was Picture Post….“ (1)

“Unfortunately, the rain that summer (1953) didn’t stop, even for my first family holiday since the fateful one I took before the Korean War. This time I took Dora and the boys on a camping trip to Gairloch…. Toward the end of the holiday, I realised that it had been costing me a lot of money. I reckoned that I had to make some money to pay for it….There seemed to be plenty of sheep around here, and plenty of awkward rocks. In that case, I thought, the sheep must often get stuck and need to be rescued. I had my story…. I fixed the whole thing up and produced a story. When I got back to London, I showed it to (Editor) Frank Dowling. He said he couldn’t pay me anything for it, because I was a full-time employee of the paper. I pointed out that I had been on holiday at the time. He said that it didn’t change anything, although I could claim expenses for the story if I liked. Without giving him time to reconsider, I immediately presented my claim for two weeks’ stay for the family in a bed-and-breakfast, plus liquid refreshment and mileage. There must have been a few raised eyebrows in the accounts department, but it was passed. It was my greatest-ever expenses coup.” (2)

“Paris Match was very much our competition, and there was a rota system in effect. Only two Frenchmen and two of us were allowed to go in; but the French newsmen were above the rules. They had twenty, we would have two, and the French police were making sure that’s all we had….I had the Leica hidden under my jacket, which was too large, but which covered up my camera well. I was wearing brown shoes, and I hoped that the police didn’t ask any questions. I waited till a herd of French dignitaries arrived, dressed very well. They were terribly courteous, and I went in with them. There, I saw this fabulous scene….I started to take pictures from above -- and along -- and down. And then I took (a picture of Queen Elizabeth entering the Paris Opera balcony stairs). Back at Picture Post, 15 pictures went into one join-up. I got a double-page spread, and the French didn’t get anything.” (3)

“(Bert Hardy) was on the staff of Picture Post until 1957, except for service as an Army photographer from 1942 to 1946, during which he recorded the horrors of the concentration camps….After the closure of Picture Post he was much in demand for advertising until his retirement in 1967. In both war and peace his portrayal of ordinary people was outstanding, and his records of London under the Blitz rank among the finest of the period.” (4)

* * * * *

Bert Hardy was “with” Picture Post from its very start, despite not being hired as one of its regular freelancers until 1940, because his pictures -- if not at the very beginning, his name -- were known to its staff from the fourth issue to the last. Hardy was born on May 19, 1913, in a neo-Dickensian district of
London (the Elephant and Castle, near Blackfriars), the oldest child to an economically disadvantaged family with seven children. Hardy came up the hard way, teaching himself the fundamentals of photography while working -- from age 14, when he left school -- as a delivery boy and lab assistant for a London picture processor (Central Photographic Service). One day, he got into a bicycle accident, and after winning compensation for his broken wheel, he decided he needed to take up a sport. The only sport he knew was cycling, so he joined Norwood Paragon, the toughest all-male cycling club in England.

Before long, he was taking pictures of cyclists, and making extra money. He got so good at this, his work began to appear in a new magazine, The Bicycle. Hardy didn’t content himself only with pictures of racing cyclists, good as his pictures were. He also composed beautiful landscapes and “softer” pictures (e.g., of young women cyclists). One of the latter was used on a cover of the magazine; its caption reads: “’…on the far horizon…’ Two charming cyclists outlined against the sky.”

At age 23, Hardy married his first sweetheart, Dora, and took a job with William Davis’s General Photographic Agency (GPA). His work was soon used by the Daily Mirror, Sunday Graphic, Weekly Illustrated, Sunday Express, Daily Sketch, Illustrated London News, and eventually, Life and Picture Post (one of his earliest essays for the latter magazine was titled “A Fish Goes to Hospital”).

By early 1940, Tom Hopkinson was about to take over editorship of Picture Post. Employing a full-time editorial staff of only five journalists then, Assistant Editor Hopkinson was interested in Hardy’s background as a news photographer. Besides Honor Balfour, Felix Man, Kurt Hutton (all three already with the magazine), Macdonald Hastings, Maurice Edelman, Charles Fenby, A.L. Lloyd, and Anne Scott-Jones, the new editor grabbed up Hardy. Hopkinson wrote, “When Bert Hardy came in to see me he was in his twenties and already an experienced cameraman. To try him out I offered him a difficult assignment. The Blitz had started and I asked him to take pictures inside street shelters. No flash must be used and the pictures must make the reader feel he was inside with the shelterers in semi-darkness while bombs were falling. Bert passed the test triumphantly; I at once took him on the staff and he was soon a mainstay of the magazine.”

Hardy was pleased, too, as he let Picture Post Art Editor Harry Deverson know in a November 1956 article for Camera World. “Recently I asked (Hardy) what it felt like, that day (March 3, 1940) when Tom Hopkinson offered him the job. ‘I was flabbergasted,’ he replied. ‘I never wanted anything as much as I wanted that -- never, never. It was the dream of a whole bloomin’ lifetime come true.’ The exaggeration was pardonable, for Picture Post and Bert Hardy were surely made for one another, and the join-up was quite a break for both.”

Hardy was first hired in March 1940 as a full-time freelancer for Picture Post; and he was soon doing more than his share of work. Hardy noted, “By late October 1941, I was working flat out, seven days a week, for the paper.” His early coverage was very good, and his work thereafter even better. And by the time he’d finished up his tour of duty, after signing on to photograph World War II with the British Army (inclusive of “Operation Overlord,” the Rhine Crossing, the Allied liberation of Belsen, and the hanging of Japanese war criminals), he had made a positive name for himself. His war coverage put the name of “Hardy” and Picture Post into even better relation, for some of his Army work appeared in the magazine; and when he returned to Picture Post in 1946, Hardy was ready to take on new challenges.

He wrote: “Within a few days of arriving back in England, I got in touch with Tom Hopkinson and we arranged to have lunch together at the Bel Meuniere in Charlotte Street, just like old times. He immediately offered me a job as a full-time employee of Picture Post at a salary of 1,000 (pounds) a year. Although it was a lot of money in those days, I wasn’t quite sure that it was enough to cover all my expenses, so I said I’d like to go and talk to my accountant about it. When we met again a week later, I’d found out that a thousand would be enough; but Tom had talked to the Directors, and was empowered to offer me 1,500 (pounds) a year. It was an offer I couldn’t refuse.”
Hardy performed well the next 11 years with the magazine. Covering six or seven more wars -- including his famous contributions (with James Cameron) to the coverage of the Korean conflict -- he ranged far and wide for Picture Post. And he won numerous prizes -- including three Encyclopaedia Britannica Awards for his picture sequences. But his most significant photo-achievement may have been in championing what has since been called a “populist idea of Britain.”(9)

During his working life, Hardy was looked on as a photojournalist devoted to his craft, with a gift for being in the right place at the right moment, and for making memorable pictures. “One” such photo emerged from his work on the day Queen Elizabeth paid her first official visit to France (and to the Paris Opera). Hardy narrated in Bert Hardy: My Life: “The Queen was due to visit the Paris Opera, and I wanted to be there to take some pictures, although officially I wasn’t supposed to be. The French Press had been cheating like mad (on the rota system), I knew. I decided that it was about time the British Press did a bit of cheating.

“I had my usual difficulty getting hold of a dinner jacket. The only one I was able to borrow was several sizes too big, but that suited me: I was able to hide my Leica inside it. As for my brown shoes, I just hoped that no one would look down that far. The next little difficulty was getting into the Opera. I didn’t have a permit, so I waited outside on the pavement until a group of French dignitaries wearing grand plumed hats, who had got out of various cars, came towards the entrance. I sidled up and joined them. I was appearing to get on fairly well with my few words of French, when they all moved to go inside. I moved with them. The police saluted, and everybody bowed (I hoped they didn’t notice my shoes), and I was in.

“I quickly looked for the best vantage point to get a good picture of the Queen coming in. I went up the magnificent staircase, and found a little box by the side where the occupants made room for me, thinking I was an official Press man. It was a fabulous panorama, and I began to realise that the scene was just too large for a standard lens to take in. The only thing to do was make a massive ‘join-up.’ Before the Queen actually entered, I started taking shots of the vast entrance hall, working slowly from left to right, and from top to bottom, and making sure that the edges of each shot coincided as far as possible with some feature like the edge of a balcony or pillar. In all I took about twenty separate shots, and the last shot of all showed the Queen climbing the stairs. After I sent the film back, I telephoned Sheila (his soon-to-be-wife) to explain to her what I had done, so she could tell the make-up man how to piece the jigsaw together. The finished picture was the most ambitious example ever of the technique I had learned from William Davis, and was published on 20 April 1957.”(10) Six weeks later, Picture Post closed; but Hardy had performed as brilliantly for it as any cameraman ever for any magazine. He was as talented and shrewd as Alfred Eisenstaedt, W.E. Smith, Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, David Douglas Duncan, Kurt Hutton, Felix Man, Bill Brandt, Tim Gidal, Margaret Bourke-White, Edward Steichen, John Loengard, Eve Arnold and Annie Leibovitz. Perhaps he was a bit of each all rolled into one.

But Bert Hardy’s influence goes beyond that of the picture magazines. Today, he is considered one of the great recorders of social conditions, in the tradition of John Thomson, Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine. “He belongs,” one critic wrote, “to a British tradition which favours anecdote and human incident. He pictures people as characters, and his work is a rich source for any study of the folk-life of Britain, a modern continuation of the graphic tradition of Hogarth and Rowlandson.” Though in his work he ranged over a vast field, making pictures over half the world and of many of the great people of his day, Hardy always returned to the individual, the ordinary man or woman and -- with a special perception but no sentimentality -- the child. He had to feel and to make contact; it was impossible for him to be just a lens.

Later, after a second successful career in advertising photography, he moved to the countryside (although he still ran his own printing firm in London, he missed taking the history-making pictures he of old: “I’ve never used a light meter or a range-finder in my life. It’s not my style. What would I like to photograph now? People. Faces. That man over there talking with his hands. Ordinary things. Life happening. I’ve always got on with ordinary people.”(11)

One need only have a glance through Hardy’s autobiography to see that “ordinary” people played a key role in his success. From the early pictures of his first family -- especially the images of his father (Albert “Seagull” Hardy) and mother (Blanche Hardy) -- to the first pictures he made of Britain in the 1930s, on
through the war years, the postwar aftershocks, the more affluent 1950s, the 1960s (when he was an advertising photographer, and made such famous campaigns as the “Strand Man” for Strand Cigarettes, “Go Electric” for the Electrical Development Association, and the “Correct-Shape Toothbrush” for the Wisdom Company), and the more recent decades (when he concentrated on personal photos), Bert Hardy emphasized his “common origins.”

The perfect “rags-to-riches” or “poor boy makes good” tale, Hardy never knew what it was to not be at work on some project or another. Tom Hopkinson saw that special “about important business” quality in Hardy, which may be why he hired him. Hardy enjoyed his day-to-day life as much as anyone. In 1964, three years before he officially retired as a professional photographer, Bert and Sheila Hardy, took up farming on their 50-acre estate in Surrey. Bert detailed their “rude awakening” in his autobiography: “We moved in at the end of April (1964). We had to learn everything about farming from scratch. Our bible was Primrose McConnell’s Agricultural Notebook (a 19th century text on farming). There were pigs which had to be weighed every week (until they reached the ideal weight for sausages), and half a dozen calves which broke out occasionally through the rotting fences. Sheila had to learn how to use the milking machine, though she eventually found that she preferred to milk the cows by hand. We also had sheep and horses, and meadows to look after.”(12)

Bert Hardy came a long way, then, even since the days when he and Dora Hardy had struggled with their family (their sons are Terry and Michael Hardy) to make ends meet with the modest income he made under William Davis at GPA. Hardy married a new wife eventually -- Sheila -- and she proved every bit as good a wife as Bert Hardy needed then. Sheila had worked for Picture Post as a picture researcher, and they fell in love over time. When they married, it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, that old line from “Cascablanca,” whose female lead, Ingrid Bergman, Hardy photographed in the 1950s. And it grew as time passed by.

