PHOTOS
THAT
CHANGED
THE
WORLD

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PHOTOS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Edited by Peter Stepan

With contributions by Claus Biegert, Brad Finger, Eberhard Illner, Jonathan Jones, Lisa Le Feuvre, Barbara L. Michaels, Ingrid L. Severin, Peter Stepan, and Val Williams

Prestel
Munich · London · New York

The date given in the headline accompanying each photograph
refers to the date the photograph was taken. In cases where the identity of the photographer is unknown or in doubt, no name has been listed.

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© Prestel Verlag, Munich · London · New York, 2016
A member of Verlagsgruppe Random House GmbH
Neumarkter Strasse 28 · 81673 Munich
First published in hardcover in 2000.

Prestel Publishing Ltd.
14–17 Wells Street
London W1T 3PD

Prestel Publishing
900 Broadway, Suite 603
New York, NY 10003

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Cover: Martin Luther King, „I Have a Dream", 1963 (p. 111); picture alliance/ AP Images
Frontispiece: John Russell, Tsunami in the Indian Ocean, 2004 (p. 204); Getty Images

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016932273; British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Project management of the updated edition by Adeline Henzschel
Copyedited by Mag Taylor (pp. 6-197; except pp. 190/191), Jonathan Fox (pp. 190/191 and pp. 198-216)
Typesetting by Wolfram Söll
Cover by Benjamin Wolbergs
Production management by Astrid Wedemeyer, Lisa Preissler
Separations by Reproline mediateam, Munich
Printing and binding by Druckerei Uhl GmbH & Co.KG, Radolfzell
Paper Primaset

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C004229

Verlagsgruppe Random House FSC® N001967

Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-7913-8237-1

www.prestel.com

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FOREWORD

There are photographs that we appreciate for their beauty. And there are photographs that shake us, disquiet, and distress us so deeply that they are etched in our memories forever. This book is about those photographs.

Some of the images in this collection not only moved the public at the time of their publication—and continue to have an impact to this day—they set social changes in motion, transforming the way we live and think. The photographic research of Lewis W. Hine delivered dramatic visual proof of the scale of illegal child labour in early-twentieth-century America, and was instrumental in compelling Congress to pass stricter laws. The documentation carried out under the auspices of the Farm Security Administration in the South dragged the desperate poverty into which many had slipped during the Great Depression of the 1930s into the light of day, prompting the U.S. government to offer assistance. Similarly, Robert Capa's photograph of a dying Spanish soldier, photographs of massacres in Vietnam and China, images of starvation in Biafra—to mention but a few—mobilized public opinion. True, some photographs made no such impact, although they may have had the potential. Their appeal went unheard or reached the public too late: photographs of the genocides in Armenia and Tibet are such examples. Perpetrated "on the quiet" in obscure corners of the world, these crimes are in danger of being forgotten. Brazil offers a different kind of example: armed with images of the desperate work conditions of the Minero and the unconscionable treatment of farm workers and indigenous peoples, photographers have for decades waged a war-in-pictures against a system so corrupt that even the most professional investigative journalism seems doomed to failure.

Photos That Changed the World is first and foremost a book about photography, and only secondly a richly illustrated volume on the history of the twentieth century. The photographs themselves are the focus as we note their characteristics and consider their impact, supported by information essential to understanding the historical background. Art history and history are equally present, and complement one another.

A panorama of influential images of the twentieth century would be incomplete if in addition to the great historic events, the tragedies and revolutions, it did not also include images that have inspired and entertained—photos from the great cultural potpourri of the twentieth century, as well as key motifs from science and technology. Such images are like colourful glass beads strewn across a carpet woven in muted tones.

The number of photographs taken by photojournalists over the twentieth century—and most photographs in this volume fall into that category—is simply overwhelming. We have tried to contain the flood of images through a rigorous selection process, opting for a manageable number of carefully annotated works rather than quantity. Some photographs capture key moments and turning points in history and are particularly relevant for certain countries or groups of people, sometimes even for the entire world. We have deliberately looked beyond the borders of Europe and North America. Most of the photographs relate events that represent the culmination of a development or the eruption of social forces. The dockworkers' strike in Gdansk was one such moment. Andrzej Wajda, the renowned Polish director, wrote: "I feel that I am witness to a chapter in our history, a rare occasion. Usually history runs parallel to our own lives, but here you can feel it. Here you see the immediacy of history in the making."[1] Looking at the pictorial documentation of such revolutionary events we often get the impression that we are feeling the pulse of history more intensively than at other times. Many of the images in this selection have become icons of photojournalism, capturing an historical epoch and key events in an unusually intense manner.[2]

Thanks are due to many individuals for their participation in this project, above all to the photographers—those whose names are known and the many anonymous ones. The contributing authors must be thanked for their critical exploration of individual photographs, which often led them to challenge the authority of the visual document.

Peter Stepan

IMAGE AND POWER

by Peter Stepan

History, they say, is written by the victors. The same is true of the images that illustrate history. Nations defeated in the great battles of the centuries were threatened with obscurity unless they could leave visual proof for posterity. A victor was only a true victor once he had proclaimed his superiority for all the world to hear and only if pictures of his triumph were there for all eyes to see. Conversely, there was no greater posthumous infamy for a Roman emperor than the destruction of the marble busts in his image, the erasure of his name from public inscriptions and documents.

