Photographing the "Uncelebrated" Truth: The Newspaper PM, New York 1940-1942

Nancy Wechter
CUNY Hunter College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds

Part of the American Art and Architecture Commons, Modern Art and Architecture Commons, and the Photography Commons

Recommended Citation

http://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/70

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Hunter College at CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Arts & Sciences Theses by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@cuny.edu.
Photographing the “Uncelebrated” Truth: 
The Newspaper PM, New York 1940-1942

By

Nancy Wechter

Submitted in partial fulfillment 
of the requirements for the degree of 
Master of Arts in Art History
Hunter College of the City of New York

2016

Thesis Sponsor:

May 18, 2016                      Maria Antonella Pelizzari
Date                              First Reader

May 18, 2016                      Nebahat Avcioglu
Date                              Second Reader
Acknowledgements

Many thanks to:

Clartje Van Rijn and Chris George of the Print Study Room at the International Center of Photography for all their invaluable assistance.

Mary Engel of the Engel-Orkin Archives for generously providing access to material on Morris Engel’s PM years.

I would especially like to thank Professor Antonella Pelizzari for her help with this project and for the stimulating teaching that prepared me to tackle it.

My thanks also go to Professor Nebahat Avcioglu for her astute comments and assistance with technical matters as well as to dear friends, Gerson Lesser and Evelyn Kleiderman, former PM subscribers, for their willingness to share their memories and their interest. Finally, thank you to my husband who cooked while I wrote.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ii

List of Illustrations iv

Introduction 1

Chapter I
The First Picture Paper Under the Sun 15

Chapter II
Ralph Steiner: The Camera Cannot Lie 40

Chapter III
Morris Engel: Children and the War 70

Conclusion
The Uncelebrated Truth 94

Bibliography 100

Illustrations 108
List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Unknown photographer, *PM*, July 19, 1941, “AFL Electrical Workers Vote to Strike Today to Protect Wage Scale”

Fig. 2. Unknown photographer, *PM*, January 16, 1941 “Negro Domestics Earn Pittance in ‘Slave Markets’”

Fig. 3. Mary Morris, *PM’s Weekly*, February 9, 1941, “PM’s Baby”, photograph

Fig. 4. Weegee, *PM*, July 22, 1941, “Yesterday at Coney Island…Temperature 89…They Came Early, Stayed Late”, photograph

Fig. 5. Morris Engel, cover of January 8, 1941, *PM*, photograph

Fig. 6. Steven Derry, “Hey Adolf!” October 16, 1940, *PM*, photograph

Fig. 7. Theodore Geisel, “When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike” September 12, 1941, *PM*, illustration

Fig. 8. Margaret Bourke-White, *PM*, August 1, 1940, “Will These Flags Be Raised Against a Foreign Power?” photograph

Fig. 9. Alan Fisher, *PM*, August 14, 1941, “Family Album”, photograph

Fig. 10. Morris Engel, *PM*, October 13, 1940, “What Foes of Public School ‘Fads’ Are Attacking”, photograph

Fig. 11. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, November 2, 1941, ‘German’ Spy Faces Firing Squad in Mid-Afternoon” photograph

Fig. 12. Leo Lieb and unknown photographer, *PM*, March 20, 1941, “Submarine Warfare Is Directed Against Babies Too….”, photograph

Fig. 13. Anon., Cover of *Spy Stories*, The Fact Group, September 1939, illustration

Fig. 14. Unknown photographer, *PM*, June 29, 1941 “FBI Seized 29 in Nations Biggest Spy Roundup”

Fig. 15. Anon., cover of *The Shadow*, July 15, 1939, illustration

Fig. 16. *PM’s Weekly*, August 25, 1940, “‘Foreign Correspondent’ Sees and Assassination”

Fig. 17. *PM’s Weekly*, August 25, 1940, “An International Incident Staged by Hitchcock”
Fig. 18. Unknown photographer, *Photography Staff*, June 19, 1941, *PM’s Weekly*

Fig. 19. David Eisendrath, Martin Harris, Morris Engel, Margaret Bourke-White, Weegee, *PM’s Weekly*, June 18, 1941, “The Sidewalks,” photographs

Fig. 20. Morris Gordon, Morris Engel, David Eisendrath, Martin Harris, *PM’s Weekly*, June 18, 1941, “The Working People,” photographs

Fig. 21. Mary Morris, *PM’s Weekly*, June 8, 1941, “The Adventures of An Ordinary Girl”, photograph

Figure 22. Unknown photographer, *PM’s Weekly*, February 2, 1941 “What Is Truth in Photography?” p. 47

Figure 23. Unknown photographer, *PM’s Weekly*, February 2, 1941, “What Is Truth in Photography?” pp. 48-49

Fig. 24. Anon., *PM*, October 18, 1940, “The Fifth Column and Its Fellow-Travelers,” illustration

Fig. 25. Anon., *PM*, October 18, 1940, detail of Earl Browder “The Fifth Column and Its Fellow-Travelers”

Figure 26. Unknown photographer, *PM’s Weekly*, February 2, 1941, “What Is Truth in Photography?” Earl Browder, detail p. 49

Fig. 27. Unknown photographers, *PM’s Weekly*, December 1, 1940, “New ‘U.S. Camera’ Shows a Trend Away From Photography-for-Photography’s-Sake,” photographs

Fig. 28. Ralph Steiner, *Self Portrait with Billboard*, 1927, photograph

Fig. 29. Unknown photographers, *PM’s Weekly*, September 28, 1941, “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original,” photographs

Fig. 30. Unknown photographers, *PM’s Weekly*, October 5, 1941, “Eye-Catchers, Here Are Some More Gems by Advertisers: The Camera Lied, but You Like the Tricks,” photographs

Fig. 31. Weegee and Anon., *PM’s Weekly*, February 23, 1940, “These Are Real People Showing Emotion……and These Are Models ‘Acting’ Emotion,” photographs

Fig. 32. Weegee, Mary Morris, Sam Schulman, *PM’s Weekly*, August 21, 1941, “Look Again!: These Photos Prove Muscles, Not Eyes, Give Facial Expressions Their Meaning,” photographs

Fig. 33. Helen Levitt, *PM’s Weekly*, March 2, 1941, “Wall and Sidewalk Drawings Show What Goes On in the Minds of New York Children,” photographs
Fig. 34. Helen Levitt, *PM’s Weekly*, March 2, 1941, “Wall and Sidewalk Drawings Show What Goes On in the Minds of New York Children,” “Secret Passage” detail, photograph

Fig. 35. Lewis W. Hine, *PM*, February 5, 1941, “Child Labor Victory Comes Too Late for Camera Crusader,” photograph