But if Hardy had once been a photographer having to make ends meet by fairly “ordinary means”; how was it we’ve labeled his role on Picture Post “crucial”? Perhaps he was the leading photographer on the magazine for many years; but weren’t some of the other photographers, the writers, the editors, the technicians, or the owner of that famous publication just as critical to its success as Bert Hardy?

No man or organization is all things to all people; but Bert Hardy came as close to completing his assignments perfectly as any performer on Picture Post’s staff. As we’ve written, Hardy was born near Blackfriars Bridge, in a portion of London known as the Elephant and Castle. How he came to take one of his most famous pictures there -- the view of a Canadian convict just released from prison, in the arms of a prostitute, used by the magazine and in the “Family of Man” Exhibit -- reveals the way Hardy worked, even when he was not under the tremendous pressure of war or civil conflict.

Hardy told that story in “How Hulton and the Hungarian Mad Picture History”: “We were all expected to have ideas, think up stories at a Tuesday morning conference. A particular Tuesday morning, I was sitting in this conference, and I put up the idea of doing a story on the Elephant and Castle, and Tom (Hopkinson) said, ‘OK, right, go and do it.’

“We (Bert Lloyd and I) arrived at the bloomin’ Elephant and Castle. In those days, there were trams, and so on, and murky old foggy days, and we arrived there about two o’clock in the afternoon. We stood in the middle of the Elephant, and we wondered: ‘What the hell are we going to do? Why did we ever suggest it?’ We walked around, and I did a few shots -- nothing that meant anything, but sort of using the camera.

“Then, one day, we were walking round the back streets of the Elephant, and a voice came from across the road, from an old terraced house, of a rather stout lady, who says: ‘How about taking my picture, mate?’ So I said, ‘OK, OK,’ came across, and took a picture of her -- not that I wanted to, but it was a contact. And then I said to her: ‘What’s it like at the back of these places, dear?’ She said: ‘Well, come and have a look.’ It was yards all going on and on, and all washing hanging up. And then, through a window, I saw a couple sitting on a settee making love -- not actually making love, but they were very much in love, it seemed, and
I managed to get into the room. I asked if I could go inside, and, somehow or other, took this picture, which became a famous picture, and they couldn’t care less about me. This was the start.”(13)

Tom Hopkinson wrote in Bert Hardy: Photojournalist for the British Arts Council: “Many people have had the ambition to be a press cameraman, just as many have had the ambition to be a foreign correspondent for a newspaper. They see the life as one of adventure and prestige -- going around the world, meeting important people, being in on events that are making history.” It surely was that sort of life for Bert Hardy; but it also was a life with a rough and tumble beginning.

Perhaps that’s why Hardy was able to man the camera “turrets,” even when live ammunition was flying all around him, as it was at the Battle of Inchon, when the Press boat led the attack and hit the wrong beach -- a beach “softened up” by U.S. naval artillery. Hopkinson’s description of what it takes to be a great photojournalist bears repeating. Hopkinson first outlined the categories of writer and photographer by indicating their preferred instruments: the pen and typewriter in the first case, and the camera in the second. Then he noted: “In a troubled situation, the start, say, of a riot, a reporter can escape attention by appearing to be paying none. Walk rapidly as though on your way somewhere; avoid catching anyone’s eye; don’t stop and stare, but take in what you have to take in while on the move. Probably no one will stop you -- but bring out a camera and see what happens. It’s like striking a match in a gas-laden cellar. Similarly, when the bullets are flying, the reporter can keep his head down and take notes -- actual or mental, but the cameraman has to take pictures. He has to stand up and move around. He has, literally, to stick his neck out.”(14)

For all his courage and skill, is it true Bert Hardy was Picture Post, in Leslie Shaw’s words? Perhaps another episode helps answer that question a bit better. Hopkinson told the story of how Hardy and James Cameron had come knocking on his door to volunteer for assignment to Korea right after the death of Picture Post war correspondent Stephen Schimanski over the Sea of Japan. Hardy told it a little differently in “Bert Hardy: Anything for a Story”: “That July (1950), I took a holiday: the first for some time. My wife and the two boys and a French boy who was staying with us went camping in Northumberland. We had a team in Korea at the time, and I couldn’t get Korea out of my mind.

“One day I drove into the village near where we were camping, to buy some groceries. I also bought a newspaper: and the first thing that I read was that the Picture Post journalist, Stephen Schimanski, had been killed in an air accident. I rang the office at once, and spoke to Paddy Brosnan, the Editor’s secretary. Tom Hopkinson, the Editor, was out at Watford, putting the paper to bed. I asked her to tell him that I would like to go, if he wanted me to.

“The next day, the telephone rang in the public call box in the village, and somebody somehow found me to answer it. It was Tom. He told me that he hadn’t liked to ask another of his staff to go, and had therefore arranged for a photographer from Magnum -- the association of European photographers, inspired by the late Bob Capa -- to go. But I could go, he said, if he could get the arrangements changed.

“I drove straight back to London, and met Jimmy Cameron, the journalist with whom I would be going. We left on August 12, 1950, and arrived in Tokyo at dawn on the fifteenth. Straight away we went to the Correspondent’s Club in Chinbun Alley, and got ourselves accredited. It was very much an American set-up then; we felt a little out of place.’”(15)

In other words, the famous Hardy-Cameron coverage of that war began on an anti-heroic note, with two British journalists arriving in a part of the world they did not feel at home in, at a time when the rest of the world was wondering if the Korean “police action” was to be the start of World War III. That coverage would presage the end for Picture Post, because Hopkinson would be fired after the quashing of the already-mentioned South Korean atrocities tale by Owner Edward Hulton. But it also would highlight a strength of the magazine at Inchon. Key Picture Post staff were, practically speaking, as unafraid of controversy or physical danger as any journalists could intelligently be (and there was controversy, not to mention danger, even in the Inchon piece: the U.N. role there was not seen in a completely positive light).
Hardy, then, led the way as often as any Picture Post staff member could -- in the field, where it counted most. Hopkinson was just as fearless, but he took on the Directors and the owner of the magazine, while Hardy, Cameron, Schimanski and other reporters “waged war” with the more physically risky and spiritually corrupting “real world” -- even if Hopkinson and Hulton were also susceptible to those latter challenges at times.

Bert Hardy always had a kind of blunt humor and determination (his skillful darkroom work for his 1940 air raid pictures indicates his ingenuity too. He even admitted, “Ideas were part of it (the job), not just going out and doing what you’re supposed to do.” He was intellectually shrewd enough to see when his ideas could work, in a photographic scene or a conference room. He added, in 1981: “The whole emotion of the magazine came from the photographers. Tom Hopkinson may have said that we needed to be pampered and fed and looked after and made fit. But no matter how good the writer might be, that meant nothing if the pictures weren’t any good. The writers helped themselves, (then, when they helped us photographers) at Picture Post.”(16)

Hardy once said, “I never had the guts to work by myself,” but he did have the “guts” to do everything he could for his employers. Along the way, he even added to his personal income. That’s one thing about Bert Hardy the casual observer noticed immediately: He knew how to keep track of his pennies -- hence, his “greatest-ever expenses coup,” cited at chapter-outset. For as much as socialism dictated the political ideas of Picture Post over the years, it’s also important to realize that each member of that publication’s staff tried hard to make a decent living for himself or herself. Hardy did a little better than most, but only through hard work. And as talented as he was, he would never have accomplished as much as he did, if it were not for many long hours of practice and experiment, many years of personal growth, and the raising of a family and reputation or two.

Hardy became catalyst and role model for the great adventures the staff of Picture Post would live through after Stefan Lorant left for America. Bert Hardy was a man, then, who could pull faces at the moon, as he noted he did as a child. And if the Korean atrocities tale was to be Tom Hopkinson’s undoing at Picture Post, he would also take satisfaction in having directed his staff well once again, with the Hardy-Cameron Inchon report. Hopkinson wrote: “As I turned over Hardy’s prints when they first came out of the darkroom, I knew that I had never had a better picture story in my hands, and decided that no one but myself should select the photographs to be used and lay them out.” We should all be as fortunate as Tom Hopkinson was to work with Greatness at Picture Post, and Bert Hardy, not to mention his colleagues, represented that Greatness.”(17)
Chapter 30

The Life and Death of a First-Rate Picture Magazine -- Picture Post

“…suddenly and without warning, (Edward Hulton decided to close the magazine. I suppose we had all realised that the quality of the paper wasn’t what it had been, but the details of the declining circulation figures had been kept from us. A letter went up on the notice board, and with a sense of shock the staff sat round and watched the announcement on the television news.”(1)

“It is neither the point in space, nor the instant in time, at which something happens that has physical reality, but only the event itself.”(2)

“I’ve always understood Hulton and his wife owned about three-quarters of the equity in Hulton Press. Therefore, in the strict sense of ownership, I hold that he was entitled to withhold a story, if he thought that it was biased in a way that would affect public attitudes, and I think he can make out a case for saying that that was so. But, in killing that Korean story, he killed something much more important. He killed a myth which had come to be taken as fact; because, until Sir Edward Hulton changed his political views, the myth had never been questioned: namely, that Picture Post’s editor and his staff were editorially, completely free.”(3)

“It is cowardly and defeatist to put the blame (for Picture Post’s demise) on competition from television; all commercial ventures have to stand up on their merits to competition with rival media….Picture Post has failed over these later years because it has been deprived of its initial sense of purpose, and in consequence has been forced to snatch at successive shifts and improvisations in the attempt to hang on to a circulation failing for lack of resolute direction.”(4)

“The television age spelt the end for Picture Post magazine. It had stood at one time for ideals and a new Britain, but ceased publication at the dawn of the age of affluence. Britain was becoming stylish….It was not long before nearly every home had a television, and a wonder of the age -- colour TV -- was spoken of.”(5)

* * * *

At present, it seems that everyone who is yet alive, and who ever was associated in any way with Picture Post, has an opinion about how and why it died. And one now-deceased staff member even asked the question: “Would a magazine such as Picture Post provide an effective means for influencing public opinion on the urgent problems of today?”(6) That is a fair question; but one can also ask: “Isn’t it possible that a great magazine like Picture Post died for a combination of related reasons?” We think that it did go out of business for many reasons, and that it might have survived, if those reasons had been nullified, or alleviated.
It may or may not have been something of a shock to the staff that was still keeping that magazine going in mid-1957 to wake up one day to discover Picture Post would no longer be published. Those professionals were still putting together a halfway relevant product, despite the odds and in spite of the fact the magazine was not as effective by 1957 in meeting the needs of “Basic Brits” as it had been during the war years and right after. At the same time, there had been many signs of Picture Post’s eventual demise. Circulation figures were known to some of the staff, even if Bert Hardy and others were apparently kept in the dark about them then. Circulation losses were especially dramatic after 1956.

In mid-1950, sales had been almost 1.4 million copies per week. By mid-1951, they had fallen off slightly to 1,255,000 per week; and by mid-1952, they were more like 935,000 per week. They remained not far below the crucial one million mark until 1956, when they started to melt away, and by end of May 1957, when the magazine folded, a printing paper reported that “Picture Post’s average sale in recent weeks is understood to have fallen below 600,000.”(7)

In a related matter, many of the top journalists had already moved on to careers in television. Besides the loss of “troublemaker” James Cameron to it, the magazine also had to make do without other TV-employed former staff members like Macdonald Hastings, Fyfe Robertson, Charles “Slim” Hewitt, Trevor Philpot, Kenneth Allsop, Cynthia Judah, Frank Pocklington and Gordon Watkins, just to name a few.(8) If television was an “electronic thief” with regard to staff attrition at Picture Post, it also “robbed” the magazine of many readers. People were very much taken up with that new technological marvel that came into British homes from 1955 onwards. They still are very much taken up with it -- although today, it is mainly a color-cable “commonplace,” and less a wondrous and revolutionary development.