The powerful have power over images, too. They decide which images are made and distributed, and which are not. Confiscation and censorship, staging and retouching: anyone who believes that such practices are the exclusive domain of autocratic or dictatorial regimes is badly mistaken. Today it is impossible to wage war unless—long before the go-ahead by parliament—the whole political apparatus of the press has been won over to the operative goal. It all boils down to information and misinformation, the clever dance of the press, timing and knowing just when to launch a text and corresponding image whose effect is as politically targeted and calculated as the range and power of the artillery. This is image propaganda in the information age, standard even in a democracy, and evident most recently in the media manipulation on all sides during both the Gulf War and the Balkan wars. When we think of what is possible even in countries that guarantee freedom of the press, we shudder at the thought of the standard of journalistic ethics in totalitarian systems.[1]

Images have tremendous influence. They are suggestive, and what they show is casually accepted as truth and reality. We frequently challenge the statistics and content of written reports. But photographs enjoy an incredible presumption of veracity, and the belief in their objectivity is difficult to shake. The seeming impartiality of a technically governed piece of machinery, the camera, suggests authenticity. And the mechanisms of this seduction operate with great subtlety.

The Unphotographed Images

Images are a privilege. If you've got them on your side, you have a better chance of things going your way. Among the retinue of lobbyists, the picture makers are always there, ready to deliver the necessary material. But what happens to the less privileged peoples and groups that do not have the benefit of a lobby? Saudi Arabia had the support of allied squadrons in its war against Iraq. Yet which world power stood by the Armenians, who fell victim to Turkish pogroms in the middle of the First World War? Who came to the aid of the Tibetan people when the Chinese invaded in the 1950s, or the people in western New Guinea, whose land was simply annexed by Indonesia in 1969? Who protects the interests of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon today against clear-cutting and mercury contamination by gold prospectors? Who speaks up for North America's native peoples, the misery on their few remaining reservations compounded by the presence of uranium in the soil? Their oil wealth saved the Saudi Arabians, but for the Yanomami in Brazil, the Navajo and Laguna-Pueblo in New Mexico and Arizona, the Cree and Dene in Saskatchewan, and the Ogoni in oil-rich southern Nigeria, the lucrative resources in their land have been a curse. So we must ask: where are the photographs to document these stories? Were any photos ever taken? In the case of Tibet they were few indeed, and even those are rarely published. As for the indigenous peoples, image editors have preferred folklore to the harsh reality of these people's lives. This lack of images is particularly saddening when the "internal affairs" of a state result in the violation of human rights. It is pure chance that we have a snapshot of Salvador Allende stepping in front of the governmental palace one last time during the coup in 1973 (p. 139). What followed was raw right-wing terror which claimed thousands of political victims—a chapter in South American history that was almost never photographed. We are familiar with the Tiananmen massacre in Beijing in June 1989 (p. 163), but Western eyes never witnessed—or no one dared to photograph—what happened simultaneously in other large cities in China, where the people were equally frustrated with the corruption and tyranny of party functionaries and protested fiercely. The chiefs of the Chinese information bureau had been correct in their calculations. Still, the reports from courageous journalists in the capital that did reach us despite a news blackout were sufficiently devastating.

The prisoners of the gulags in the USSR or the labour camps in China were rarely recorded in photographs. The military juntas in Brazil, Argentina, and other South American countries were equally adept at eliminating anyone who stood in their way, without leaving a trace. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires hold up photographs, portraits taken of their relatives before they disappeared (p. 147), but no one knows what really happened to them; at best there are a few oral histories. What has happened to the Kurds in Turkey, in Iraq, and in Syria over the past decades? Only when a country was defeated through outside intervention or as a result of war, as in the case of Nazi Germany, did photographs play an important role as documentation. In this case, photos were systematically gathered in preparation for the Nuremberg trials to support the prosecution's case against the accused (p. 67). In the case of the Pol Pot regime, following the example of the Nazi terror, many years passed before documentation of the crimes was discovered in archives kept by the camp photographers (p. 141).

Every journalist has a story about the difficulties of filing reports from countries where the press is subject to censorship. How much more dangerous then is the work of photojournalists in totalitarian states, especially when martial law is proclaimed or when war breaks out. Important chapters of the twentieth century must do without pictorial illustration. The photographs are absent not only because it was physically impossible to make them and would have endangered the photographers themselves, but also because they were simply not politically opportune or altogether desirable. In many cases, there was no lobby to catapult the events into the press. And the result? We cannot fully reconstruct the twentieth century by means of archival images alone. To be sure, we have an abundance of images from the "focal points" of the world—that is, those regions declared as such by headline writers and opinion makers—but the closer we get to regions that are socially, geographically, and ethnically "peripheral," the quicker the flood of images dwindles to a trickle or dries up completely.

The information we have about some behind-the-scenes events of the twentieth century is often due to the willingness of actively engaged eyewitnesses to take a risk. One need only think of Ladislav Bielik (p. 121), Nick Ut (p. 134), or Robert Capa (p. 50). Many of the photographers are unknown by name, at times deliberately and for good reasons. The author of the Allende photograph (p. 139), a Chilean, insisted upon negotiating with *The New York Times* under a pseudonym to escape reprisals. As a result, a deeply moving image reached the world and was voted the World Press Photo of 1973. We know the names of some of the figures in the snapshot, but the photographer had to remain anonymous to protect himself.