Fig. 36. Lewis W. Hine, *PM’s Weekly*, August 25, 1940, “Lew Hine’s Camera Helps Fight for Social Justice,” photographs

Fig. 37. Marion Post, *PM’s Weekly* August 17, 1941, “Marion Post is a Top Woman Photographer,” photographs

Fig. 38. Walker Evans, Marion Post, *PM’s Weekly*, October 18, 1940, “The Small Town,” photographs

Fig. 39. Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, Walker Evens, Marion Post, *PM’s Weekly*, October 18, 1940, “The Small Town: Its People Make it the Backbone of America...And Their Lives Are Sometimes Beautiful, Sometimes Miserable,” photographs

Fig. 40. Unknown photographers, *PM’s Weekly*, December 15, 1940, “’Framing’ Doesn’t Necessarily Make a Picture Good,” photographs

Fig. 41. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, November 2, 1941, “‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’ on Playground,” photographs

Fig. 42. Mary Morris, *PM*, October 4, 1940, “Curiosity Helps a Mind Grow,” photograph

Fig. 43. Unknown photographer, *PM*, August 27, 1940, “77 Weary Child Refugees From Old Britain...Find Food, Safety and Sleep in This New World,” photographs

Fig. 44. Peter Killian, *PM’s Weekly*, October 20, 1940, “Halifax: Where War Comes Closest to America,” photograph

Fig. 45. Unknown photographer, *PM*, September 14, 1940, “Raid Survivors Comb the Rubble For Bits of Their Battered Toys,” photographs

Fig. 46. Gene Badger and unknown photographer, *PM*, August 22, 1940, “British Kids Find an Invincible Air Raid Shelter: The U.S.A.” and “A Nazi bomb Left This Mother and Child Homeless,” photographs

Fig. 47. Alan Fisher, *PM’s Weekly*, June 29, 1941, “New York’s First Negro Cop Ends 30 Year on Force,” photographs

Fig. 48. Morris Engel, “When Fellers Need a Friend”, *PM’s Weekly*, September 14, 1941, photograph
Fig. 49. Unknown photographer, *PM*, December 24, 1940, “They Have a 4-Room Apartment Full of Things They Admire…But They Spend Nearly All Of Their Time at the Store,” photographs

Fig. 50. Weegee, “Just Add Boiling Water,” 1937, photograph

Fig. 51. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, July 21, 1940, “PM’s Gallery Presents NEW YORKERS-Unposed Portraits,” photograph

Fig. 52. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, September 8, 1940, “The Problem of Keeping City Kids Off the Streets,” photograph

Fig. 53. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, September 8, 1940, “PLAY PLACES: There Aren’t Enough Satisfactory Playgrounds in New York…and Many Kids Think It’s More Fun to Run Wild in the Streets,” photographs

Fig. 54. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, June 29, 1941, “Play Streets Set Back By WPA Cuts,” photographs

Fig. 55. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, June 29, 1941 “Many a Beautiful Friendship Has Started on a New York Street…There Are Lots of Good Games Kids Can’t Play Without Supervision,” photographs

Fig. 56. Margaret Bourke-White, *PM*, August 12, 1940, “These Are Hoboken’s Children: Are They All ‘Dead End’ Kids?” photographs

Fig. 57. Henri Cartier-Bresson, Seville Spain 1933, photograph

Fig. 58. Helen Levitt, *PM’s Weekly*, August 11, 1940, *PM’s Gallery*, “Battle on a Precipice” “Fact of Life,” photographs

Fig. 59. Aaron Siskind, from the “Harlem Document” 1932-1940, photograph

Fig. 60. Morris Engel, *PM’s Weekly*, Sunday, March 15, 1942, “Children Turn Experiences Into Drama in Program That Makes Learning More Vivid,” photographs

Fig. 61. Ray Platnik, *PM’s Weekly*, September 21, 1941, “The U.S.A. Begins Trying Out Its Civilian Defenses,” photograph

Fig. 62. Unknown photographer, advertisement, *Life*, September 8, 1941

Fig. 63. Unknown photographer, advertisement, *Life*, August 17, 1942

Fig. 64. Fred Gund, Lou Stouman, *PM’s Weekly*, February 25, 1941, “Plain People, Caught Off Guard, Make Good Pictures”, “Plain People, Caught Off Guard, Make Good Pictures,” photographs
Fig. 65. Alan Fisher, *PM*, July 22, 1942, “A Small Boy Yells Loud for Pots and Pans…New York Housewives Shower Them Down,” photograph
Introduction:

The Newspaper PM, New York, 1940-42

*PM* will be written in Words and Pictures: *PM’s* choice of pictures. Over half *PM’s* space will be filled with pictures - because *PM* will use pictures not simply to illustrate stories, but to tell them. Thus the tabloids notwithstanding, *PM* is actually the first picture paper under the sun.

Confidential memorandum. Ralph Ingersoll to the staff of *PM*,
Subject: This paper as of May 14, 1940

In 1938, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two working class Jewish adolescents, created an “interplanetary immigrant” who was dedicated to making the world better. This involved being a champion of the underdog and in order to accomplish his tasks, they endowed him with superhuman powers of strength and perception. This hero, “Superman,” was the most enduring of many champions in the popular culture of the 1930s. His cover identity was that of a meek, mildly mannered newspaper reporter at a metropolitan daily who possessed the ability to transform himself at a moment’s notice whenever he was needed to further the cause of justice. Such heroes appeared across different media, on radio shows as well as in comic books and pulp fiction. As this super-hero was entering public awareness and photography was gaining dominance as a way to convey news of the world, a new photography driven newspaper was

---

2 The character of Superman was originally introduced in 1933 in an illustrated short story; however, the familiar heroic Superman first appeared in Action Comics No. 1 in June 1938 when the superhero was associated with the slogan “Champion of the Oppressed.” In 1940, at approximately the time of *PM*’s debut, *The Adventures of Superman* became a popular radio program. On that show he was granted the ability to fly and the original slogan was dropped in favor of “Truth, Justice, and the American Way.” This trajectory paralleled what was happening on the pages of *PM* and eventually, the country, as concern for the downtrodden and ethnic identity gave way to creation of an American identity, celebration of democracy and an all out effort to win the war. See Charles Moss, “Superman’s Dark Past”, *The Atlantic*, May 24, 2015. [http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/05/supermans-dark-days/393998/](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/05/supermans-dark-days/393998/) accessed 3/16
being born in New York City, the real Gotham. The daily newspaper *PM*, which ran from June 1940 through 1948, was created from within the heart of the publishing empire of Henry Luce. The idea for the new paper was the brainchild of Ralph McAllister Ingersoll, an experienced publishing world insider who took the wildly successful formula of the mid-1930s weekly photo magazines, such as Luce’s *Life*, and translated it into a daily paper. His new publication was intended to represent political views that emphasized a sense of justice and advocated for social improvement for the dispossessed. The “Superman” phenomenon was a perfect metaphor for *PM*, which proclaimed its purpose as a crusading newspaper. In an early prospectus for *PM*, Ralph Ingersoll stated,