Commercials were being sold over “the tube,” as well, and because of that, the advertising pounds that once had flowed into Picture Post and other magazines had to be recovered by other means -- e.g., by changing editorial content and formats in such a way as to gain more readers and cut costs. Picture Post did not activate those means properly, though, to warrant continuing influence. Moreover, the system of revolving editors following Tom Hopkinson’s removal proved not to be the solution to the waywardness that began to creep into the production of the magazine. Ted Castle, his first replacement, had lasted for not much more than the staff-suggested six months agreed to by Edward Hulton at the time of Hopkinson’s sack. According to Hopkinson, Castle was followed by Frank Dowling (an advertising man), Brian Chapman (who came to Picture Post from the Daily Mirror and News Chronicle), Jack Hargraves (from Lilliput), and Len Spooner (from Illustrated). Hopkinson also noted: “In addition John Pearce, as joint general manager, took the chair for a while, as did Edward Hulton himself. A Polish gentleman was said also to have sat in it, while towards the end decisions were being taken -- if reports were correct -- by a consortium of all surviving editors blending their talents in conference together.”(9)

What the stable editorial control of Stefan Lorant and Hopkinson had brought to the magazine for 12 good years was a general sense of clear direction. And if Hopkinson would have been retained, perhaps that directedness would not have suffered so much -- despite the storm clouds that had gathered round Hopkinson’s head even before 1950.

The type of situation Hopkinson enjoyed for as long as he did must be appreciated. He had almost full editorial control over what went into Picture Post from 1940 to 1950. In fact, he had so much control that he could hire whomever he thought fit for staff -- including MPs -- and use whatever staff materials proved vital to his reader-education program of literary and photographic advancement. On the first score, in particular, Hopkinson held sway. He once wrote semi-romantically: “In those days journalism as a profession had not yet been structured and an editor enjoyed much freedom as to whom he employed, subject of course to his proprietor’s agreement. When a young student just leaving his Welsh university wrote asking for a job as a reporter, I replied asking for samples of his writing. All he sent me were poems, but they were remarkable enough to secure him a three months’ trial, after which everyone agreed we should keep him on. We knew him as John Ormond Thomas and were sorry when after only a few years he returned to Wales to work for the BBC and to make his name -- now John Ormond without the Thomas -- as a poet and a television producer. Some thirty years later in his programme, ‘The Life and Death of Picture Post,’ he would pronounce an eloquent requiem for the magazine.”(10)
Many observers today -- objectively or subjectively motivated -- state that the beginning of the end for Picture Post occurred when Hulton stopped the presses on the South Korean atrocities tale reported by Hardy and Cameron, and when he negated the editorial control of Hopkinson over subject matter by firing him. But try as one might to accept the myth of the hard-pressed, yet fiercely independent editor “just doing his job,” there is another, different side to this story, as well.

Robert Kee wrote that Hulton may not have been sure what he was getting when he began Picture Post in October of 1938. In effect, “he was buying the gleam in (Stefan) Lorant’s eye,” but he still had the right to final control over what went into his privately-owned magazine, should he choose to exercise it, which he did not do generally with a heavy hand. Kee continued: “…with the backing of Hulton’s considerable financial resources Lorant now saw himself in a position to implement in Britain those ideas of photo-journalism which had been the hallmark of the German magazines and of which Hopkinson had already glimpsed the potential. Lorant had no difficulty in persuading Hopkinson to leave Odhams to become his Assistant Editor at Hulton Press. Within less than three months of hectic, even chaotic, planning in which the title itself was until quite late uncertain (it was at one time to have been called Lo!); and after a lively advertising campaign and the pledging of part of Hulton’s personal fortune with the bank, Picture Post appeared on the stands for the first time on 1 October 1938.”

What the gleam in Lorant’s eye amounted to was a “whirlwind” of journalistic endeavor -- of the sort that made for great reading, but that could result in commercial exhaustion eventually. Lorant, after all, had never stayed long with any of the magazines he worked for; and Hopkinson was still something of an unknown editorial talent to Hulton. Perhaps it’s most remarkable that Picture Post was able to exist successfully for 19 years within that whirlwind. Picture Post was a valiant endeavor, taken on by valiant personnel -- inclusive of its owner -- and journalism historians should continue to record its triumphs as well as its tragedies. And economically and artistically, there were many of both.

One of its triumphs over time was the magazine’s ability to develop essays that focused on important concerns of “ordinary” Brits, who were seen in the magazine to often be extraordinary. Or as a Downing Street story in its first issue put it: “It isn’t just that they want to see the Premier, their instinct draws them nearer to the heart of things.” And Picture Post got to the heart of things with basic, essential words, pictures, and layouts. As for its tragedies, the greatest emerged from the conflict that arose between a good share of the staff and Hulton, once the war was over. Throughout the war years, a spirit of camaraderie helped everyone pull together, despite some real “self-criticism” -- of each other, and of the Churchill-led Government.

After the war, the Labour Party came to hold exclusive power in a surprise election victory, and Hulton was as moved initially as others by the positive nature of that surprise. Soon, however, his basically Conservative stance grew at odds with the socialist nature of many new economic reforms. In short, Hulton became opposed to the welfare state and the things related to it that, he thought, couldn’t easily be improved -- like the nation’s investment and tax structures, or the spiritual side of humanity, and people’s motivation to work.

If, before the war, Chamberlain had “reassured” Brits by saying, “I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds,” to which Picture Post had replied by recommending a healthier form of insomnia with its satirical essay, “Back to the Middle Ages,” after the war, national self-criticism seemed less focused on the new Government, more on the social conditions “created” by former administrations. Hulton soon came to dislike the new approach, and perhaps rightly so: It neither critiqued the new Government fully or rooted out the worse conditions that had brought on the Attlee administration. Hulton argued in a debate-interview between former staffers many years later that he had the right to steer the course of his publication to a greater extent than some might have wished. He noted: “I hold the view -- which is not, I suppose, held by every editor -- that, if a capitalist puts money into a newspaper, buys a newspaper or starts a newspaper, as we did, not only has he the right, I think he has the moral duty to oversee the social and political line it takes. I think he has the duty to do so, or he should sell it. This is my view -- a rather old-fashioned view, but it is my view.”(12) However, to be fair to the magazine’s other
personnel, it’s also true no magazine can be all things to all people -- no matter how good it is. And sometimes, that means that even owners’ feelings must be confronted.

What the journalists of Picture Post did accomplish for a very long time was to keep to the implicit intent of the magazine, which was to educate its readers and help reform society positively. And it did help alleviate a great deal of misery during some difficult days for Britain. In a way, Picture Post staff’s idealistic aesthetic mission was not unlike that of the now-deceased photographer Werner Bischof, who himself contributed some memorable photos to the magazine. Bischof noted: “Even if many of my stories are not published the way I would like them to be, our point of view is slowly becoming a concept, and it will become easier for us to realize our ideas in the future. I believe that only work done in depth, with total commitment, and fought for with the whole heart, can have any value. The details, the ‘l’art pour l’art’ aperçu are isolation and, in a certain sense, unhealthy. Spontaneous, constant observation and an interaction of ideas can alone relate the true situation.”(13) Bischof apparently saw life essentially, just as Lorant, Hopkinson and many colleagues did. Of course, it’s always possible to second-guess everyone and everything connected with any enterprise -- Hulton’s, Bischof’s, or anyone else’s -- though that might not be a just critique.

James Cameron, who knew about internal and external criticism as well as anyone, wrote: “The spectacle of the conscientious journalist bemoaning the idealistic shortcomings of his profession is both piteous and platitudinous, like that of the rueful whore. His condition may be unfortunate but it is hardly irremediable; the journalist who feels that the methods of the organization that pays him are a doleful burden upon his principles can as a rule resolve his dilemma: he can stop taking their money, and get out.”(14) Picture Post’s personnel (the owner, Directors, and editorial staff) did not deserve to be contemptuously criticized by their own colleagues; and their magazine was successful enough in populist terms, even respectably utopian, to have warranted Lionel Birch’s keenly sensible observation in the debate above. Birch said: “I believe (Picture Post) was the first picture magazine to reflect all aspects of life in Britain, and some on the Continent, in ways that all kinds of people could understand.”(15)

Something G.K. Chesterton wrote indicates the scope of mental landscape that Picture Post mapped for its readers. That passage is quoted in Bill Brandt’s Shadow of Light: Photographs. Chesterton noted: “There is at the back of every artist’s mind something like a pattern and a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams: the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would like to wander, the strange flora and fauna, his own secret planet, the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied.”(16)

Lorant, Hopkinson, their staffs, and even Edward Hulton and his Directors were sufficiently curious and artistic to be able to venture forth into strange landscapes to try to present to their readers a varied world -- and yet one that all people could feel at home in. And Picture Post’s personnel appealed to their readers with enough artistry to cause real aesthetic appreciation in the latter group. Stuart Hall’s lament, then, that Picture Post failed because it lost its ideological authenticity -- in terms of its socialist ideals -- misses the point a bit. Yes, socialism was an important ingredient in that magazine’s special mix; but so too were many other worthy ideals -- including motherhood, family values, artistic appreciation, the entrepreneurial spirit, sports, military defense, and national character, or just plain “Englishness” -- Englishness that J.B. Priestley would take pains to praise in those days, and later on, as well.(17)

In other words, the cultural and spiritual authenticity of Picture Post was always more important than its ideological consistency -- socialist, capitalist or otherwise. Hall does have it half-right when he writes that the magazine ‘had surpassed ‘party labels’ (as George Orwell had pointed out earlier) and ‘the old distinction between Right and Left,’ …because it spoke straight to ‘multitudes of unlabelled people who have grasped…that something is wrong’.” But when Hall added that “what was wrong Picture Post had no language for,” he commits a fatal mistake: He cuts a great magazine off simply because it wasn’t “progressive enough” to have foretold the exact language of cultural-economic scholars who worked in the latter part of the 20th century. And he doesn’t give Picture Post enough credit for the criticisms it did most certainly lodge against social and political conditions during and just after the Second World War.(18)
And, Picture Post did give those conditions names — if one asked Bert Hardy or Robert Kee what those names were, and one would have been amazed how lively the discussion could get. As for the story that sent the magazine wandering “off into the fog,” there was so much implicit and explicit statement against the U.N. cause in the Korean atrocities tale that Hulton reprimanded his staff hard for it, rightly or wrongly it still open to debate. No doubt, Hopkinson knew from the start that that Hardy-Cameron report would be explosive, if published. He noted in the group-debate mentioned above: “I could see when I looked at it that, in the climate of the time, the story was dynamite. It was a criticism of what was felt to be ‘our side,’ for ill-treatment of prisoners. I therefore waited until Cameron got back, and questioned him, but there was no doubt that the story was 100 percent genuine, and that this was no isolated case.”

Ted Castle, Hopkinson’s former assistant editor, chimed in: “We didn’t rush it into print. It was a scoop, and a temptation which I am sure would not have been resisted in the rest of Fleet Street. We wanted to be fair, and to be fair in our treatment of all the pictures we had, and the description of what was happening.” Cameron spoke up: “I drained it, as far as I could, of any kind of emotion at all. Over and over again, we wrote this thing, Tom Hopkinson and I, between us. I wrote it and he vetted it, until it became austere, almost to the point of aridity. That, of course, was a calculated effect. I did not want anybody to say: ‘There’s this emotional devil, Cameron. He’s always going out and beating his breast about some bloody thing or other.’ I wanted to make it clear that this was not a gut-reaction on the spot; that this was a long-considered thing. I never worked so hard to write so badly.”