In addition to courageous individuals, it is important to acknowledge the initiatives of groups who have worked for decades to shed light into murky political zones. Organizations such as Amnesty International (founded in 1961), the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (Association of Endangered Peoples, founded in 1968–70), Human Rights Watch (founded in 1978), and many others have always mistrusted official communiqués, finding their own sources of information in the "grey market" and through internal channels. The bulletins and statements of these organizations are the "black book" of twentieth-century history, which offers a stark contrast to the official centennial retrospective; unsettling as it may be, it provides a look through rose-coloured glasses by comparison. The environmental organization Greenpeace (founded in 1971) should also be mentioned in this context, whose struggle to contain ecological destruction has often had tangible results. Whenever possible, human rights groups and other activists have tried to unearth photographic documentation to make their case. The Atomic Photographers Guild is an association of photographers who have devoted themselves to documenting the effects of uranium mining and nuclear testing, thereby making the invisible visible. Since the sixties, Yuri Kuidin, a member of the Guild, succeeded in taking photographs in Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, a former test site for Soviet nuclear weapons, which shook even our media-hardened eyes: newborns with genetic malformations so severe that they are barely recognizable as human beings. The Soviet Union had set off some 470 atomic bombs in the region for testing.

"Infotainment"

On the one hand, thousands of photos of Princess Diana (p. 151) and film stars whose every appearance and gesture is minutely observed; on the other hand, the great silence and failure of the media in the face of crimes against humanity. Photos are big business. Photos are products. The hunger for images is insatiable and needs to be fed every single day. Dailies and weeklies, high-calibre journals and the tabloids seem to survive on the market only if they engage in a bidding war for visual sensationalism. Today, the word "news" seems to be almost synonymous with "sensation." The concept of "news" contains within it the moment of the new, the until then undiscovered; it makes a direct appeal to human curiosity. *Life* magazine boasts of being present "on the newsfronts of the world." But is this the information we need? News has become fatally entwined with entertainment. The content of a message seems almost secondary. The primary aspect is the news value as such. Accidents and crashes, fires and abductions, intimate details in the lives of celebrities—all guarantee record editions. The most moving images, statistically, are not those of great political events, but the visual "top ten," the optic bytes of a Threepenny World. Yet the latest stories are always the same old ones. The potential of photography to enlighten, something that has only been able to develop with the democratization of information, threatens to go under with the total commercialization of the medium.

These are the conditions for news distribution that determine what our *image* of the world will be. Tailored for sensation, visually effective, easily readable, and colourful: those are the requirements for a commercially viable photograph, one that responds to the demands of "infotainment." The more it conforms to our expectations and clichés about certain countries or ethnic groups, the better. The photo of a Muslim kneeling in prayer in front of a burning oil well—taken two days after the official end of the Gulf War—comes dangerously close to being staged, so perfect are the convergences of all the ingredients required for a Western media product (p. 169). The image meets all the prerequisites for a good film poster. Complex content, which would require us to linger over an image, would only limit its appeal and consumer-oriented "readability." Mind you, the professional emphasis on the essence of an action, the artistic mastery of photography, are not at issue here.

Newspapers and commercial magazines feed on events. Not a random hodgepodge of incidents, but events that can be divided into bite-sized, easily digestible visual information: fish sticks instead of fish. What good is news that describes a chronic state of catastrophe with which we are already familiar? Thousands of children die of starvation every single day. But these figures no longer shock as much as they once did, victims themselves of a cult of fast-breaking news perpetuated by the press and television. Statistics about the status quo of humankind—and the photographs to match them—are only pulled out for parade on special occasions, a UNESCO anniversary or other such celebrations. At all other times the motto is: horror that has become chronic does not merit an article or a photograph. While "good news is bad news," ever-new locales are vital to meet the requirements of "news." Images of famine, especially, seem to have lost their impact as a result of their mass distribution and repetition over the past decades; people have become visually satiated. The Sudan presents another such example: bankrupted by years of military rule, from 1983 until 2005 the country was in the grip of its second long term war, a war that had claimed two million victims by 2001 and four million refugees.[2] The war was followed by a series of ongoing conflicts, but as far as the Western media are concerned, it might as well be. What interests the media: the world as it is or a stylized version of the world?[3]

There's no doubt that the impact of an individual image is diminished by the deluge of them that washes over us day after day. Regardless of the news medium, its moment in the limelight is brief and even its echo soon fades away. Today, images are easy to ignore because the next one is already clamouring for our attention. Would Hine's photographs of child labourers (p. 17) inspire the kind of political change today that they did in the early twentieth century? Jeffrey Newman, the current chairman of the National Child Labor Committee, is sceptical. Child labour in the Third World certainly seems to call for another such photo-reportage, but contemporary social documentary photographers wouldn't even have to travel that far afield. They could simply look in their own backyard. "Now we need another Hine to denounce the exploitation of children in late-twentieth-century America," says Newman. "How many people are aware that most of the fruit on our tables is gathered in California by unregistered child labour?"[4]

Hine spread his social message by means of lectures, exhibitions, and publishing. He might have met another lecturer of his day, had he been interested in the race to the South Pole: Roald Amundsen embarked on a lecture tour across America soon after his successful expedition, giving some 160 presentations. "I had no peace day or night. Like an old poster I was sent from one place to another . . . I was merely a cog in the great lecture machinery," he wrote. Amundsen wasn't giving his slide presentations merely out of passionate interest; he needed the income they generated, having exhausted his funds.[5] Second only to newspapers, such talks were a popular medium of bringing photographs to the attention of a wider public.

In 1908, competition for photography arrived on the scene at the movies: cinemas showed newsreels with the latest information on politics, culture, and sports, in moving images that were updated once or twice a week; after 1928, the pictures were accompanied by sound. In view of the newspaper boom in the 1920s it is safe to say that far from posing a serious threat to photography, these newsreels served to whet the public's appetite for current news. But the cinemas and newsreels did spell the end for lectures and slide presentations.