> We are against people who push other people around, just for the fun of pushing, whether they flourish in this country or abroad. We are against fraud and deceit and greed and cruelty and we will seek to expose their practitioners. We are for people who are kindly and courageous and honest. We respect intelligence, sound accomplishment, open-mindedness, religious tolerance. We do not believe all mankind’s problems are now being solved successfully by any existing social order, certainly not our own, and we propose to crusade for those who seek constructively to improve the way men live together. We are Americans and we prefer democracy to any other principle of government.³

Photography was central to the conception of *PM* and a crucial element in its mission of informing ordinary people, encouraging them to be a participating audience, and teaching them to be literate about the photographic message. The editorial staff referred to their urban and mainly proletarian readers as the “uncelebrated,” an expression that they purposely coined in opposition to the prevailing celebrity culture of Hollywood running through the most popular picture press. The term “uncelebrated” encompassed members of the working class as well as minorities - racial, ethnic and religious - who were often subjected to discrimination. This was

³ Roy Hoopes, *Ralph Ingersoll: A Biography*, New York, Atheneum, 1985, p. 410. “*PM* is against people who push other people around” became what Paul Milkman calls “the cornerstone slogan of the newspaper” and was so important to the editors that they printed the slogan several times a week until 1946, when Ingersoll resigned. The full quote was published twice in the newspaper, followed by the words “*PM* still feels this way.” Paul Milkman, *PM: A New Deal in Journalism, 1940-1948*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, Rutgers University Press, 1997, p. 41.
significant at a time when prejudice, both blatant and subtle, was widespread in the United States, and Fascism presented a growing threat from abroad. PM repeatedly printed its slogan “we are against people who push other people around,” and the rapidly increasing possibilities of war on the horizon gave greater urgency to its visual program. Daring like Superman, on the side of the little guy, PM was also exceptional because it did not accept paid advertising. Instead, PM was supported by millionaire department store heir, Marshall Field III, who, in accord with the paper’s political views, stated, “I’m not supporting a newspaper, I’m supporting an idea.”

Considered a left-liberal New York City daily newspaper, PM represented a milestone in American journalism. Its photography was neither commercial nor sensational but aligned with the views of the cultural left, widely known in the mid-1930s as the “Popular Front” – an organization that had originally been created by the Communist International in 1935 in order to fight the growth of fascism.

PM also reflected a meaningful chapter in the history of photojournalism that has been little examined in comparison to the major mass circulation illustrated periodicals that emerged during the 1930s, notably Life magazine. This was all the more important because the newspaper was incubated in the crucible of Henry Luce’s publishing empire, in the offices of the photo magazines, Fortune and Life, where Ralph Ingersoll, future PM editor and publisher, had initially

__________________________

4 PM was originally supported by a group of funders but after a few months these were eventually bought out by Field. Hoopes, cit., p. 236.
5 The meaning of the name PM is unknown. It could be short for p.m. and suggest the status of an afternoon paper, but this interpretation is not convincing because it had a morning edition. The initials coincidentally stand for Picture Magazine and they might have inspired the naming of the contemporary AM subway tabloid. There are competing anecdotes regarding the paper’s naming. Some sources ascribe this to syndicated columnist Walter Winchell, some to Ingersoll’s friend, author Lillian Hellman, or to columnist Leonard Lyons. In some accounts, the name was arbitrary and there is conjecture that its meaning was deliberately unclear. See Paul Milkman, cit., p. 43; Roy Hoopes, cit., p. 216.
held major positions. Ingersoll aimed to expand 1930s modernist photojournalism from the
great mass circulation picture magazines to the daily newspaper, and he set this goal at a time
when the dailies were extremely conservative in terms of both politics and form. They were also
parochial and unimaginative in sharp contrast with Ingersoll’s PM.

In every aspect, PM bore the imprint of the flamboyant Ingersoll who had participated
intimately in the development of Life, the 1936 picture magazine that was instrumental in
shaping and disseminating modern visual culture, forging a particular image of a corporate
United States. Ingersoll’s own newspaper was also modernist in its embrace of photography as a
new form of visual narrative. PM’s agenda challenged Luce’s vision of a consumerist America
largely populated only by white, middle and upper classes, by explicitly representing and serving
ordinary citizens, and working actively on behalf of “the common man.” PM’s editors saw in
FDR and the New Deal the best hope for the United States.

---

6 Luce hired Ingersoll to be managing editor at Fortune in 1930. Due to Fortune’s success, Ingersoll was
promoted to second in command at Time, Inc. In this capacity, he recognized the importance of the
dynamic use of high quality photography, pressured Luce to create a weekly picture magazine, and began
to work on plans for it. In 1936, when Luce personally took over what became the picture magazine, Life,
he sent Ingersoll back to Time as Vice President and General Manager. Ingersoll, whose views had
evolved leftwards, disagreed strongly with the politics at Time, Inc. Hoopes., pp. 81, 86, 139-154
7 New York City had nine papers in the late 1930s. Of these, The Daily News was a sensationalist tabloid
saturated with comics, celebrity gossip, crime, and sexual titillation. The Telegram provided a platform
for the viciously conservative critic, Westbrook Pegler. Other mainstream papers, including The New
York Times and The Herald Tribune, were instruments of the status quo. Only The New York Post
reflected the city’s diversity and did not attack the New Deal and the Roosevelt administration. No new
newspaper had appeared in the city since 1924 when the Mirror and The Graphic began. There were
numerous foreign language and leftist papers but these had relatively small circulations. Many papers had
also folded or merged in the wake of the Depression. According to Milkman, there had been almost no
innovation in newspaper publishing in five decades. The tabloid papers used badly reproduced
photographs and since the 1920s these publications provided fodder for those critics who saw
photographs as inferior to the written word and a threat associated with social decline. Milkman, cit., p.
10.
8 The term “the common man” derived from the famous speech known as the “Century of the Common
Man,” made by Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President under Franklin D. Roosevelt.
This speech of May 8, 1942 was published in its entirety by PM. His words, “I say that the century on
which we are entering—the century which will come out of this war—can be and must be the century of
the common man,” were critical of Henry Luce’s designation of the twentieth century as “The American
This study considers photojournalism in *PM* from June 1940 through July 1942, the period during which Ralph Ingersoll had the greatest influence on the paper, prior to his enlistment in World War II. This was the time when the paper was most vibrant, experimental, and attractive. In the summer of 1942, following Ralph Ingersoll’s departure, other journalists took over the editorial staff. At this time, Ralph Steiner, the paper’s photography critic who had been essential in shaping *PM*’s unique message, also left, and photographer Morris Engel departed to join the armed services and the war effort. Finally, by 1943, the programs of FDR and the New Deal were superseded by an all out effort to win the war and *PM*, suffering through war-time shortages in ink and paper, became less visually compelling.9