Michael Middleton, an assistant to Hopkinson, pointed out: “I was in Hopkinson’s room when the telephone went, and, after he had listened for a moment or two, I heard him say: ‘I am prepared to discuss it, but I won’t accept that as an instruction.’” Hopkinson noted: “It had been Edward Hulton on the phone, and he told me that the article on the Korean War had to be taken out of the paper.” Hulton responded: “I said: ‘This is really outrageous.’ He was suggesting that atrocities were being committed by our side, and they were not really being committed by the North Koreans. I felt extremely strongly about this, and I said, ‘I cannot have this article.’ Then Hopkinson said: ‘I cannot accept that from you.’ So I said: ‘Well, that’s absurd, because, after all, I am the proprietor, a controlling shareholder and the editor-in-chief.’”

Hopkinson explained: “Meetings went on throughout the week. Various attempts were made to persuade me to resign. I was shown a statement to be put out by the general manager, saying that I had resigned, following a dispute about the Korean War. I said that I was not resigning at all, and that, if they wanted to get rid of me, they would have to sack me.” John Pearce, an executive with Hulton Press, said: “There was, in fact, only one practical solution. We couldn’t sack the chief proprietor. We could sack Tom Hopkinson.” Rene Cutforth, the debate’s moderator/narrator, said: “And sacked he was. A few of the staff resigned in protest, but most were persuaded, by Hopkinson, to stay on.”

Hulton also noted in the same debate: “It has been suggested that Picture Post could, if Hopkinson had been there, or some very competent editor had been there, have gone on. I do not think so, because, owing to the attitude of the advertising agents, they took the view that the thing for the future was television. They had invested labour, mental activity and money in dealing with television, and they told me that they would devote all their advertising either to television or to the national and Sunday press. I am practically certain that, no matter what editor you had, it would have been almost impossible to have continued.”

Former staffer Lionel Birch had some less kind things to say about management beliefs and the television age: “As for editorial policy in the television years, I suppose the polite word for it would be ‘pragmatic.’ The paper was blown about here and there, in a desperate circulation-building search for the next expedient. Certainly, there was a feeling that the editorial policy was influenced, in varying degrees, by things like circulation reps’ reports, advertising agents’ views, management’s hunches. So it was not really surprising that a lot of readers began to feel that this was not the same magazine as the Picture Post to which they had warmed in the 1940s.”

Finally comes Hopkinson’s haunting question, and answer -- not about whether or not Picture Post could handle present-day issues, but about how that magazine succumbed. He said: “Who really killed Cock Robin? In the last seven years of the paper’s life, there was at least one editor per year (or thereabouts).
Several of them were very able journalists, but, at that rate of change, not one had a chance to settle down and follow a consistent policy. I think the truth is that a magazine has a special character of its own, and it has to keep to that character. It is for that particular character that the readers buy it, and it is this character which keeps the staff enthusiastic and united. In its last years, Picture Post became not one magazine, but many different magazines. Some issues looked like copies of the New Statesman, and some looked like popular Sunday newspapers. So I do not think, myself, that television is to be blamed for killing Picture Post. I think Picture Post just lost its sense of direction and wandered off into the fog.”

Cameron wrote about his return to England from a jaunt with Hardy to cover the Dali Lama’s flight from Tibet in early 1951, in this way: “‘For the Gautama laid it down: Everything corporeal is material and therefore fleeting, it carries within itself the seeds of dissolution; nothing is eternal but the law of cause and effect.’ There must be a book to be written about these matters, I thought as the taxi jerked and crawled through Pimlico; but by then it was too late, and tomorrow one would have to start work again.”

Cameron perhaps had it right: Einstein’s event -- Picture Post’s final issue -- came, and dissolution followed. All is nothing, in the end, except the spirit that motivates our work, our existence. The spirit of a great magazine and its staff would have to live on in the days and years ahead. “Tomorrow one would have to start work again.” Yes, work -- always work. God gives us something to do when we think our world is ending: He gives us new tasks, new spirit, new life. And we must be grateful.
Part VII

Picture Post’s Lasting Contributions To the Art of the Photo
Chapter 31

What Stefan Lorant’s and Tom Hopkinson’s Editing Did for the Continuity of Character in Picture Post.

“As the light grew strong each company gathered about its political commissar to hear once more why they were there, for what they were fighting, how they were to reach out for new objectives. By the help of maps each detail…was made clear. Most of what the commissars had to say was already known; but Spanish Government military orders lay down that each soldier must have explained not merely his own duties, but the meaning of the action as a whole, and its importance to the ideals for which he is asked to fight. He must never go into battle like an automation moved by words of command. He must think for himself and accept necessity because he knows it to be a necessity.” (1)

“Hopkinson, who had been Assistant Editor on Clarion and was now employed on Weekly Illustrated to write captions, soon realised that Lorant understood photographs in a way no-one else he had ever met understood them. He wrote later that as a result he himself came ‘to recognise photography as a journalistic weapon in its own right, so that if -- like myself at that time -- you are determined to promote causes and affect conditions, photographs can be a potent means for doing so.’ This is exactly how Picture Post was to operate.” (2)

“‘Why don’t you let Teddy (Owner Edward Hulton’s nickname) do what he wants with Picture Post?’ Not having expected anything so direct (from Nika, Hulton’s wife), I fenced. ‘What does Teddys want to do with it?’

‘He wants to run it -- to decide what goes into it. After all, it’s his magazine. He put up the money for it -- you didn’t.’

‘That’s true. But now it isn’t only Teddy’s magazine -- it’s everybody’s.’

‘What d’you mean?’

‘It has a character of its own. Not mine, not anyone’s. Really it’s the character of its readers.’

‘Now you’re just arguing…’

‘What you’re saying to me is “This isn’t your ship, it’s Teddy’s. So let him do the steering.”’

‘Right! Why not?’

‘Because he’ll bump it on the rocks. He’s bound to.’

‘Even if that was true -- which it isn’t -- you don’t have to worry. We should look after you -- you must know that.’
‘You might look after me, but you can’t look after the paper. If you do what you’re proposing, it will fail.’

‘You needn’t worry about that,’ said Nika with finality. ‘We’d never allow Picture Post to fail. What should we be if we did? Just two more very rich people.’

Throughout our talk I noticed that she made use of a curious gesture as though she were snapping (a stick of bread) in her fingers. But there were no breadsticks on the table.” (3)

* * * * *

The first two editors of Picture Post -- Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson -- tried to ensure their publication worked properly. Hopkinson said that what he learned from Lorant was that pictures could become “weapons,” and that readers could be educated by them. Moreover, since the magazine’s staff was also crucial in all this, it, too, could be educated and made to understand the necessity of making journalism overall a kind of weapon.

When Lorant called Robert Capa the “Greatest War-Photographer in the World” in 1938, he was using propaganda to sell magazines. At the same time, though, he was also staking a claim to a cause: the Spanish Civil War and its journalism. And because Capa’s photo essay was published by Picture Post that year, relating to the fighting along the Ebro River, its pictures and text had to be first-rate. And they were.

The lead photo’s caption contains an implicit message that Capa’s journalism is a weapon in the war against the Loyalist troops of Generalissimo Franco. It reads: “The Staff Plans the Attack: Back behind the front a group of officers of the Spanish Government forces plan the final details of their counter-attack on Franco’s men. As they work with their maps and telephones, reports keep coming in to them from patrols sent out the night before.”

The essay goes forward from that point into battle with the Spanish Republican troops. Men are wounded, prisoners are taken, and a man dies. Picture 26, the last in the 12-page series, tells a moving tale.

That final caption reads: “But For This Man It Is The End: A Dying Man Gives His Last Letter -- He will never go home again. He will never write any letters after this one. He speaks a few broken sentences. A comrade listens, tries to catch his meaning, jots his words down. Later he will contrive to send them home. Another brave man has met his end.”

The last words of the text sum up the essay: “Amid overwhelming difficulties, the art of war has been rediscovered by the Spanish people. The result is that, whatever happens now in Spain, Europe will have to reckon with a new and powerful army in a quarter which has for centuries been a byword for military weakness.” (4)

The battle has been joined by Picture Post, and if the future of Europe seems in doubt, at least Robert Capa was there to suggest some options for British allegiances in the war that just preceded the Second World War, and served as its wake-up call to arms.

The staff of officers in Capa’s most famous piece for Picture Post symbolizes the editorial staff of the magazine. Crouching down to discuss their plans, enlisted men wait in the trenches for word to come down on the next offensive. Those enlisted personnel symbolize Picture Post’s readers. They would go through hell during World War II, and enlisted men of the Spanish Republican army would pay a price during the Spanish Civil War; Picture Post told both groups’ stories with feeling.
In fact, there were close ties between Picture Post’s staff and their readers. So close were those ties that the socialist capitalism that was spread by the staff affected the magazine’s readers; and that which was spread by the readers affected the staff. Socialism per se was an important part of the Spanish Republican Army’s message; and Lorant and Hopkinson realized its value prior to a similar realization by their staff.

Lurking ever in the background at Picture Post -- despite the best efforts of the many capitalists on the staff -- was the sense that the workers of Britain had a lot more coming to them than what they had acquired up until the pre-war years. Some might even have been looking to implement worker-control of the news organizations they worked for. Bert Lloyd believed in that, and perhaps he had a number of sympathetic friends on Picture Post in this connection.

John Whale has pointed out that, as much as workers have long wanted more to say in the organizations they work for -- in journalism and elsewhere -- “a change in control does nothing to change the economic data. Newsprint still has to be bought, wage demands met, advertisements garnered, readers kept or won.”

Whale continues: “Public ownership, a favourite radical suggestion, would make no difference either: not even public ownership of all organisations within a given medium, which might at least be thought to do away with the evils of competition. When those conditions were met in British television before 1955, and the BBC had a monopoly, the Corporation still felt impelled to make its audience as big as it could, in order the better to protect and finance its monopoly. Public ownership, too, however organized, can lead -- as it has sometimes with the BBC -- to a dangerous degree of government influence.” (5)

Picture Post went “public” with its stock in the 1950s; but it never became a nationalized corporation -- which may be what Whale fears most -- and Hulton still held majority control. But the staff of the magazine long did pull together solidly, as if they were the final arbiters of what went into the magazine and what didn’t.

Hulton wouldn’t like to admit that this is what was happening to “his” magazine throughout the 1940s; but perhaps that is why Nika Multon had her “little talk” with Hopkinson just before the storm cut loose in 1950, and enveloped Hopkinson and a few others within it.

The thing that made Picture Post so great was its “character”; and the way its workers and readers responded to the challenges of keeping the magazine alive during some trying times for their nation says a lot about Britain from 1938-57. Somehow, then, Picture Post found a legitimate place in the hearts and minds of “Basic Brits.” And if the intellectuals of that nation also took heart from the magazine, it may have been because they found the good mix of leftist and rightist arguments involved there the stuff of great debates.

One debate that may have indirectly resulted in Hopkinson’s firing occurred early in 1950, when James Cameron (who had recently resigned from the staff of the Daily Express, one of Lord Beaverbrook’s papers) wrote a letter that got printed in a prestigious British daily.

Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie comment in Lord Beaverbrook: A Life: “Beaverbrook’s relations with left-wing members of his staff were less happy (than his association with the Tribune’s Michael Foot, who succeed Nye Bevan when the latter became the Labour Government’s new Minister of Health). James Cameron resigned from Beaverbrook newspapers altogether when the Evening Standard (another Beaverbrook daily) ‘engaged in what he justly believed to be a shameful slur’ -- as Foot later wrote -- against the Labour Minister, John Strachey.” (6)

An anonymous critic writing in The New Statesman and Nation for March 18, 1950, noted: “His (Cameron’s) resignation was a matter of professional principle and his protest against ‘purge-by-press’.” Moreover, “Since the appearance of this letter (Cameron’s explanation in The Times of March 11, 1950), a rumour, obviously carefully fostered, has been going round that Mr. Cameron really resigned for other reasons; that he had parted from the Express before the attack on Mr. Strachey…..I have seen a copy of Mr.
Cameron’s correspondence with the editor of the Daily Express. It does not bear out these rumours. Mr. Cameron did not resign in order to accept any other lucrative post; indeed, he resigned without any other post in mind.” (7)

Needless to say, Cameron was quickly hired by Picture Post just after this little bit of publicity. And the fate of Hopkinson, at least, was cast in granite. If the right-wing Hultons were a bit nervous when the political maverick Cameron came on board their publication in mid-1950; they must have been stir-crazy when he and Bert Hardy returned from South Korea with their atrocities tale. For as courageous as the Hardy-Cameron coverage of the war was overall, it was wasted motion to the Hultons, due to “Terror in Korea: We Appeal to U.N.” That “unpublished” essay’s eventual uses may even have given “aid and comfort to the enemy,” as Hulton suggested its publication would. (8)

Lorant and Hopkinson had set the pattern early on for what was to come on Picture Post. And when James Cameron was hired by the latter man at about the time the Korean War began, things were bound to break loose. Mrs. Hulton made sure of that. Her talk with Hopkinson at about this time was like an early dagger to Hopkinson’s heart; and he got the message.

Picture Post had maintained its character and its readers for 12 years, when Hopkinson was forced to leave the magazine. Hitler himself had done similar things to Lorant. In the end, both men were forced to accept a less tidy fate than they would have liked. Both men would have liked to stay with Picture Post longer than they did.

But the Hultons were not Hitlers; the former couple were pragmatic capitalists, who kept their high-quality publication going strong for the better part of 19 years. And if the true “character” of Picture Post was owing to Lorant, Hopkinson, their staffs, and their readers, it was also owing to the richly endowed ownership of Edward and Nika Hulton.

The Hultons may not have done everything correctly with their best magazine; but neither did all the people who worked for them; and that complex reality is something both sides must come to terms with, wherever they are today. (9)
Chapter 32

Picture Post’s Impact on Other Great News-Feature

Picture Magazines, Especially Outside Britain

“Many photographers honed their talents on the whetstone of World War II. One of the youngest and ablest of them was Leonard McCombe, an Englishman who became a member of the LIFE staff in 1945 at the age of 22. He had already been a professional photographer for four years.” (1)

“’Hell!’ Humphrey (Tyler) kept saying. ‘They were just mowing the people down, kids and all. And Ian (Berry) was dodging in and out among the bloody bullets taking his little pictures! He just ran out into the middle and knelt down. Hell! What a cameraman. He’s nuts, of course. Completely nuts! He just ran out into the middle and knelt down…Hell! And then half-way through he just thought he’d try the other camera and switched over.’

When he’d finished his story, I asked: ‘What about my car?’

‘Hell!’ exclaimed Humphrey, fishing in his pocket for the keys.

‘Is ours a lucky car! Not a bloody scratch! And the Mail car which went in just behind us has got two bullets in the back and the windscreen shattered by a stone.’

Ian printed up his pictures. He had got the crowd running towards him, many of them children, many of them still laughing, thinking it was all a game, thinking the police were firing blanks to scare them. He had got a woman lying dead and the man beside her staring stupefied at his blood-stained hand. But he had got something more -- a picture that was going to be produced dramatically later on at the Sharpeville Enquiry when police officers denied there had been any firing from the Saracens. It showed two policemen -- firing into the fleeing crowd, and the policeman with the revolver reloading when he had emptied his magazine. In the course of a couple of minutes, and at the risk of his life, he had taken a handful of pictures that were to be historic. At the Sharpeville Enquiry later on he was to say, in his diffident and hesitating way, a sentence that would do more to destroy the official picture of a savage horde baying for the lives of a hundred and fifty policemen than a volume of argument. He was asked if, while he was walking about -- alone and unarmed -- among the crowd some minutes before the shooting, he had experienced any difficulty or sense of danger. Ian thought for a moment, then replied: ‘I had to say “Excuse me” once or twice in order to get past.’” (2)

“When Queen Elizabeth set foot on French soil for the first time in 1957 Bert Hardy…was refused admission to the glittering scene inside the Paris Opera. The guards did, however, let through one group of dignitaries talking French, in full evening dress with decorations, without apparently remarking on the fact that the silent one in the group wore brown shoes and had a bulge in the pocket of his over-size dinner jacket. Hardy…had tagged along; and made brilliant use with his Leica of the time available before the Queen arrived. He had no wide-angle lens (and regards them as unacceptable because of the distorting effect), so he took consecutive photographs of different sections of the scene from the top of the staircase, and ended it with several shots of the Queen coming up the stairs. These separate photographs were printed and joined up in a jigsaw to create (one harmonious) picture.” (3)
“Photojournalists are despairing. They still come to me (Director of Photography Tom Kennedy) and say my magazine (National Geographic) is the only game in town. (And yet) a lot of photographers still have to shoot celebrities to pay the bills, though I think in their heart of hearts they’d rather do our kind of work. I see the schizoid tensions of photographers trying to keep a foot in both worlds.” (4)

“Today the press must be sustained by what it does for society, this very different society, rather than by simply what it does for the soul of the individual. It certainly remains for the Press a virtue to ventilate opinion. Concentration of control imposes on us today duties of greater access for the public so that we escape the jibe of Huey Long about Henry Luce: ‘The owner of Time Magazine,’ said Long, ‘is like the owner of a shoe shop who stocks only the shoes to fit hisself’....With a volatile, pluralistic electorate, and a complex bureaucracy, a free press provides an indispensable feedback system from governed to the governing, from consumers to producers, from the regions to the centre, and not least from one section of the bureaucracy to another.” (5)

* * * * *

If the great photojournalistic breakthrough occurred in 1925 -- the invention in Germany of small cameras, scarcely larger than today’s 35mm, with very fast lenses, enabling the user to take pictures unobtrusively and under low-light conditions -- there was also a setback then. People were caught off guard, no longer posing for the camera but acting quite naturally, perhaps too naturally -- doing awkward, funny, dangerous, real things. At least, though, there were some decent possibilities, as well.

To be sure, the editor now became a man of greater importance. It was he who sent photographers off on specific assignments, often with scripts detailing particular pictures he wanted, confident that they would come back with not just pictures but with a ‘story,’ something he could organize through skillful layout. And it was he who shaped that story or report by deciding which pictures he would use, and how he would use them: large, small, in sequences; for dramatic effect or for information, to inspire humor, anger, curiosity, disgust.

Stefan Lorant was the first great picture editor -- the man who made things happen in photojournalism more than anybody else from 1928-1940. His first great vehicles included Picture Post (1938-57), the most successful magazine he would ever work for. Lorant was well-known in the photojournalistic community then; and his work was imitated as often as possible.

Then Lorant left for America, where he began a somewhat different career -- in book-publishing. His replacement at Picture Post -- Tom Hopkinson -- was equally good at assembling a first-rate staff around him and keeping it working effectively. If Hopkinson was not quite the master of layout that Lorant had been, he was a gifted administrator; and he could himself still compose a distinguished layout when called upon.

Life Magazine in America heard about the exploits of Lorant, Hopkinson and their staffs; and it wanted “in.” In 1945, then, the great Henry Luce-owned picture magazine hired Leonard McCombe, a 22-year-old photographer who had worked for Picture Post as a freelancer, and who had taken many memorable photos for that magazine during World War II. McCombe’s sensitive, evocative style would become a hallmark on perhaps the greatest of all American picture magazines. (6)
Life would continue to want “in” in the months and years ahead. As Bert Hardy tells it: “Around then (the
time of Hardy’s Gairloch holiday expenses coup during the summer of 1952) Life magazine must have got
wind of what was happening at Picture Post (with revolving editors). In August 1952 they had approached
me and offered me a job as a photographer on their staff. But even though the salary they were offering was
three or four times what I was receiving at Picture Post, I didn’t fancy it. At that time I didn’t have any
thought that Picture Post might pack up.”

Hardy adds: “I had been with the paper for most of my career as a photographer, and they used practically
every story I did. I knew that on Life, even the best photographers only got about one in three or four
stories used, and that they often spent up to three months working on a story. I liked to work under
pressure: I didn’t think I could work properly in that sort of vacuum, so I turned down the offer. When I let
this be known to the management of Picture Post, they rewarded my loyalty by giving me a new and bigger
company car.” (7)

Henry Luce may have been able to call nearly all the shots early on at Time and Life, but he couldn’t
deplete Picture Post’s staff sufficiently to put that magazine out of business by himself, if he wanted to.
And if Hardy’s splendid scooping of Paris Match and the other big picture magazines during the Paris
Opera appearance of Queen Elizabeth in 1957 was his last interesting image for Picture Post, it is also true
that he and others like him had put in almost 19 years of dedicated service to a truly remarkable
publication, before it folded. Life, Vu, Stern, Paris Match, and a few other legendary publications would
learn from Picture Post: they would not fade in the same way.

When Tom Hopkinson departed England in the mid-1950s to take up new work for the Drum Magazine in
South Africa, there were some telling comments made. One was from Anthony Sampson, who wrote a
short piece in his Pendennis column: “Picture magazines in Britain, confronted with television and waning
advertisements, are having a difficult time: but there are parts of the world where they have an exciting and
growing role to play in developing the self-consciousness of half-literate people. One of them is Africa; and
it is appropriate that Tom Hopkinson, who was editor of Picture Post in its heyday from 1940 to 1950,
should have been appointed last week as editor of the monthly picture magazine Drum in Johannesburg, of
which 200,000 copies are scattered all over the continent.

“Tom Hopkinson is about as far from the conventional picture of a journalist as anyone could be. Gentle-
looking and soft-voiced, with large melancholy eyes and an air of infinite patience, he has a habit of
entering a room without anyone noticing.

“But he has been one of Britain’s most original and enterprising editors: his quick, sensitive knack with
pictures, and his strong integrity (he resigned from Picture Post when he was not allowed to print an expose
of atrocities in South Korea) showed through in every issue of his magazine.

“It had always been part of his principle that pictures should concern themselves with ordinary people,
doing ordinary things -- without condescension or stunts. His feeling for ordinary people was obvious in the
famous series of B.B.C. broadcasts which he recorded in Rotherhithe, where he lived in a pub for three
months talking to locals. It is this kind of warm sympathy, together with his vast experience, that is likely
to make his contributions to an African magazine particularly important.” (8)

In fact, with the international acclaim Drum captured from its coverage of the Sharpeville shootings in
1960, and his daily running and upgrading of that magazine, Hopkinson also put in stellar service there. His
work with the likes of Ian Berry (now with Magnum, and once called by Photography “the world’s greatest
news photographer”) and the legendary Peter Magubane, among many distinguished journalists, speaks
volumes for his compassionate, yet direct editorial style. (9)

Other third-world picture magazines have been affected by both the American (especially Life and National
Geographic) and British (especially Picture Post) influences. Notably, Seoul Magazine, edited by H.
Edward Kim in South Korea, took on many of the best editorial effects from both nations, and was a first-rate English-language picture magazine.

Moreover, even the international small-format news-feature publications -- like People and the still-revered Time magazines -- not to mention the much-acclaimed New York Times Magazine and The Sunday Times Magazine, are today still influenced by similar editorial principles that guided Picture Post for so long. That is, those very renowned periodicals still rely on good layouts, with stunning photos, texts, and captions. Add in online and In magazines today, and one sees how words and pictures are still being combined by many types of modern magazines.

Lorant’s and Hopkinson’s editorial genius, then, is ever in the background, sometimes in the foreground, as well, and today still remains an inspiration for the great picture magazines. And many from among their staffs on Picture Post remain forces in modern photojournalism, as I write this.