After the Second World War, the newsreels themselves were overtaken by yet another invention: television. Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 was the first in history to be televised internationally. As a medium, television was far more successful as competition for photography (p. 81) and the antagonism between still photography, distributed mostly in print, and moving images in television news continues to this day. During the second half of the twentieth century the journalistic photograph undoubtedly lost some of its uniqueness, but its suggestive power remains undiminished. Photography has been forced to rediscover its unique strengths. Among these is the fact that a photograph can zero in on *the* moment that is the culmination of a sequence of actions. The best photographs are those that hit the mark perfectly.

The Aesthetics of Horror

Let's not fool ourselves: many famous photographs from the arenas of war or disaster are also "beautiful," be it Verdun (p. 31), Lakehurst (p. 54), Korea (p. 77), or Tiananmen (p. 163). These examples are successful attempts at drawing a picturesque element out of the horror. From a plethora of photographs, these are the ones that have come to epitomize the events over time. At Lakehurst, there were thirty-six dead in the crash of the *Hindenburg*, but they were never photographed. From Tiananmen, there are photographs of protesters crushed by tanks, but those images tend to be found only in scholarly publications and research archives. My Lai is closely associated with the image of a screaming woman, but one would have to search far and wide for photographs of the massacred villagers lying in their own blood.

Commonly held ideas about what is acceptable to the public—what constitutes good taste—have led to a kind of "aesthetic" censorship. Concerns about human dignity and the associated reluctance to photograph corpses may also have played a role, as has the Western habit of repressing anything that has to do with death. Thus the key photograph of the *Hindenburg* disaster shows impressive fireworks, and the Tiananmen massacre looks like a military-civic parade. The stageworthy assembly of Ku Klux Klan members in Wrightsville (p. 72) makes us shudder, although the photo gives us no clue that this is a criminal organization. Dorothea Lange's photograph from her ambitious campaign to document the misery of farmworkers in the southern states bears the mark of a Madonna image (p. 49). And even Robert Capa's *Death of a Spanish Militiaman* shows not a trace of blood. We've already mentioned our misgivings about the image that has come to symbolize the Gulf War. All these examples demonstrate that the visual reception of events is subject to an aestheticism, which can in part be attributed to the history of how photographs have been used. On the other end of the spectrum are relatively unvarnished images of historic events: the Armenian massacre (p. 28), Pearl Harbor (p. 54), the Crimean War (p. 57), the Warsaw Ghetto (p. 59), the Vietnam War (pp. 115, 134) and Rwanda (p. 173).

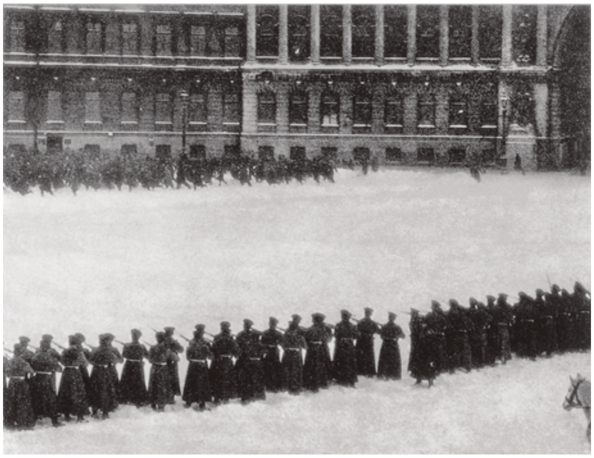
Luck, Staging, Manipulation

To be in the right place at the right time is the dream of every photojournalist. Sometimes there are signs that things are about to happen: demonstrations, for example, whose explosive character is evident, even before they begin. But "reading the signs" is not enough. Often it's a matter of pure chance whether someone is there with a camera, ready to release the shutter at just the right moment: Algiers (p. 95), Bratislava (p. 121), Paris (p. 117), Gdansk (p. 148), West Bank (p. 159), Beijing (p. 162). Moreover, developments in wartime are notoriously difficult to assess. Drastically restricted freedom of movement is perhaps the greatest obstacle for war correspondents. Taking a "good" picture under such conditions requires an enormous amount of patience and even more luck than usual, in addition to sound military experience and a great deal of talent. Among photographers, war correspondents are a species apart, and Robert Capa stands out as a remarkable figure among them. It has been said that he had more war experience than many a five-star general. The oft-quoted photograph from the Spanish Civil War is the incunabulum of twentieth-century war photography, establishing the maxim—"get as close as you can"—for all subsequent war photographers. But as Gisèle Freud has pointed out, Capa's advice would prove fatal for many a dedicated correspondent and indeed for Capa himself, whose life ended tragically when he stepped on a mine in his attempt to get "as close as possible" in Thai-Binh, Vietnam.

In the nineteenth century, when photography was still burdened with an excess of equipment in the days before the portable camera, photo-reportage was a cumbersome affair, a profession in its infancy. Still, some of the most famous early exponents of war photography date from that period. Roger Fenton was the first to create a visual record of war in the Crimea, where British, Turkish, and French soldiers fought against Tsarist troops from 1854 to 1855. With the technology at his disposal, Fenton—who travelled around in what he called his "photographic van"—couldn't take battle pictures. Instead, his photographs focus on portraits of generals, marshals, and other high-ranking military officials, on camp life and topography—all subjects at rest. Common soldiers are only seen in formation or as aides-de-camp; a scene with a wounded soldier becomes an unintentional allegory of compassion. This was an era when commanders still dined in style and drank champagne when the manoeuvres of the day were over. Battle scenes could be photographed only much later, during the course of the First World War. Lighter cameras, faster and more manageable "roll films," and faster shutter speeds made this possible. Alexander Gardner's and Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of the dead on the battlefields of Antietam (1862) and Gettysburg (1863) impress with their high degree of realism. Soon after, they were shown at an exhibition in New York, where they confronted visitors with the gruesome reality of the Civil War. Photographs taken during the Paris Commune (1870–71) focussed on scenes during breaks between battles or once the fighting was over. In addition to group portraits of the fighters at the barricades, the photographs recorded many views of destroyed buildings and portraits of victims, both revolutionaries and government troops.[6]