Many of the journalistic practices introduced in *PM* were decades ahead of their time and in many respects, the paper’s influence changed American newspapers altogether. *PM* introduced the weekend picture supplement, which still exists in the form of the syndicated *Parade Magazine*. It encouraged a vivid, personal style of reporting, both written and visual, and it served as a model for the “critical culture” of the alternative press that would evolve two decades later with its adversarial style of crusading journalism and its break with the traditional financial model of selling advertising.10 *PM*’s weekend edition, known as *PM*’s *Weekly*, was partly derived in its form from a magazine, and is the focus of this study.

By the time he started his own publication, Ralph McAllister Ingersoll was one of the most famous journalists in New York City and was known for his vigorous writing.11 Ingersoll

---

9 The change in the visual appearance of *PM* began in late 1942 and was marked by the autumn of 1943 when wartime shortages necessitated thinner paper and no color ink.  
11 Ingersoll began his career in journalism at the offices of William Randolph Hearst’s *New York American*, then worked for Harold Ross at the *New Yorker* where he is credited with starting the still extant “Talk of the Town” column. In 1930, Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* magazine, hired him to be the Managing Editor of *Fortune*, a luxury publication that addressed and celebrated corporate America.
employed some of the best writing talent available for his new publishing venture and allowed
them the freedom to write according to their own choice.\textsuperscript{12} The prevailing writing style at \textit{PM},
like Ingersoll’s own, tended to be vividly descriptive, deeply investigative, stylistically personal
and distinctly leftist in its bias.\textsuperscript{13} This tone and freedom extended to the paper’s staff of first-rate
photographers who were known in press circles for their originality. In addition, \textit{PM} published
work by a wide array of noted freelancers, including Weegee, as well as images purchased from
photo agencies.\textsuperscript{14}

A picture paper such as \textit{PM} was a consequence of the growing trend in visual
communication that capitalized on the public’s insatiable appetite for information about the
modern world via photojournalism. In many ways, it followed in the tradition of the great
European picture publications that arose in the preceding decades: \textit{BIZ, AIZ, VU}, and the French
communist paper, \textit{Regards}.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{PM} joined a number of U.S. left wing publications that also

\textsuperscript{12} Among the writers whose talents \textit{PM} could claim were I.F. Stone, James Wechsler, Max Lerner, James
Thurber, Erskine Caldwell, Ben Hecht, Penn Kimball, Hodding Carter, and the illustrious Ernest
Hemingway.

\textsuperscript{13} During his tenure at \textit{Fortune}, Ingersoll came into contact with leftist intellectual writers Archibald
MacLeish and Dwight MacDonald who exposed him to the ideas of socialism and political dissent and
inspired him with their enthusiasm for Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was then running for president. As
his views evolved leftward, Ingersoll began to dislike the politics at Time, Inc where he was appointed
General Manager in 1936. At this time, he became increasingly involved with a circle of leftist friends
including writers Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett and began to work with a socialist
psychoanalyst who also saw Marshall Field. See Milkman, cit., p. 13, 41

\textsuperscript{14} The newspaper also maintained a roster of talented visual artists, illustrators and cartoonists: Theodor
Seuss Geisel, (Dr. Seuss), Leo Hershfield, Ad Reinhardt, Charles Martin, Jack Coggins, and Don
Freeman.

the French communist paper \textit{Ce Soir}, 1937-1953 was a model for \textit{PM}. This requires further research but it is
conceivable that the initials \textit{PM} can be associated with a translation from the French, “this evening”.
However, according to both Paul Milkman and Ingersoll’s biographer, Hoopes, the choice of the initials
\textit{PM} for the name of the paper was fairly arbitrary and may have been done to keep readers guessing and
talking about the new publication. Additionally, \textit{PM} was not an afternoon paper, and had a morning
edition as well.
represented “Popular Front” views but these had smaller circulations and many, such as the *Daily Worker*, were punctuated by advertising and the photography in these was neither of the quantity or quality of that in *PM*.\(^{16}\) Although *PM* used the methods of combining words and photographs developed at *Life*, it translated these towards progressive ends and for the benefit of its diverse working class readers. The picture of which Ingersoll’s newspaper presented represented a sharp contrast to *Life*’s picture of a mythic, consumerist America based on equal opportunity. In contrast, *PM*’s vision included the diverse fabric of New York City and *PM* showed images of what *Life* left out: widespread poverty, deeply embedded racism, and discrimination based on religion and ethnicity. Toward this end, the editors made a different array of citizens visible, including labor’s “rank and file”, minority groups, blacks and women. (Figs. 1-2) *PM* also demonstrated its considerable interest and commitment to children visually. Pediatrician Benjamin Spock, who later became famous for writing what amounted to the bible of post-war child rearing advice, contributed a weekly column, *PM’s Baby*, tracing the development of a baby girl born at the time PM appeared. (Fig. 3) The paper was known for waging highly vocal crusades against bias including several that exposed the coded discrimination that was commonplace elsewhere in the daily press.\(^{17}\) However, *PM* did not ignore popularly appealing imagery such as that of leggy young women in bathing suits. It just presented this trope of the era, which *PM* called “Bathing Girl of the Week,” with what Paul Milkman has referred to as “a proletarian slant”.

Henry Luce understood the power of photographs to affect public opinion and used his

---

\(^{16}\) Milkman, cit., p. 33.  
\(^{17}\) *PM* was acutely aware of and opposed to the widespread anti-Semitism of the time. The early *PM* waged a campaign exposing blatant discrimination in help wanted ads. See Milkman, cit., pp. 146.
publications to mold this in the name of what he referred to as “partisan objectivity”. Ingersoll learned this while in Luce’s employ; however, besides their political differences, there was a fundamental difference between the two publishers. While Luce hid the mechanics of his partisan manipulation by maintaining that photographs were factual records, Ingersoll and his staff revealed the constructed nature of every image to his readers and that photographs were made by human beings, by nature subjective, rather than by mechanical means. Together with his editors, especially photo critic, Ralph Steiner, he used PM’s admission of its leftist bias as a claim for its honesty.