A free press, as Harold Evans has indicated, must be just that: free. And if that includes the qualities of volatility and pluralism, then so be it, for informed argument and discussion -- as Hopkinson and Lorant would have agreed -- is crucial to the education of all people today. If the government is to know what the people think, then there must be a great and free press to inform it -- at risk, sometimes, of course. (10)

No matter the distance in time from Picture Post to People, it remains a short distance from the greatest photos of Robert Capa, Leonard McCombe, Tim Gidal, Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, Felix H. Man, Humphrey Spender, Grace Robertson, Bill Brandt, and the others who worked for Picture Post to the work of the current generation’s heroes: the Ian Berrys, the Ken Kobres, the Susan Meiselases, the Mary Ellen Marks, the Donald McCullins, the Harry Bensons, the John Loengards, the Annie Leibovitzes, and the Philip Jones Griffiths.

And always remember writers like George Bernard Shaw, J.B. Priestley, and James Cameron. Ben Bradlee and Studs Terkel called James Cameron simply, “the best journalist of the century as far as writing, style and content are concerned.”(11)

Picture Post and those who love her have fought the good fight.
Chapter 33

The Particular Fate of the British Photo Essay Vis-À-Vis Picture Post

“Stefan Lorant’s Picture Post was one of the first popular pictorial magazines in England. Before its birth on 1 October 1938, the Illustrated London News, the Sphere, the Tatler, the Sketch, the Bystander were all already displayed on the news-stands. But all these publications catered to the upper classes, while Picture Post appealed to the common man. After two years of editing and bringing the magazine’s circulation to 1.7 million, Lorant left for America. He was succeeded by his assistant editor, Tom Hopkinson, who edited the magazine for the next decade. On Hopkinson’s departure and until the magazine eventually folded, there was a series of editors, none of whom retained the job for more than a year. Picture Post spanned almost 13 (actually 19) years and with the last issue dated 1 June 1957….

Unlike others, Lorant does not see television as responsible for the demise of Picture Post: ‘Life in America, Stern in Germany, Paris Match in France -- they all survived. Picture Post was killed because it was dull and boring. It offered no new ideas. The issues in the ‘50’s were carbon copies of the pages which were printed in the late ‘30s. The layouts were copied over and over. If editors had gone with the times, Picture Post would still be with us today.’

This view would not be supported by some of his contemporaries or more recent historians, who would see it as part of a larger malaise affecting all the English pictorial magazines and English photojournalism in general. Yet, there is a cogent logic supporting Lorant’s opinion of Picture Post’s eventual demise.” (1)

“Jonathan Dimbleby has, with skill and restraint, given a voice to the Palestinians’ wretchedness in their exile…their national calamity is total. The wasteland he records of despair relieved only by violence is lit up by Donald McCullin’s pictures exploding like mortar bombs.” (2)

“The International Center of Photography has exhibition galleries, a full education program, and two bookstores with an unusually large selection of new and backlist stock. Also carried are photography postcards, magazines, posters and gift items. ICP Uptown is housed in a beautiful landmark building on Fifth Avenue at 94th Street, and the brand-new ICP Midtown is located on Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street.” (3)

* * * * *

Photography -- especially photojournalism -- is a big business today. Gone are the days when the European photographers worked apart from the Americans; and gone, too, is the “Golden Age of the Picture Magazines.” Today, photographs have many other uses -- including postcards, books, posters and documentation work, not to mention online postings and online publications. And if the photo essay is re-emerging as a popular form, that is due to the resurgence in popularity of picture books.

The British, too, have been affected by the new plurality of vehicles for their photographic work; and New York always beckons. Early on, photos were used regularly by several leading British periodicals, in the days before Picture Post, including the Illustrated London News, the Sphere, the Tatler, the Sketch, and the
Bystander. However, they were dedicated to the upper classes mainly, and Picture Post was a magazine the common man also felt comfortable in reading.

This book began with a brief overview of early photo essays -- in particular, relating to books of photographs. Britain has had a distinguished legacy, in this regard; and if William Henry Fox Talbot, Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry Peach Robinson, John Thomson and Henry Peter Emerson -- the greatest 19th century British photographers -- did not benefit financially a great deal from the effects of book-publishing then, at least their descendants have been gratified by the superb output of these remarkable early photo artists. (4)

But in the beginning, book-publishing, and exhibitions, were almost the only ways for photographers to show their work to a “large” audience -- despite the costs involved even with those processes. Today, then, books are being rediscovered as compelling homes for photo essays, not to mention all other photographs as well. In this regard, one book of photographs and text stands out as being influenced by the best work used in Picture Post, as well as by the finest photo essays in the rest of journalism history -- in Britain or anywhere. That book is The Palestinians.

Written by Jonathan Dimbleby and photographed by Donald McCullin, The Palestinian does, in fact, tell a provocative tale. Dimbleby, one of British television’s most prominent reporters, and McCullin, one of Britain’s finest photojournalists, take up the cause of the modern outcasts of Israel. Showing with brutal honesty the predicament of the Palestinians, they trace the causes of their beleaguered status in the Jewish nation.

Tracing the roots of dissent to the British Mandate (following from the Balfour Declaration in 1917) exercised after World War I, the indomitable pair paints a grim picture. The Palestinians, it would seem, have every right to a homeland in “Palestine”; but are they using effective measures to bring that about. In other words, can a people so influenced by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) be free in the Middle East with their own homeland and living at peace with their Israeli neighbors? That complex prospect seemed doubtful.

Laid out in modern fashion -- something Stefan Lorant and Tom Hopkinson could appreciate -- with words and pictures telling complementary stories, and varying in comparison to one another only in the ways they explode mortar bombs in the reader’s consciousness, The Palestinians was the perfect antidote in 1980 (when the Quartet Books paperback came out) to any apathy British journalists might have felt then about the Middle East.

The book’s cover -- used on the entire page, as so many of McCullin’s photos are here -- reveals a young boy guarding an old man in white with a machine gun, both dignified in their roles, and begins the sensitization of readers to the issues.

A people’s identity is at stake. And before they disappear altogether from public consciousness, Dimbleby and McCullin want to ensure a good airing of arguments. The fact that Jewish views are largely kept out of this work (except through a detached view provided by the reporters) indicates that the book has a select focus: the incredible dilemma of the people of “Old Palestine.”

Perhaps the last words and picture tell a great deal about what has become of the Palestinians in this day and age. The last photograph shows four Jewish men in traditional dress gathered around a table of books at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. In the distance more Jews are praying at the wall. It is a peaceful enough image; but one that many Palestinians might shiver over.

The reason is simple enough. As Salah Tamari, a Palestinian man, and author Dimbleby indicate at the end of the book: “It is becoming dark. The children are tired. There are sticky young fingers to be wiped, kisses and good-byes to be made. Then it is quiet. Salah goes into the garden, where there are exotic plants from...
India and Vietnam which he tends with care. There is an olive orchard, a few goats. Cicadas. It seems right -- for a moment -- to be at ease. But Salah breaks the silence.

“‘Sometimes I say to myself when I am working here, “If only this garden were in my own country.” You cannot understand. I am here yet I am not here. I feel sometimes like volunteering for the suicide squad. This is no place for my old age, not for my death, here. I want my body to be buried in Palestine.’

“He goes inside and shuts the door. Silence, no peace.” (5)

And so, a married, childless Palestinian man living in Kuwait yearns for a true home; and the British -- still involved in that part of the world -- take pictures and write stories, so that one people they had a hand in pushing “out” may someday be back “in” a bit, hopefully, without violence. The only word on the final line of text is “peace” -- a noble sentiment if it actually becomes a reality in the Middle East.

Tom Hopkinson, who worked in Africa for the leading black picture magazine (Drum) on that “dark continent” would have sympathized greatly with The Palestinians; he might also have sympathized with the Jews, Stefan Lorant’s distant relatives, because both groups have a right to a homeland. How they will be reconciled remains an open question; but surely, Dimbleby’s and McCullin’s book helps tell an incredible story. If we can only believe.

It is not a far-cry from The Palestinians to the Sunday Times Magazine picture essay “Children Under Stress” photographed by Lord Snowdon. In this 11-photo, 12-page report (with cover photo added in), we see the difficulties of youngsters -- from little Patricia Byrne’s wayward expression (she “has lived all her life in this condemned Liverpool street”) on the cover to the feisty toddler being held in the last picture, a compelling statement is made about British children living in poverty.

The large-scale pictures reveal all the emotions a youngster can go through -- from teary-eyed rage in a scuffle to the semi-dignified, yet semi-pitiable response to the cameraman by a young boy with his arm around his little sister. These children have gone through the problems of poor household and family settlement. Fathers are out-of-work or away, mothers are hard-pressed to keep up rent and food payments in neighborhoods that have been condemned, and children are ignored more often that not.

Their situation was being part-way addressed in the 1970s by the Child Action Group, and this story came out on May 10, 1970, at the start of a turbulent decade in Britain. There was no looking back to the past, some said; and yet it was the past that had created the rancid conditions for poor families that were and are proving so incapable of remedy in Britain. (6)

Unfortunately, good as the very objectionable dry text is in stating the case for better conditions for Britain’s children, the photographs have no captions, and good as Photographer Snowdon is with almost any subject, the overall effect would have been rendered more poignantly with a few words focusing on the pictures. Occasionally, a report can stand out by the sheer presence and finality of its pictures, and this one is close to doing that; but with the right words, the photos would have carried even more weight.

It is a great distance, then, that The Sunday Times Magazine travelled from May 10, 1970 to May 13, 1990 -- in the issue whose cover is graced by Princess Caroline of Monaco. Reported by Georgina Howell, with portraits photographed by Karl Lagerfeld, a splendid range of activities is depicted. The first small photo shows the princess as an infant being held by her loving mom, Princess Grace. Next to it is the stunning portrait of the adult princess, complete with black gown, ruby-red ear-rings, and gold bracelets. Other beautiful portraits follow in this “Serene Test,” as do snapshots of her early years, and a family portrait with her husband and three small children. (7)

The text concludes with Princess Caroline politely avoiding a last picture: “She has said goodbye and is already halfway to the door when she draws the final line: ‘You’d like to know my personal motto? Never explain and never complain.’” Ah yes, The Sunday Times Magazine has its wittier side, as well.
All the above picture essays rely on strong photographs, as did Picture Post, and in the case of the magazine and book photo essays mentioned here, they also depend on strong layout, with a “third effect” rendered less by the juxtaposition of photos on the same page -- as in Picture Post -- but by photos used large and small, mainly by ones and twos, on different pages. Picture Post used photos more plentifully than most modern essays do; but both can still be blended with words to make strong points.

Today, there may be a “larger malaise affecting all the English pictorial magazines and English photojournalism in general,” but it is also true that the British nation has produced many of the world’s outstanding journalists. Once you get past a few lesser tabloids, one can find a lot worth reading and taking in. The British Royal Family and terrorists -- which seem to be the rage at present -- may have little in common practically; but both make for stunning headlines and pictures. And news is being made everyday in Britain, as elsewhere. Gratefully, that nation has the journalists to cope with most of it.
“KK (Kenneth Kobre): I suppose you researched Albert Schweitzer when you expected to do a photo essay on him. Did you have a bias before you started?

WES (W.E. Smith): I had read all his books, and thought it would be easy to strike up a rapport with him. When I met him, I found that he was vastly different from what I expected.

KK: Why?

WES: Those who had written about him had especially idealized him, and left him not quite mortal. I found, however, he had to make compromises.

KK: Like what?

WES: In the leper village, for instance, Schweitzer would let a clean child remain with leprous parents. He would not say, ‘Take the clean child away.’ Instead, Schweitzer would say, ‘If I take the clean child away, there will be no place for him to go to. His parents will leave also, and they will be in the forest, where I cannot watch them, and they will spread the disease.’

When Schweitzer first reached the village, his European training called for the amputation of a native’s leg that was badly crushed. But if Schweitzer amputated, he would have become known as ‘the butcher doctor.’ He didn’t amputate. He lost some lives but saved many more in the long run because natives kept coming to him for help.

KK: None of this is revealed in the final Life magazine photo story on Schweitzer.

WES: No; this was one of the reasons that led me to resign over the story.