In the twentieth century it became possible to photograph scenes of uprisings and demonstrations more directly and spontaneously; the examples collected in this volume are among the most outstanding works in the history of photojournalism. Rebellions were often followed by far-reaching changes in the political landscape, overthrowing governments or entire political systems. To the new leaders some visual record of their own beginnings was indispensable for their identity and self-image. As the former rebels became the new masters, they sought to bolster their claim to leadership, no matter how corrupt, by creating a "historic" frame around the heroic dawn of the party in an attempt at legitimization. If authentic visual records were available, all the better, and if not, one would simply commission some.

The storming of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg is the perfect example of such artificial historicizing (p. 33). It is a well-known fact that capturing the seat of the Russian govern-



Suppression of a peaceful demonstration in front of the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, on January 9, 1905, known as Bloody Sunday. Film still from *Ninth of January* by Vyacheslav Visorsky, 1925.

ment was a fairly unexciting nocturnal exercise. There are no authentic visual records. To preserve the memory of this historic event—set off by the legendary cannon shot from the battleship *Aurora*—theatrical re-enactments were staged annually in the streets, and stills from the performance were made. The matching "photo document" is correspondingly theatrical. Although it was recast after the fact, the image is lodged so firmly in the collective memory of the twentieth century that it is widely accepted as the key image of the October Revolution. Even established stock houses sell it to this day as a photograph from 1917. Images from Bloody Sunday, January 9, 1905—when protesters marching peacefully to deliver a petition to Tsar Nicholas II were brutally mowed down in a hail of bullets—were also reconstructed. To create a visual record of this key pre-October Revolution event, Soviet "historians" used a still from Vyacheslav Viskorsky's 1925 film *Ninth of January* (*Deryatoye Yanvarya*).

On the other side of the Great Wall of China, the need for history was just as great after the revolution, during the early years of the new regime. To enhance the legend of the Long March (1934–36) with visual "proof," Mao Zedong, then ten years older, sat on a white horse and was surrounded by extras for a crowd effect. According to Harrison E. Salisbury, an expert on the Long March, no original photographs exist, only drawings.[7] The white horse seen in the staged photograph was later stuffed and is still on exhibit in a museum. Whether the person who created this *mise en scène* was conscious of "staging truth" is of no matter. The relationship between truth and tale in the Middle Kingdom is something very different than that in the rationally thinking West or in the "New World." Perhaps it was merely an attempt to create interesting visual material for the massive People's Education campaign, which the Communist Party was undertaking at the time.

Staged photographs, posed photographs, and retouched photographs: the lines between such definitions are blurred and often difficult to decipher. The photograph of Tibetan prisoners lined up for deportation (p. 87) is most likely posed. The Chinese would have had no trouble in rounding up survivors of the Lhasa massacre to create the scene. One of the most famous retouched photographs is that of Lenin's speech with Leon Trotsky standing beside the podium (p. 37). When Stalin decided to liquidate Trotsky—after having expelled him from the party in 1927—the former leader was quickly erased from the photograph and the blank space filled in with steps. By now, examples of Stalin's handiwork fills a whole book: "Just like their colleagues in Hollywood, the Soviet retouchers spent many hours 'improving' upon faces that were less than perfect and falsifying reality. Especially Stalin's pockmarked face required a high degree of retouching skill. But when he began to 'purge' the country in the late 1930s, a new kind of retouching occurred. After Stalin's henchmen had physically eliminated his political adversaries, [the retouchers] removed them from all visual records."[8]

Totalitarian governments have always been especially aware of the "power of the image," but photo manipulation is by no means restricted to such regimes. With software programs such as Photoshop, it has become quite common. The thin layer between fiction and non-fiction is porous and too easily overlooked. In an era besieged by mass media and cyberspace and consequently suffering from a latent loss of reality, the question about the authenticity of images has taken on new importance as the ethics of reportage and the reputation of the profession itself are at stake. How pressing and topical such questions are is confirmed by a April 1996 manifesto circulated by top newspaper and magazine professionals in Spain: "We want images that are new and imaginative, with virtuality not compromising the permanence of those that arise from reality, because by defending quality and credibility we are also defending the feasibility of the Press as a product. We believe in truth as the leading principle of our activity as journalists and therefore we consider that it is not correct to alter the content of a news image in a way that it might mislead the public or distort its author's intention." The copyright holder's claim is at stake.

Images of History

History is a social construct of the past to which photography also makes a contribution. Our image of the twentieth century is often influenced by what journalists have captured on film. This applies equally to photojournalists, war correspondents, society photographers, and paparazzi, not to mention amateur photographers. But our image of the century is equally informed by that which has *not* been captured on film. Vast areas of the globe are a no man's land in photographic terms. Even in the case of important events in those areas, there's no guarantee that someone was ready with a camera. Moreover, many visual records have simply disappeared: chance plays a role in whether a photograph is preserved for posterity. It seems almost a miracle that the photograph of Scott and his team in front of Amundsen's tent at the South Pole has survived (p. 24). No such luck existed in the case of the sinking of the *Titanic*, where no camera was there to record the disaster. When editorial departments at newspapers around the world realized that no photographs existed, the disaster had to be reconstructed in drawings that gave the impression of news photography.