The most famous example of the openness with which the paper treated photographs as human products was the inclusion of Weegee’s own colorful writing commenting on the process of making his images along with his iconic photographs. On June 22, 1940, when the first of Weegee’s Coney Island crowd shots appeared in PM, the accompanying text identified his real name as Arthur Fellig and introduced his description of his experience: “Herewith is Weegee’s own story of how he took this picture.” The text even described what Weegee had for lunch. As he wrote, “two kosher frankfurters and two beers at a Jewish delicatessen on the Boardwalk.


19 Ingersoll was exposed to Kurt Korff, the former editor of Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung who fled the Nazi’s and came to work for Luce in 1934 on the creation of the new picture magazine which became Life. Korff brought his skill in the construction of photo essays and it is difficult to belief that Ingersoll would not have had close contacted with this talented editor. While in Luce’s employ, Ingersoll, memos show, made the final decision about Life’s size and helped put together the layout of the first issue. See Chris Vials, Realism For the Masses: Aesthetics, Popular Front Pluralism, and U.S. Culture 1935-1947, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009, p.180.

20 PM recruited William McCleery, former features editor of the nationwide Associated Press, and gave him complete freedom as picture editor and editor of the weekend magazine section. McCleery was lured away from Life where he was unhappy with the elitist Ivy League atmosphere. He brought his considerable experience using large amounts of photographic material in features rather than single news storied to PM. See Milkman, cit., p. 18-19.
Later on for a chaser, I had five more beers, a malted milk, two root beers, three Coca Colas and two glasses of Buttermilk. And five cigars costing 19 cents.”\(^{21}\) (Fig. 4) According to Jason Hill, this shot was almost identical to one published by *The Daily News* five days later.\(^{22}\) The fundamental difference lies in the text accompanying this picture describing Weegee at work.

As more images depicting the hostilities in Europe appeared, *PM* editors pointed out how these pictures were staged and faked. For example, on July 24, 1941:

> The only thing missing from this Berlin propaganda shot is the camera director who so obviously arranged it all. Notice the Nazi soldier, anything but camera shy, leading, not following his prisoners toward the tank out of which they are supposed to have been smoked. And toward the camera. The only thing that looks authentic is the countryside that is as flat as the Russian steppes where Berlin said the picture was taken.\(^{23}\)

A few pages further into the same issue, another comment revealed a staged shot: “This is the actual invasion of Ningpo. Plunging into battle, flag-in-hand, went out with the Crimean War and a charge under fire was never like this. This shot was staged for dramatic effect.”\(^{24}\)

The deeply embedded stance regarding the status of the photographic image as something constructed, and the willingness, even the urgency, with which the editorial staff instructed readers, set *PM* apart from any other publication of its moment. This included other picture magazines such as *Look*, which used a format similar to *Life’s*, but represented a more liberal perspective. *Friday*, a privately funded Popular Front picture magazine, emulated the look of *Life* including a red logo banner and full page photographs on its covers but was unapologetically Stalinist and followed the staunch Communist Party line with regard to non-intervention in

\(^{21}\) Weegee, “Yesterday at Coney Island...Temperature 89...They Came Early, Stayed Late....”, *PM*, July 22, 1941, pp. 16-17.


\(^{23}\) *PM*, July 24, 1941, p. 3.

\(^{24}\) “Out for Fresh Conquests, Japan Shows How It’s Done,” *PM*, July 24, 1941, pp. 16-17.
Europe. Both *Look* and *Friday* were punctuated by advertisements, which were carefully selected in the case of Dan Gilmore’s *Friday*. Neither *Look* nor *Friday* specifically analyzed photographic images for their audiences. The communist publications, *The Daily Worker* and *The New Masses*, supported and reported on labor in photographs as well as words. Some of the same photographers and artists also worked for these publications as well as *PM*. However, these publications had much smaller circulations and none used photographs with as much sophistication nor as extensively or engagingly as *PM*. Even Earl Browder, the head of the CPUSA who disagreed with the *PM’s* political position admitted that the paper was compelling.

Historian Jason E. Hill emphasizes that *PM* was a daily paper, not solely a magazine, and must be considered as such although it arose in relation to, and partly in reaction to the prevailing magazine culture of its time. The available literature on *PM* is relatively sparse compared to that

---

25 There were points of contact between *PM* and *Friday*, with several staff photographers occasionally contributing to both. Work by *PM* photographers, Irving Haberman and Ray Platnik also appeared in *Friday* and there were other connections to that magazine. Steiner, as did Roy Stryker, served as a judge for a photo contest, “Youth in Focus”, sponsored by *Friday*, which presented work by young members of the American Youth Congress on September 20, 1940, p. 26. Steiner mentioned his part in this contest in a column.

26 A wealthy young radical, Dan Gilmore, who funded *Friday*, had been considered but rejected as a backer for *PM* because of his insistence that *PM* adhere to the CPUSA party line. Gilmore had loaned Ingersoll money ($25,000) for his initial research into a picture publication. This relationship between *PM* and Gilmore’s publication bear further exploration. Hoopes, cit., pp. 187-88, 220, 234.

27 Several staff members, including artist Ad Reinhardt who did illustrations for *PM*, came to the paper from the *New Masses*. By 1935 the *New Masses* had a circulation of 25,000. (http://spartacus-educational.com/JmassesN.htm) accessed 11/1/15. The Communist *Daily Worker*, at its peak in the late 1930s, may have had a circulation as high as 35,000. It was one of the most influential publications of the left, had a Sunday edition, serious sports coverage, counter cultural comic strips and other entertainment features. (http://dlib.nyu.edu findingaids/html/tamwag/photos_223/bioghist.htm) accessed 11/1/15

28 Browder condemned *PM* for being reactionary but felt it presented news “in such a charming and innocent and interesting fashion that even the members of our own Association, I am sorry to say, often prefer *PM* rather than the *Worker.*” See David Margolick, “*PM’s* Impossible Dream,” *Vanity Fair*, January 1999, p. 129.
on *Time, Life, Look* or other magazines. This literature either covers politics, as in Paul Milkman’s thorough study dedicated to the full run and the demise of the newspaper in the climate of the Cold War, or it deals with *PM* as a phenomenon in written journalism in periodic articles devoted to the paper, such as that by David Margolick.\(^2^9\) These only briefly touch on photography as part of the paper’s agenda. The only major visual analysis of *PM* to date has been undertaken by Jason E. Hill who ably demonstrates the central role of photography. In his dissertation and essays, which will be released shortly as a book, Hill downplays the importance of the readers in *PM*’s mission, and how its visual program was directed towards educating them. The first years of the paper’s existence, in the lead up to World War II, were tense and uncertain and have tended to be somewhat historically overlooked. Whereas 1930s photography has been treated by John Raeburn, William Stott, Maren Stange, and other American studies scholars, *PM* has not been discussed. Recent meaningful historical work on the build-up to war and the changes it wrought in American identity has been conducted by Lynn Olsen, whose book, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America’s Fight Over World War II 1939-1941*, delineates the depth of American isolationism and the resistance to war, encompassing this in terms of visual culture.\(^3^0\) Such studies, including that edited by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch, *War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, show a nation moving towards democracy, while transcending ethnic difference.\(^3^1\)