KK: Did you resign after the story was printed?

WES: No, I resigned before it was printed, trying to force the editors to give some consideration and space necessary to tell the story right.”

“…we were not in it for big profits or for circulation records. Both these were necessary, and they came. But the reason why (our staff members) lived the arduous lives and worked the long hours we did, for salaries modest even at that period, was that we were determined to achieve…a more just and equal society. We did not think of Picture Post as being the property of Edward Hulton. He was the owner; he had his name on the title page, and was entitled to the profits. We didn’t think of the paper as belonging to ourselves. We -- the photographers, writers, editorial assistants, dark-room staff, secretaries and office boys -- together created the weekly issues and felt entitled to the credit, as well as to the blame when we made a blunder. But the magazine in reality belonged to the readers, since it existed to serve their interests. And the readers knew this. Letter did not come in the office in handfuls, as on every other paper I have ever worked for. They came in in hundreds, and at times in sackfuls; there was a staff of four or five to see that all which required an answer got one.
Life still existed until recently and Picture Post doesn’t. What can we learn from that notable fact? And how can the enormous commercial and critical success of one (Life) be compared with the legendary triumphs and tragedies of the other (Picture Post)?

Well, it is not our aim here to flat-out compare the greatest historic American picture magazine with the greatest historic British picture magazine. It is, however, our goal to summarize a few of the lessons that Life and the other great picture magazines learned/learn from the example of Picture Post.

When W.E. Smith resigned from Life over the controversial publication of his photo essay on Dr. Albert Schweitzer (“Man of Mercy”) in 1954, the world was a different place -- as it was when Tom Hopkinson was sacked from Picture Post. But some things don’t change much over time. Two different men stood behind their principles, and both men temporarily lost. Did they or their bosses win in the long run? Perhaps all concerned parties won to a degree. And other picture magazines will better stay the “full course,” if they know the Picture Post story better.

After carrying the Schweitzer essay back to America, Smith quarreled with the Life editors about that photo essay. Smith resigned from Life in an attempt to affect the use of pictures and captions, and to expand the Schweitzer layout. Smith believed that he should do his own developing and printing whenever he could, and that he should have a hand in the layout of his pictures and have a voice about the captions. What the writer wrote, Smith held, was the writer’s entirely. Why, then, should not the picture story be completely the photographer’s?

By most accounts, Smith was not an easy photographer to work with. Most Life staffers shot their assignments and shipped the film back to New York. Smith developed his own negatives and then held on to them. With control of his negatives, Smith could threaten to withdraw a story, if he felt the editors were not going to play the photos properly.

After leaving Life, Smith began two amphibious projects (one in Pittsburgh, the other in Minamata, Japan), and completed them both -- his Pittsburgh portfolio was published in the 1959 Photography Annual over 38 pages, and his book on Minamata, related to the terrible human cost of chemical pollution, emerged in 1975. Smith died in Tucson, Arizona in 1978. (3)

Now, it was Picture Post’s policy always to claim copyrights to the pictures it paid for from its own staff, so unless there were special arrangements worked out on that magazine for the odd freelancer (which I’ve not been able to confirm was ever the case), a photographer like W.E. Smith might never have found work with Edward Hulton’s publication, if he would have wanted it. Keeping one’s negatives simply wasn’t done on Picture Post.

As a curb to photographer disenchantment (because until 1941, that magazine’s cameramen did not get name credit either for their pictures), the editors of Picture Post always made sure that care was taken to print as much of the work that its staff produced as was humanly possible -- photographers and writers alike. Photographs were usually plentiful enough in Picture Post layouts, as was the text.

And because Stefan Lorant had set a precedent, the proper editing and layout of pictures and text went ahead “full-force” when the time came for the work to be done -- Tom Hopkinson perhaps being a little more diplomatic and disciplined about this aspect of the business than Lorant, the master of layout per se.
In any case, because the first two editors of Picture Post took their staffs seriously, and made every effort to meet their needs (particularly Hopkinson), it became a matter of course that a “peaceful climate” came to exist in the offices of the magazine. So, despite the early war years, and in spite of the tension growing between Hopkinson and Owner Hulton, life was halfway pleasant for the staff when they were conducting business at Shoe Lane, where Picture Post was located.

More importantly, though, when it came time to use pictures and text, the climate only heated up a little. In other words, if there was any tension between journalists and editors over the use of pictures and/or text, the argument was minimal. One can read the autobiographies of Tom Hopkinson, James Cameron, and Bert Hardy -- to take three key players into account -- and not find any substantial mention of disagreements between Hopkinson and his journalists over the uses of their stories and/or photos. As long as Hopkinson was in charge, the editorial job was handled with compassionate discretion. (4)

In fact, the sort of “disagreements” that occurred were usually of the type that could be dealt with handily, even humorously. Take for example Hopkinson’s relationship with Edgar “Grumpy” Ainsworth, Picture Post’s art editor at one time. Hopkinson notes that he was anxious to retain Ainsworth, whose job it was to work out the magazine’s layouts in detail.

Hopkinson goes into detail about his affection for “Grumpy” in Of This Our Time: “I was fond of Grumpy, either because of or despite his abrasive manner, and was sorry when one summer evening during the flying-bomb period it seemed he was about to go up in smoke. I had been working late (during the summer of 1945) and around seven in the evening went downstairs to go home.”

Hopkinson continues: “Outside all main entrances in those days was a stout brick wall to act as baffle and prevent bomb blast entering the building. Hearing the hammering noise of a V1 flying bomb, I stopped by the baffle wall and looked up.”

The drama heightens: “It was coming in over the river, quite low down, only a short distance away, and appeared to be heading directly up Shoe Lane. As I watched, two thing happened simultaneously; the bomb’s engine cut out -- which meant that it would start to come down leaving just ten seconds before it hit the ground -- and Grumpy, who had been drinking in the pub opposite our offices, started to walk out around its baffle wall.

“Poor Grumpy!” I thought. ‘That’s the last I’ll see of him! Hope he had a few good drinks.’

“At the same moment, as he told me later, he was catching sight of me for what he supposed was the last time.

“Poor old Tom! He’s gone! Serves him right for staying on working after everyone else had left!’

“We were both wrong, however, for the bomb veered away in its descent to explode with a shattering crash and a column of filthy smoke and debris in Clifford’s Inn, 100 yards behind Grumpy’s pub, and almost directly opposite Manzoni’s restaurant where the elderly waiters in their stained evening suits had been interred in the rubble four years previously. Have lost so many good people to other employment, I was not willing to lose Grumpy too, and Grumpy, who had been offered a job in an advertising agency, was persuaded by a pay increase to stay on, being assisted in his layout work by young Rosemary Grimble who would later make a name for herself by her exquisite line drawings....” (5)

At that time, many good people were leaving Picture Post -- not because Hopkinson was a bad work supervisor. Rather, it was because he was talented enough to make his staff “celebrities” of a sort. Maurice Edelman, for instance, won a seat in Parliament in 1945. Charles Fenby, Hopkinson’s assistant editor, had gone to take over another Hulton magazine, the Leader, recently bought from an out-of-luck crony of Labour leader and railway union boss J. H. Thomas, a character known as “Coshier” Bates.
Ted Castle was then persuaded to take Fenby’s place, after he left the Daily Mirror. MacDonald Hastings, who had been invaluable as a war reporter, left just before the war ended for a romantic project -- nothing less than to revive the old-time Strand Magazine, a project that never worked out -- taking with him, temporarily, photographer Felix Man. Anne Scott-James, who was about to marry Hastings, left at the same time, going back to fashion magazines and then on to a distinguished career in Sunday journalism. (6)

Thankfully, the end of the war did bring some people back to Picture Post, but that story has been dealt with previously. The point is there was always good ebb and flow on the magazine, and Hopkinson knew how to keep relations up with his staff. If W.E. Smith would ever have wanted to work for Hopkinson, he would have had to check his ego at the door, and yet he still might have been happy in that potential relationship. Hopkinson had a way with people; he liked them generally, and he got along well enough to last the 1940s under Edward Hulton. Moreover, his staff was very satisfied that he did. And to be sure, Life’s staff generally was disciplined and conforming, even if Smith did not fit that mold.

What lessons can we learn from the Picture Post story? It is clear Picture Post had a mandate from its readers: to bring about change in society. It even had a mandate for its owner: to keep the readers and the Hultons happy. And it managed to survive for 19 years because somehow the talent onboard was happy to be there, at least temporarily. And in the case of Bert Hardy and Kurt Hutton, they were pleased to work for the magazine for almost its entire life. The editorial controls of the magazine and its staff, then, were in good hands for 12 years, and perhaps more. And to put it bluntly, its readers were entertained/informed enough to keep the money coming in.

Meanwhile, we Americans have been doing “our own thing” from since long before Life began in 1936. It behooves us, though, to recollect that photography was a European invention, as was the modern photo essay. And Picture Post was a leader in the use of both techniques for many years. Its staff did “their thing” long enough to warrant notice by Life and many other U.S. picture magazines. And if Picture Post failed, it did so with dignity. It had gone under because its content had become less than essential to British life, for a number of reasons. But at least its “makers” (the staff, readers, and advertisers) had been effusive in their mercies for 19 profitable, stimulating and memorable years.
Chapter 35

Homage to the Men, Women, and Youngsters Who Made Picture Post Work from 1938-57

“For a crowd is not company and faces are but a gallery of pictures and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.” (1)

“I could see a face in the moon, and I was lying in my cot making faces at it, when all of a sudden it pulled a face back at me. I was terrified. I threw the covers over my head and waited in fear for my parents to come home. I never pulled faces at the moon again.” (2)

“When you look into the mirror, it is not you that sees your reflection; your reflection sees you.” (3)

“Curiously enough the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings.” (4)

* * * * *

I began this analytical account of the history of that great British picture magazine Picture Post with two questions restated among the four used at outset of this final chapter, one from Bert Hardy and the other from a Japanese poet, both of which helped me select a title for this book.

I chose those quotations because it seems we human beings are forever pulling faces at the moon (or at the reflection of the sun’s light that we also sometimes call “the man in the moon”). And if we go one step further and say that the moon is a kind of mirror -- one that sees us, and that we really can’t visualize ourselves in, or see “him” in, at least not profoundly so -- then it is possible that “the man in the moon” can see us always, and that we have many opportunities to pull faces at him, as long as we never see how he pulls faces at us!

The moon has many other connotations to it -- some negative, some positive -- but it’s certain it contains a great deal of mystery, even though humans have walked on it since 1969. Perhaps, though, some things should always remain a mystery.

During the autumn of 1981, I felt as if I were walking on the moon in the heroic sense. I lived and worked in London then; and I came to know some of the staff of Picture Post as a result of that special time -- including Bert Hardy and James Cameron (both of whom I met and interviewed then), as well as Tom Hopkinson, Robert Kee, and Tim Gidal (having corresponded with the last three, yet never meeting them).

I was and/or am amazed by how splendidly all these professionals seem and/or seemed to survive. They clung to some old ways, to be sure, some traditions; but they also could spot a good deal when one came their way. I hope that in some small way, I presented them with a “good deal.” They surely did that for me;
and I am grateful to each of them, and to all the people who made Picture Post a thing of beauty -- a golden picture magazine in “The Golden Age of the Picture Magazines.” (5)

No doubt, I was “swimming against adversity” for a while in London; but once I talked with Bert Hardy -- the first staff member I met of the best magazine I’ve ever come across, and the only Picture Post staffer I’ve yet photographed -- I knew I was onto something special. Don’t ask me why or how everything came to me with regard to that autumn or this book; it just did, and I am grateful it did.

But perhaps if I “paraphrase” a passage or two from George Orwell’s Homage to Catalonia, my readers will get a better idea of what it was like for me to be in London in 1981, to meet Bert Hardy and James Cameron, and to experience Picture Post as I have over the years, albeit retrospectively more recently.