Just as visual records can elucidate, educate, and enrich our view of history, so they can become a curse when they misrepresent facts or fail to show events in their totality. Another danger lies in the fact that our "image" of an event is often entirely informed by a single photograph. Photos alone cannot give us the full picture; we need additional information to expand our knowledge. In his overview of the archival documentation of the pro-democracy movement in China, Richard Baum has addressed the same problem: "While the historical memory of the 'Beijing Spring' of 1989 has inevitably begun to fade with the passage of time, a few highly evocative, stereotyped images continue to provide a potent, if shadowy, reminder of what transpired. The solitary figure of a young Chinese civilian, captured on film calmly facing down a column of tanks, resonates powerfully today in annual U.S. congressional debates on the renewal of China's most favored nation status, in widening U.S. support for Tibetan independance, and in the appearance of an entirely new epithet in the English lexicon: 'The Butchers of Beijing.'"[9] Baum contends that the video still (p. 163) contributes to an inaccurate representation of the facts of the massacre in Beijing because, contrary to common belief, the victims were in the main average Chinese citizens and only relatively few students, and the worst carnage did not occur in Tiananmen Square but on Changan Boulevard to the west of the square.

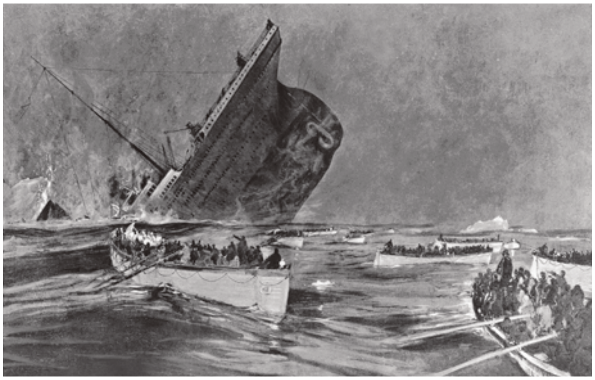
Faced with the risk that events of this magnitude might be forgotten, we may have to resign ourselves to such inaccuracies, trusting that the potential for enlightenment is one of the enduring achievements of photography. Nevertheless, the problem remains that photographs often contribute to the simplification of an event, or promote prejudice and partial knowledge. Perhaps we should approach the "reading" of photographs in the manner recommended for reading biblical texts: that is, with the awareness that our understanding has been corrupted by religious artists over the centuries.

The Image in the Witness Box

We face a dilemma in working with the products of photojournalism. Photographs of high artistic quality are invariably appropriated by art history, the "science" of aesthetics. (Although—at least in Europe—art historians who make photography the topic of their study have often been relegated to the sidelines of their profession.) The visual products of pure reportage, those that document historic or political events, are considered the domain of historians. These professionals, in turn, are less experienced in reading an image, and while they are fully capable of providing the corresponding historic facts, aesthetic analysis and interpretation are another matter. Ideally, the interpretation of visual records should be a matter of both historic and art historic study: a challenge to establish a level of interdisciplinary co-operation that does not yet exist.

Art historians have been only too happy to study icons of photo-reportage: images such as *Migrant Mother* by Dorothea Lange, Robert Capa's *Death of a Spanish Militiaman,* or Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. But history is not made up of "Sundays" alone. How do we approach everyday images from the arenas of politics and war: trench warfare at Verdun, independence celebrations in Africa, rebellions from Leipzig to East Timor, or daily life for blacks in South Africa? Many of these images are snapshots taken by photographers whose names are either not known or not yet researched, from areas of the world that the Eurocentric tradition of art history (or, to be more precise, its obsession with Italy) has trouble relating to.

Historians are always ready to use photographs to *illustrate* historic events. They interpet them with the help of text sources, using them as secondary sources, if at all. Photos are considered supplementary information to the "hard facts," and are seldom interpreted as primary sources. When we take a closer look—as this book literally invites us to do—we find that photos occupy


Sinking of the *Titanic*, 1912, gouache.

a unique position vis-à-vis historic "fact." Rarely can they claim to be simply a mirror of events. Like eyewitness reports, images deliver an interpretation of an event from a specific perspective: subjective, sometimes partisan, sometimes manipulative. Anyone who believes that a photograph captures "reality" is naive. Why a picture was taken, who distributed it, what their intention was—these questions must be asked again and again. Photographs can speak to us only after we have mistrusted and challenged them.

Foreword

1 Ulrich Zuper, ed., *Wir bauen ihnen ein Denkmal: Dokumente, Materialien, Tonbandprotokolle. Lenin-Werft* (We are building a monument: Documents, materials, transcripts, from the Lenin Shipyards) (Stuttgart, 1982).

2 The accent was placed on photojournalistic work. But all areas of photography, traditional and modern, have produced deeply moving and consciousness-raising images. This applies equally to portrait, landscape, commercial, and industrial photography as to nature, underwater, and aerial photography, and to scientific, microscopic, X-ray, medical, and astrophotography.

"Photographs change nothing but spread their influence everywhere," Vicki Goldberg noted in her seminal work *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York, 1991). She goes on to list the areas she studied to determine the impact of individual photographs: "The photographs have been divided into categories corresponding to the kinds of influence they exerted—revelation, proof, political persuasion, social reform... It may be that the influence of images cannot be proved to a scientist's satisfaction, yet we always seem to be living with the results...," p. 16*ff*.