This thesis argues that *PM* was intended to be entertaining as well as informative. Its overriding purpose was to champion the plebian audience made up largely of urban union

workers, providing them with the most transparent information it could as well as imprint an understanding of the seriousness of the growing threat of Fascism. To this end, I have divided this study into three parts. The first will discuss PM in the context of other press developments of its time, focusing on its intention to be both a popular and a dissident vehicle for news. In this section, I analyze specifically how PM treated the photographic image differently from contemporary illustrated periodicals. Part II will concentrate on the central role of weekend photo editor and columnist Ralph Steiner in developing a singular understanding of photography. Chapter III is dedicated to an analysis of the form of the photo-essay in PM. While PM is known for some of its large, single photographs that tell complex stories in one image, I argue that it also developed original narrative strategies, which incorporated elements borrowed from cinema.

The reason why there is still not a great deal of literature on the photographic work in PM is partly due to what Jason E. Hill identifies as the difficulty inherent in studying a daily newspaper which multiplies both the number of issues and the state of preservation of the originals over other types of weekly, monthly or quarterly magazines. Most of what has been written about PM comes from a perspective of journalism. However, there is relatively little on the photographers, with the exception of Weegee, who was so central to the paper.\(^{32}\) I am indebted to Jason Hill for what he has written on the matter. While there have been mentions of photography in PM, especially in relation to the New York Photo League, notably by Michael

---

Lesy, these are brief outlines in the context of the general picture press of the time.³³

Jason Hill has done breakthrough studies describing the visual program of *PM* and the editors’ transparent skepticism toward the photographic image. Hill has also examined the relationship between photography and illustration in *PM* as it relates to the paper’s tendency to elevate its photographic staff. His presentation of the “photojournalist as artist” is largely accurate but can be easily misinterpreted as a view of the photographer/artist in the framework of the modernist “genius” that may have begun in the 1930 but flowered only later. It is essential to keep in mind that *PM* began as a product of the leftist milieu of the late Depression and that its photographers were workers, who like others, were elevated by the paper. Despite the paper’s promotion of stars such as Weegee and Margaret Bourke-White, the photographic staff was part of a collaborative team that included writers and editorial staff. From 1940-1942, the newspaper’s program showed evidence of the transition from a laboring culture which was concerned with “the common man” and the equal rights of all religious, ethnic and racial groups, to one in which separate identities gradually became incorporated into a general American identity resolutely united to take on the enemies of democracy. Hill cautions that, despite its beginnings in the milieu of picture magazines, *PM* was nevertheless a daily newspaper that was intended to inform first and foremost. Above all, the ordinary working person was as important and worthy of being pictured as the most famous and manufactured of Hollywood stars. In keeping with the democratic spirit of the paper, and fulfilling philosopher John Dewey’s views that like citizenship in a democracy, art was a triadic process which involved what was depicted, the artist, and the viewers’ active participation for its completion, *PM* readers were regularly and

specifically invited to submit their own photographs for critique, or possible paid publication. This thesis examines how these liberal dynamics, occurring in this particular printed media, used photography in order to focus on the “uncelebrated,” and what the significance of this operation might be for the larger study of photography at this critical time for American culture.
Chapter I

The First Picture Paper Under the Sun

The physical paper, PM, measured a little over eleven by fourteen inches in a slightly more square version than the standard tabloid format of the time. (Fig. 5) Its weekly edition ran thirty-two pages and cost five cents. Both page count and price doubled for the weekend edition to ten cents and sixty-four pages. This edition came in two sections and functioned like a magazine meant to be read casually and at leisure over a longer period of time than the daily paper. It carried regular features such as complete radio and cinema listings, lengthier stories, more elaborate layouts, and more photographs. All editions were stapled to make the paper easy to handle on public transportation. Ralph Ingersoll hired the noted illustrator and graphic designer, Thomas M. Clelland, to give PM a modern look that made it as easy to read as it was to handle. Clelland, who had been responsible for designing the sumptuous Fortune magazine during Ingersoll’s tenure as managing editor of that publication, designed the custom Caledonia typeface. The groundbreaking design used a slightly larger nine-point size replacing the difficult to read seven-point type that prevailed in other papers. He gave PM a four-column layout set off by borders of white instead of the cluttered six columns of other dailies. Called by Ingersoll “a new kind of newspaper,” PM won the prestigious N.W. Ayer Award for typography and design during each of its first four years. Hoopes, cit., p. 404. Its visual cohesiveness was in part due to the editor’s decision not to accept outside advertising.

Following other successful picture magazines, including Life and the French VU,
Clelland designed a striking three-inch logo box placed in the upper left-hand corner of the cover page. This barely contained the large white script letter’s “P” and “M,” “5 cents,” and just below, in smaller letters, “New York Daily.” The logo box was usually a distinctive burnt orange which was used in other cover elements and repeated elsewhere in the issue. At times, other colors appeared on PM’s cover: blue, brown, red or green, but burnt orange was the color most identified with the paper. (Fig. 6) The addition of color to the overall attractive appearance helped justify the paper’s higher price, which was more than twice that of other tabloid papers. Under the logo box, a separate white box contained the volume number, the date and the weather conditions. The same color border used in the logo outlined a table of contents and a vertical listing of the top headlines in the left-hand column. The remaining three columns of the front page were taken up by large type headlines for one or two major stories plus a single, large, eye-catching photograph all delineated by a quarter inch colored border on three sides. Sometimes, instead of a photo, the front page contained an illustration or a full-page editorial signed prominently by Ralph Ingersoll. PM also distinguished itself from other papers by using whiter, thicker paper and faster drying ink that would not come off on its readers’ hands. This paper was specially coated and this enhanced the reproduction quality of the photographs, which were printed with greater tonal range, pleasing contrast, and generally more detail. Unlike the antiquated equipment used by the other metropolitan newspapers, PM invested in state-of-the-art press equipment. Since the mid-1930s, advances in printing technology in the form of rotary presses and faster drying inks had facilitated production, especially of photographic images, in greater quality as well as quantity. These advances had made the large circulations of the big U.S. picture magazines, Life and Look, possible. Ingersoll took a logical step and applied the new technology to his daily paper, which was designed to stand out on city newsstands. It succeeded
and created a stir physically as well as politically.\footnote{PM’s competitors, especially the Daily News, did their best to sabotage the paper’s much anticipated debut. See Milkman, cit., pp.1, 51-52.}