Remember, I am paraphrasing, and pre-empting, George Orwell: “I have recorded some of the outward events, but I cannot easily record the feeling these events have left me with. It is quite possible everything is a jumble of sights, smells, and sounds that cannot be conveyed in writing: the smells of a famous fish market and the sights and sounds of a remarkable train station photographed by Tim Gidal, places which I also visited (6); the sights of celebrities and ordinary people doing exactly what Bert Hardy would have them do for his camera; the feel of the trenches, as conveyed by Robert Capa’s immortal pictures of a preparatory civil war in Europe; the crackle of icy snow beneath my feet, as my world awakened to me in the heart of the American Midwest in December 1981, when I wanted to be back in England; the crisp, taut writing style of James Cameron shortly after he and Bert Hardy led the landing forces over the sea-wall at Inchon in September 1950; the assistance of Sally Soames and Prem Olson in locating Bert Hardy; the lovely photographs of a soon-to-be legendary screen star taken by Bert Hardy, and the beautiful, personally designed greeting card that star sent me in the year before her death from cancer; the clear, cool light of the mornings I jogged in London, which reminded me that not everything would be easy in the months and years ahead; the empathetically worded prose of Anne Scott-James, as she suggests some ideas on how and why the British people should have more children as a result of World War II; the positive responses I have received to the story and reviews I have had published relating to Picture Post since early in 1984; the glorious photos of children taken by Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, and the other great photographers of that magazine -- especially Bert Hardy’s image of two street urchins in the Gorbals section of Glasgow in 1948; the incredible photos and text that marked Picture Post during its entire existence, from the first issue to the last; the bully-good crimp Picture Post put in Hitler’s style; the unforgettable pictures that magazine used during the German air-blitz over London; the intelligent text, captions, and headlines Picture Post ran alongside its excellent photographs; the masterful layouts of Stefan Lorant, Tom Hopkinson, and the other editors of that magazine, which made Picture Post a legendary piece of work; the sight of Edward Hulton sitting cross-legged on the floor of his home, during a discussion that included many nicely attired ladies; the angles related to Bert Hardy and James Cameron that I should have photographed, but didn’t, and the memorable picture I took of Mr. Hardy with his two dogs (the one of four I took by his kitchen door that now-deceased Gerry Grove said was “the only one” fit to print of all the pictures I made of his legendary printing firm partner); the expression I saw on my London roommate Calvin Lawrence’s face when I showed him my copy of Mr. Hardy’s Bert Hardy: Photojournalist; the very decent letters I received from Tom Hopkinson, Tim Gidal, and Robert Kee after approaching them with questions about their work; the richly rewarding correspondence my editor-teacher in London, John Whale, and I have kept up over the last 26 years; the striking resemblance Lord Beaverbrook had to a former (then middle-aged) South Korean colleague of mine, a certain balding Mr. Kim at the Korea-Kuwait Bank in Seoul; the sights and sounds I see and hear whenever that rare American responds they have heard of Picture Post; the ebullient looks on the faces of quite a few celebrities as they hammered it up for the cameras of Picture Post’s photographers; Tom Hopkinson’ humorous “racehorse” remark to Denzil Bachelor that indicates the kind of respect that editor had for his photographers; the deserved first photographer credit given on Picture Post (to Bert Hardy, for his “Fire Fighters!” coverage); the amazing Elephant and Castle station, where Bert Hardy instructed me to catch the train en route to his farm estate in Surrey; the generous publication of my reviews (and stories) in British Heritage, the British Journal of Photography, Journal Quarterly and Smithsonian; and the delightful conversations James Cameron, and Mr. and Mrs. Hardy, and I had in 1981 -- complete with liquid refreshments and brownies.
“Many more sights, sounds, and smells come together at this point in my mind. Curiously enough, the whole experience of London left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings.” (7)

I hope that the impact of Picture Post’s history on me -- which was very much a part of my time in London in 1981, and which I have tried to summarize in these chapters of historical writing, examining that magazine’s photo essays and its personnel -- is relevant. For it is my intention that everyone who lives in Britain, travels there, or desires to do either, should know about Picture Post, and its folkloric contributions to British culture.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once noted: “Men run away to other countries because they are not good in their own, and run back to their own because they pass for nothing in the new places.” And that may be half-true about every world-traveller including me. But Henry James, another influential American writing during the 19th century, may have said it best when he pointed out: “My choice is the Old World, my choice, my need, my life.” (8)

Picture Post is part of that “Old World” to me; and yet, quite miraculously, it is also part of the “New World” -- a part, that is, of my American experience. My forefathers came to America from Ireland, France, Canada, Germany and Austria; and the Irish nation once was British territory, and still is in Northern Ireland. Picture Post went to all these places, and to America.

Once, Bert Hardy produced a photo essay on Northern Ireland for Picture Post -- an essay that included the photograph of an unemployed man sitting by a window. It is a well-lit picture, and one perhaps that reveals a fair amount of wonder, perhaps even hope, in an otherwise bleak landscape.

I like to think of myself as that man, but two or three years up the road. I’ve seen a few hard times myself, and still have stuck with my views on Bert Hardy, James Cameron, and the rest of Picture Post’s indomitable staff; and soon, someone -- the best possible person and organization -- will take my writing on that legendary group of souls seriously. And then I will see this book published.

It may be I will have to revise my views of the rest of the world significantly before I will become a “star” myself. But it is hoped I will never have to alter my vision of what the world looked like when Picture Post was still in business.

Of course, I don’t recollect seeing that magazine when it was still being published -- although I was almost seven years old when it closed its operating doors -- but I do recollect seeing the layouts, the pictures and the text of many photo essays from that great magazine after 1981, and I hope that I will live long enough to see them all someday.

I suppose I’ve big dreams about life still, even though I am in my fifties now, and aging rapidly. I expect to see Bert Hardy and -- Lord willing -- James Cameron again someday; and I would also like to meet more members of Picture Post’s staff while they are still on this earth. If I fail to do these things, then it will be because I have been an itinerant late starter, and not proper company for “the better people of this world.”

If the stars have pulled a face or two at me, then, perhaps I will someday be that mirror-like “man in the moon,” who can still pull a few good faces at the rest of humanity, and not be seen doing so -- except when it suits “him,” or me.

Bert hardy felt he couldn’t pull faces at the moon after he saw the moon pull faces back at him. And I hope that before I depart this world, someone will say: “There is the ‘man in the man.’ Let’s sit down and talk with him a while. He may be very agreeable to us. At any rate, he won’t pull any more faces at us that we do at him. I know, because I am one of those ‘stars’ that has pulled faces at the moon.”
Finally, everything comes down to the subject of love before long. If we love each other, as the good people -- young and old, staff and subjects, owners and readers -- of Picture Post did, then there may be a place in Heaven for all of us. In this regard, I need to thank my parents (David Ambrose and Rose Caroline Marcou), my son (Matthew Ambrose Marcou), my other family, and my friends (both living and deceased) for their loving help in putting these views on paper. God (who has something to say about who the “man in the moon” or the “stars” really are) makes room in “His House” for those people who make room for others in theirs, and many good people have made room for me. As the Golden Rule states: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Indeed, we have done unto others a bit here, and there; now we must see how they do unto us....
About the Author

David J. Marcou was born (on November 25, 1950) and raised in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He graduated from Aquinas High School in 1968; the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1973 (B.A.-History); the University of Iowa-Iowa City in 1978 (M.A.-American Studies); and the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1984 (B.J.-Journalism/News-Editorial Sequence).

After graduating from the Missouri School of Journalism, David found work as a copy editor with Yonhap News Agency in Seoul, South Korea. From there, he went on to become chief copy editor and reporter for Business Korea, publications editor for the Korea Trade Promotion Corporation-KOTRA, and industry editor for the Korea-Europe Economic Report (all in Seoul). In 1990, he was hired to be the editor of The Adams County (Wis.) Times/Friendship Reporter. From there, David went on to start his own freelance reporting organization: DJM Communications, which is now 3M Communications. He taught writing and photography for Western Technical College in La Crosse from 1991 to 2002.


David has held more than a dozen one-man photo exhibitions, including two in Seoul, South Korea. His freelance writing and pictures have been published in The La Crosse (Wis.) Tribune; The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; the Columbia Missourian; British Heritage; Korean Culture; Morning Calm; Missouri Life; Commerce Now; Catholic Digest; Smithsonian; RPS Journal; the British Journal of Photography; and the Aquinas News, among many such publications.

David has one son, Matthew Ambrose Marcou, who will be 20 years old on September 23, 2007. Matthew is a chemistry major and computer technician at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis.
Chapter 1


3. Ibid., pp. 6-12.

Chapter 2


Chapter 3


7. Of This Our Time. Pages 144-159.

Chapter 4


5. Of This Our Time. Pages 159-160.


7. "How Hulton and the Hungarian Made Picture History."


9. Of This Our Time. Page 157-158.


Chapter 5


Chapter 6


8. The International Center of Photography Encyclopedia of Photography. "Lorant, Stefan."

9. From President George Washington's "Farewell Address", in September 1796.

Chapter 7


4. Of This Our Time. Pages 160-161 and 171.

5. "The Picture Post Story."


7. "The Picture Post Story."

8. Of This Our Time. Page 172.


Chapter 8


Chapter 9


7. Of This Our Time. Pages 167-171.


Chapter 10


4. Of This Our Time. Page 172.

5. Of This Our Time. Pages 171-172.

6. Of This Our Time. Pages 173-175.


Chapter 11


6. Two letters from Tom Hopkinson to your author, one dated February 21, 1990, and the other dated April 26, 1990.
Chapter 12


2. Of This Our Time. Pages 173-174.


4. Of This Our Time. Page 148.


6. Of This Our Time. Pages 172-173.


Chapter 13

1. From the second of two letters sent to your author from Tom Hopkinson -- this one dated on April 26, 1990.


4. “Tom Hopkinson: A Father Figure in Photography.” Creative Camera, August-September 1990. Pages 7-8.


6. Of This Our Time. Pages 173-175.

7. Of This Our Time. Page 176.


11. Of This Our Time. Pages 171-175.

Chapter 14


Chapter 15


4. Of This Our Time. Pages 184-185.


8. Of This Our Time. Pages 282-290.

Chapter 16


Chapter 17


Chapter 18


Chapter 19


Chapter 20


8. 1945: The World We Fought For. Pages 73 and 354.

Chapter 21


4. “The Picture Post Story,” by Michael Hallett. The British Journal of Photography, July 2, 1992 (Pages 13-15); July 9 (Pages 22-23); July 16 (Pages 24-25); and July 23 (Pages 24-26).


Chapter 22


8. The Picture Post Album, by Robert Kee.


Chapter 23


3. Of This Our Time. Pages 251-252; 259-260.


Chapter 24


Chapter 25


4. Of This Our Time. Page 282.


Chapter 26


2. From Tom Hopkinson’s April 26, 1990, letter to your author.


Chapter 27


10. From the Introduction to Pictures on a Page.


14. Of This Our Time. Pages 148-149.


Chapter 28


Chapter 29


3. From the author’s personal interviews with Bert Hardy in November 1981.


5. Bert Hardy: My Life, by Bert Hardy.


8. Bert Hardy: My Life, by Bert Hardy.


16. From the author’s personal interview with Bert Hardy in 1981.

17. Of This Our Time. Page 283.

Chapter 30


8. The Picture Post Album, by Robert Kee.

9. Of This Our Time. Page 293.

10. Of This Our Time. Pages 236-237.

11. The Picture Post Album, by Robert Kee.

12. “How Hulton and the Hungarian Made Picture History,” an Article from the BBC1’s “The Life and Death of Picture Post.”

13. Werner Bischof, Tokyo, November 18, 1951.


Chapter 31


4. “This Is War!”


Chapter 32


Chapter 33


5. The Palestinians. Pages 252-254.


Chapter 34


Chapter 35