Image and Power

1 Paul Watson, *Los Angeles Times* correspondent during the NATO attacks on Kosovo, is one of the most convincing critics of the allied information policy. His commentaries give a more complex view of many events, which the television stations treated with unfailing one-sidedness. As an eyewitness to ethnic cleansing and supposed liquidations, he rejects any hasty judgment and assessment as improper from a journalistic point of view. *Kosovo: The War and the Media*, a documentary film by Claude Vajda and Béatrice Pignède, France 2000. On the subject of manipulated media representation during the Gulf War, see Vicki Goldberg's *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York, 1991), pp. 257*ff*.

2 Sudan: Nearly 2 million dead as a result of the world's longest running civil war, U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2001. Archived 10 December 2004 on the Internet Archive (http://web.archive.org/web/20041210024759/http://www.refugees.org/news/crisis/sudan.htm). Retrieved January 22nd, 2016.

3 In this context, Michler makes a remarkable proposal: "There is a lack of preventative new reporting about catastrophes and erroneous developments in the making. This kind of preventative information could ensure, in the case of conflicts, that attempts at negotiations are begun in time." Walter Michler, *Afrika – Wege in die Zukunft* (Unkel/Rhein, 1995), p. 42.

4 Marie-Monique Robin, *Cent photos du siècle* (Paris, 1999), no. 4.

5 Roland Huntford, ed., *Die Amundsen-Photographien: Expeditionen ins ewige Eis* (Braunschweig, 1998), p. 9.

6 *Roger Fenton: Photographer of the Crimean War* (London, 1954); Musée d'Orsay*, La Commune photographiée* (Paris, 2000).

7 There is only one photograph from 1936 with General Zhu De and Zhou Enlai. I am grateful to Eberhard Illner, Cologne, for his insight on the Long March.

8 David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (New York, 1997); see also *Bilder, die lügen*, published by Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Bonn, 1998).

9 Jian Ding, Elaine Yeeman Chan, and Leslie Evans, *The China Democracy Movement and Tiananmen Incident: Annotated Catalog of the UCLA Archives, 1989–1993* (Los Angeles, 1999).

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

San Francisco Earthquake 18
Child Labour in the United States 20
The Wright Brothers' Airplane 22
Discovery of Machu Picchu 24
Scott's Expedition Sights Amundsen's Tent 26
Mexican Revolution 29
Arrest of Archduke Ferdinand's Assassin 30
Armenian Genocide 33
The Siege of Verdun 34
Storming of the Winter Palace 36
Signing of the Treaty of Versailles 38
Lenin's Call to Arms 41
Opening Tutankhamun's Coffin 42
Lindbergh Lands in Paris 44
The Crash 46
Prohibition in the United States 48
Reichstag Fire 50
Migrant Mother 52
Death of a Spanish Militiaman 55
The *Hindenburg* Disaster 57
Bombing of Pearl Harbor 59
Searching for Dead Relatives 60
Deportation from the Warsaw Ghetto 62
Normandy Landings 64
Dresden Destroyed 66
Raising the Flag 68
Concentration Camp after Liberation 70
Bombing Hiroshima 72
Gandhi and the Spinning Wheel 74
The Burning Cross 77
Portrait of Einstein 78
Korean War 80
The Ascent of Everest 82
Coronation of Elizabeth II 84
Marilyn Monroe 86
Hungarian Uprising 88
Deportation of Tibetan Prisoners 90
Elvis Presley 92
Che Guevara 94
Celebrating Independence 96
Demands for Independence 98
Gagarin, First Man in Space 100
Escape to the West 102
Boy with Toy Hand Grenade 104
Cuban Missile Crisis 106
The Beatles 108
I Have a Dream 110
Assassination of John F. Kennedy 112
Muhammad Ali Knocks Out Sonny Liston 114
Louis Armstrong in Performance 116

Execution in Saigon 118
Student Uprising in Paris 120
War and Famine in Biafra 123
The End of the Prague Spring 124
Rescuing the Abu Simbel Temple Complex 126
First Man on the Moon 128
Woodstock 130
Tragedy at Kent State 132
Pelé Leads Brazil to Win the World Cup 134
Willy Brandt at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial 136
Napalm Attack 139
Wounded Knee Takeover 140
Military Coup Against Salvador Allende 142
Portraits of the Condemned 144
Soweto Uprising 146
Camp David Accords 148
Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo 150
Strike at the Lenin Shipyards 153
The Royal Wedding 154
Destruction of the Yanomami Territory 156
Nuclear Disaster in Chernobyl 158
Workers in a Serra Pelada Gold Mine 160
The Intifada 162
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill 164
Massacre in Beijing 166
Fall of the Berlin Wall 168
Nelson Mandela's Release from Prison 170
The Gulf War 172
Albanian Refugees 175
Tutsi Genocide 176
Greenpeace Confronts Shell Oil 178
Muslim Expulsion 180
Mourning Yitzhak Rabin 183
Zapatista Uprising in Chiapas 184
AIDS Memorial Quilt 186
Attack on the World Trade Center 188
The Disappearing Aral Sea 191
Genocide in Dafur, Sudan 193
Tsunami in the Indian Ocean 194
Hurricane Katrina Devastates New Orleans 196
The Gorges Dam 199
Inauguration of President Barack Obama 200
The Last Days of Osama bin Laden 202
Arab Spring 205
Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami 207
Flight MH370 208
Destruction of the Roman Temple at Palmyra 211
Alan Kurdi and the Syrian Refugee Crisis 213
Pluto 214

SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE

April 18, 1906 San Francisco, California

Photographer: Arnold Genthe

On April 18, 1906, at 5:12 a.m., two earthquakes shook northern California between Salinas and Fort Bragg, affecting an area that stretches some 65 kilometres (40 miles) across and 320 kilometres (200 miles) along the San Andreas fault. The first quake lasted for forty seconds and the second for twenty seconds, with a ten-second interval between them, and reached 8.4 on the Richter scale. Aftershocks continued throughout the day. Some 5,000 buildings, especially those built on soft or sandy ground, were destroyed. Roads and streetcar tracks were broken up, rendering them impassable. Subsequent fires caused extensive additional damage.