In the bottom colored border of the front page the phrase, “PM sells no advertising,” was inserted in small white type and ran in every issue of the paper.\footnote{This decision also had a practical aspect since maintaining an advertising department would have been costly for a paper with a modest circulation such as PM. See Milkman, cit., p. 47.} By refusing paid advertising, the paper was thus free to print news “without fear or favor.”\footnote{“PM is in business to tell as much of the truth as it can find out—because it believes journalism’s function in a democracy is to seek truth in contemporary life and to print it without fear or favor.” Walcott Gibbs, “Profiles: A Very Active Type Man—I, The New Yorker, May 02, 1942.} Unlike most magazines and newspapers, PM could publish any story it saw as newsworthy without compromise, no matter how controversial.\footnote{Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century, Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1956.} It also meant that the paper’s interior layouts could be clean, harmonious, and unbroken by ads.\footnote{The few advertisements that did appear in PM were in the form of small line drawn cartoons or seamless photomontages. These were the only places where side-by-side photomontage was used.} This was distinct from the practice at women’s magazines among others, where, as Sally Stein has analyzed in reference to Ladies’ Home Journal, stories and articles were interrupted by advertisements that forced readers to flip back and forth, distracted by the ads.\footnote{Sally Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women’s Magazine, 1914-1939,” in Richard Bolton, ed., The Contest of Meaning. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992, pp. 145-162.} Because PM was free from the ads that often took up as much as forty three percent of other publications, this gap also meant that there was far more space available to fill with visual material; illustrations, cartoons, and above all, photographs, which were presented in well thought-out layouts, as single images, sometimes running a full page, or in sequences.\footnote{In the early years of Life magazine, the proportion of advertising to content “hovered” at around 43%. See Chris Vials, Realism For the Masses: Aesthetics, Popular Front Pluralism, and U.S. Culture 1935-1947, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009, p. 172.} The paper even occasionally used photographs in creative combinations with diagrams and illustrations or overlaid color. (Fig. 7) The paper’s editors proudly used photographs “to tell
stories, not merely to illustrate them.” For them, pictures were “a primary means of conveying information.” These photographs, unless deliberate editorial decisions determined otherwise, were always sharp and clear, and surpassed those in newspapers many years later.

Following a precedent set at Time magazine, PM divided the news into categories under graphic headers at the top of the page. A typical issue from 1940 began with sections divided into “Foreign News,” “The Nation,” and “New York.” An editorial page with a lively “letters to the editor” section and a “News Summary” were usually also inserted in the first part of the newspaper. “Labor” came next. This unique section underscored the paper’s aggressively liberal perspective and stood in sharp contrast to Time. The remaining sections were innovative for a newspaper and came under the rubric, “News for Living.” These included complete movie and radio listings, items on food, proletarian fashion and entertainment, and two illustrated pages which presented the best deals from a city department store called “News In Today’s Ads.” The issue finished with two pages of sport photos and the rear cover contained either more sports images or a feature called “File and Forget,” composed of between four and six images that were either humorous or interesting but minor. PM was known for its regular categories which were innovative for a newspaper: for example, the “News for Living” section which provided readers with news of bargains in home goods and clothing, economical weekly food menus and other useful information years before this type of feature appeared anywhere else. On the weekends, the larger issue included expanded news on health, education, leisure activities, child development, books, theatre, art, and a key section on photography. After PM’s first few months of existence, the layout shifted bringing six to eight pages of photo news to the first pages of the daily edition, under the title, PM’s Photo Magazine. At that point, more photographs were used throughout PM than had ever been used in a paper before.

42 Milkman, cit., p. 41.
News and feature photographs were executed by a group of first-rate staff photographers. The work was supplemented by the contributions of freelance photographers, both professional and amateur, famous and rising, as well as a wide array of photo agencies. Ingersoll’s own photographs appeared in his foreign reports from Great Britain and the USSR. The photography most closely associated with PM is that of the inimitable Arthur Fellig, aka Weegee, who was paid a weekly stipend by the paper for first rights to publish his idiosyncratic images. Weegee’s signature photos, a large proportion of which were taken at night, were marked by the use of flash, the attention to unusual and overlooked subjects, and an intensely personal and humanistic style that was a good fit with the vividly visual, subjective, journalistic approach practiced by Ingersoll and favored by others writers.

The luminary photographer, Margaret Bourke-White, had worked with Ingersoll on Fortune magazine and significantly, when he invited her to leave her position at Life and work for his new publication, she accepted. Bourke-White had earned a national reputation for her work at Luce’s picture magazines where she created a dramatic image of U.S. industry characterized by strong geometric forms, emphasizing dimensionality, and tight compositions. This work amplified the image of American corporate power and became synonymous with U.S. modernism. Although Bourke-White remained at PM only through the paper’s first year, she contributed work that reflected her own humanism and political commitments towards PM’s Popular Front positions. (Fig. 8)

PM assembled a highly professional staff of outstanding photographers, including Morris Engel, David Eisendrath, Irving Haberman, Alan Fischer, John DeBiase, Ray Platnik, Steven

---

43 "A Trip to the Besieged City of London", PM, November 19, 1940. Ingersoll wrote other stories on England and Russia in fall of 1941. His own photos appeared in PM, November 3, 1941, pp. 12-13, and again November 5, pp. 4-5, Nov. 11, p. 9. He was not a talented photographer but he followed a precedent set by Lucien Vogel in VU.
Derry, Martin Harris, Hugh Broderick, Peter Killian, Leo Lieb, Gene Badger, John Albert, Bill Brunk, Morris Gordon, Dan Israel, Dan Keleher, Arthur Liepzig and Mary Morris, who pioneered the use of white umbrellas to give a softer look to flash lighting and portraiture. Many of the major photographers working at the time also contributed images to PM: Robert Capa was given a two page spread of his images from China, while pictures by Walker Evans, Edward Weston, and Edward Steichen appeared in book reviews and in Ralph Steiner’s column. Steiner also featured work produced by photographers commissioned by the Farm Security Administration, including Arthur Rothstein and Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and Marion Post Wolcott. He devoted full columns to the work of Lewis Hine, Helen Levitt, Lisette Model, John Guttman, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, George Platt Lynes, as well as a number of photographers associated with the New York Photo League, including Walter Rosenblum, Lisette Model and Ruth Bernhard.