The photograph captures the drama of the moment: the photographer, Arnold Genthe, has chosen his position carefully, setting up the unwieldy equipment of the day—tripod and glass plates—in an elevated, central position. Together with hundreds of San Franciscans he looks down the hill at the centre of the city. Damaged buildings are clearly visible in the foreground. One facade has collapsed and rubble fills the street. But that's not what everyone is looking at. In fascination, they gaze at the huge columns of fire and smoke—a devastating panorama of destruction. Sporadic, smaller fires, fatally ignored by the authorities at first because no one believed they posed a serious threat, ignited burst gas mains. To make things worse, the wind picked up and soon firestorms were spreading throughout the city.

Only 585 firefighters and a mere fifty fire engines were available to serve the vast area affected by the quake. Desperate attempts by private citizens to put out the fires were doomed because the water mains that led from Crystal Springs Lake and from San Andreas Lake into the city had been broken. There were not enough experienced firefighters who to knew how to dynamite buildings and create firebreaks to stop the fires from spreading. The fires were finally brought under control when the wind changed direction and after the water system had been hastily repaired. The toll after seventy-four hours of raging fires: 450 dead, 28,000 buildings or approximately one-third of San Francisco destroyed, $350 million to $500 million in damage. Chinatown, San Francisco's financial district, was completely destroyed, as was the newly built city hall and its archives, the library, the art collection, and numerous churches and schools. The disaster ruined many businesses and prominent families lost their fortunes virtually overnight. Fire insurance companies chipped in with $229,000 in compensation, but others refused on the grounds that it was an "act of God." Even today, only 5 percent of Californians have earthquake insurance. The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 remains one of the worst natural disasters in the history of earthquake-prone California. E.I.

Warren A. Beck and David A. Williams. *California: A History of the Golden State*. Garden City, New York, 1972.

CHILD LABOUR IN THE UNITED STATES

November 30, 1908 Lancaster, South Carolina

Photographer: Lewis W. Hine

“Sadie Pfeifer, 48 inches high. Has worked half a year. One of the many small children at work in Lancaster Cotton Mills. Lancaster, S. C., Nov. 30, 1908.” Thus read the brief notes jotted down by Lewis W. Hine, who photographed this girl in a cotton mill in South Carolina. The girl supervised an industrial spindle machine, watching for torn threads and changing spools.

We don’t know how old the girl in the picture is, but her height gives us some idea. A twelve-year-old boy, whom Hine encountered in Columbia, South Carolina, had been working in a mill for four years. Of forty workers at a mill in Newton, Massachusetts, ten were still children. In textile mills in Dallas, Texas, and Tifton, Georgia, Hine found twenty or more child labourers, dozens in Lancaster—many clearly less than ten years old. Often barefoot, they worked as weavers, spindle changers, sweepers, or “back-ropers.”

But that wasn’t all. Things looked much the same in other areas. Hine photographed children in mines, glassworks, and canning factories. Children working as newspaper boys, shoeshine boys, cigar rollers, and . . . beggars. The army of children who worked in cottage industries at home—making doll dresses, lace, artificial flowers, or shelling nuts from dawn ’til dusk—was too large to count. After Jacob Riis, Hine became the pioneer of social documentary photography. His lens recorded the tough everyday life of the children without softening the edge. A far cry from the saccharine idyll of childhood seen in nineteenth-century photography, these images confront us with the underbelly of American prosperity: ragged clothes and large, sad eyes. Free from all sentimentality, his photographs sought to shake the public out of its complacency, to incite the delegates in Washington to toughen up child labour legislation. Between 1906 and 1918, Hine undertook countless journeys by car and train on behalf of the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), a humanitarian organization, travelling through the United States and taking some 5,000 photographs, each as good as circumstances would allow and labelled with brief notes for NCLC research: name, age or height, occupation, location, company name, and date. These notes proved that even those laws that did exist to protect children were often grossly ignored. They also demonstrated that new, farther-reaching legislation was required. It would take until 1938, however, before Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which permitted children fourteen and older to be employed only if such employment took place outside of school hours and not in factories or mines. The need for social reform that was the motivation for Hine’s images pushed aesthetics into the background: the photographs aimed to shed light on poverty and maltreatment, America’s dark side. Nevertheless, the photographs are clearly the work of great formal talent. In many of the individual or group portraits the psyche of these children is laid bare in a fascinating and often disturbing manner. P.S.

Vicki Goldberg. *Lewis W. Hine: Children at Work*. New York, 1999.

LEWIS W. HINE (1874–1940) was eighteen when his father died in an accident. He found employment in an upholstery factory, where he worked up to thirteen hours six days a week. After moving from job to job, he trained as a teacher and took up photography. Using this medium to educate the public became his central theme. In 1906 he began working for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), at first as a freelancer. In 1908 he resigned from teaching and devoted himself full time to photography. As an employee of the NCLC he took countless photographs of child labourers that were published in newspapers and other publications as part of the committee’s public education campaign. From 1913–1914 Hine was responsible for the NCLC exhibitions; he also photographed child labourers and gave lectures on the topic. In 1918 he was commissioned by the Red Cross to document the effects of the First World War on civilians in the Balkans. In 1939 a retrospective of his work was exhibited in several U.S. cities.