With very few exceptions, every photographic image that appeared in PM was accompanied by the name of the photographer. The paper regularly made reference to how its photographers obtained their images, accentuating that a human being was responsible for the picture and that this was not due to just a mechanical device. Weegee’s first person writing accompanied his photos, further emphasizing PM’s practices which broke with those of other publications of its time. A small feature on the editorial page called “PM’s Family” introduced individual members of the paper’s staff with a portrait and short biographies including

---

45 “Front-Line Photographer”, PM, August 14, 1941, photos by Robert Capa (see Appendix). A Steichen photo taken for Canon Towels appeared in Fig. 38a, PM’s Weekly, September 28, 1941, “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original”, p. 48.

46 I submit as an example of the practice that even the well-respected press photographer, Sammy Schulman, who specialized in photos of Franklin D. Roosevelt, was not credited for his classic news photos of a 1933 assassination attempt on the then President Elect. See Michael L. Carlebach. The Origins of Photojournalism in America. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992. pp. 165-167.
photographers. (Fig. 9) Any press awards won by PM photographers were promptly announced as well.47

As a further indication of PM’s practice of elevating its photo staff, the premier issue, June 18, 1940, included the names of darkroom personnel on its masthead. The paper also made it clear that these photographers were human beings who were intrepid in overcoming difficult hurdles in order to get the best shots possible. An example of this is the description of the lengths to which staff photographer Gene Badger went to obtain photographs from the top of the Trylon, symbol of the 1939 World’s Fair, which was in the process of being dismantled for scrap metal in preparation for war build-up. The paper read thus,

Some of them were shot from the top of the Trylon 450 feet from the ground. Gene had to climb - there’s no elevator. It took him 45 minutes. He took pictures from a 5 foot square steel plate. Seven workers were with him. They gave him a ham sandwich, an orange, and a cup of coffee for lunch. Two hours later he climbed down. When he took off his shoes to ease aching feet he discovered that friction had worn his socks to threads.48

PM contributed to the upending of the general custom that regarded press photographers as coarse and aggressive in pursuing what was considered a menial occupation, replacing this trope with the notion that they were tenacious and resourceful.49 This characterization of press photographers, as Michael Carlebach points out, had begun to soften during the 1920s and 1930s but photographers were still held in low esteem. Although Fortune and Life began to elevate some of their photographers to quasi-celebrity status, photographs were presented as anonymous

47 For example in “Family Album” PM’s Weekly, June 29, 1941, page 20, beneath a photograph of Alan Fisher holding a Graflex, the text reads, “Alan Fisher is one of NY’s ace news cameramen because he’s one of those lucky people who is making a living at what he likes to do more than anything else in the world-taking pictures. At 28 he’s at the top of his profession. He got a start while a student at Brooklyn Tech and became a news photographer at 21 with the World-Telegram. He was one of the first cameramen tapped for PM’s photographic department. An amiable, charming guy, Alan takes infinite pains with the simplest news shot and the prints he turns in show it. For the past two years he has won first award in the pictorial division of the Press Photographers Exhibit”.
48 “This Is the World’s Fair, Four Months Later,” PM’s Weekly, March 2, 1941, p. 15.
products. Even in the mass circulation picture magazines, photo credits were placed unobtrusively, while newspapers did not credit photographers at all. *PM* was different.

From the start, the cover and first six to eight pages of the second section of *PM*’s weekend edition were devoted to full-page images that showcased work by a single photographer or presented a portfolio of work on a relevant topic. Young photographer, Morris Engel, made his debut in the paper this way, followed soon after by Helen Levitt.\(^5^0\) These pages were referred to as *PM*’s *Gallery*, and this feature elevated the status of the chosen photographers and treated the images that were presented as fine art in a nod to the increased prestige of photography.

*PM*’s audience included a large proportion of union members who belonged to the large garment workers unions that dominated the New York City workforce.\(^5^1\) Many of these fit historian Michael Denning’s definition of “second generation plebeians,” who had emerged from the immigrant working class and benefitted from free public education and the gains made by organized labor.\(^5^2\) *PM*’s audience, which came mostly from the middle and working class, was rising socially, and was economically and politically aware. Therefore, although *PM* was physically a tabloid dependent on circulation and made broad efforts to reach, stimulate and entertain these readers, it addressed this demographic by functioning as “a highbrow tabloid.”\(^5^3\)

In one of Ingersoll’s many early prospectuses, he stated that, “The purpose of this newspaper is to keep its readers intelligently and entertainingly and truthfully informed on what has happened in the world….”\(^5^4\) The paper attempted to do this at a moment when being aware of world

---


\(^5^2\) Denning, cit., p. 61, p. 485n16.


\(^5^4\) Hoopes, cit. p. 397.
events was vital and this made being truthful more important to PM than being objective.\textsuperscript{55}

*PM* earned its self-proclaimed label as a different kind of newspaper through its editorial dedication to subvert mainstream press practice. Unlike conventional publications, *PM* did not present photographs as unmediated and factual representations of the world. The individual photographer was rendered as author of his/her images in a manner akin to artistic attribution and photographs were blatantly described as mediated by subjective but skilled consciousness. As was pointed out in the discussion of Weegee’s Coney Island photographs, mainstream publications often did not even identify their photographers in order to perpetuate the authoritarian deception that images were created via impersonal, mechanical means. Chris Vials points out that *Life* often captioned images with “phrases such as ‘Here is...’; ‘Here are pictures...’, as if it were the mere exhibitor of found objects,” thus bolstering the photographs’ magical appearance, and the publication’s authority.\textsuperscript{56} *PM*, which Jason Hill refers to as “a mutation from within” the Luce Empire, understood but exploited the relationship between text and image by using captions that openly skewed the readings to different ends. For the editors at *PM*, an authored photograph, or a written piece, contained more truth than an objective one. Ingersoll freely admitted: “So we shall hardly be unbiased journalists. We do not, in fact, believe unbiased journalism exists, feeling rather that claims to emotional disinterest are, consciously or unconsciously, fraudulent.”\textsuperscript{57} The newspaper’s interrogation of truth and commitment to transparency included admitting to its own slanted agenda.

*PM* capitalized on the popularity of photojournalism among its audience, which included a large proportion of those who were politically aware and agreed with the paper’s positions.

\textsuperscript{55} Hoopes, cit. p. 397: according to Ingersoll, “the objective of the paper would be to communicate the “truth,” not “objectivity.”” See also Milkman, cit., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{56} Vials, cit., p. 162.
\textsuperscript{57} Hoopes, cit., p. 401.
Questioning the mutable nature of the photographic image and revealing its ability to be manipulated to suit a variety of biases was in sync with the widespread public concern and suspicion over propaganda. Ingersoll clearly laid out that the paper’s “larger purpose is the service of the truth” and as he continued:

…Most newspapermen serve truth and print as much of it as they understand or dare. It is in their understanding and their daring—and in the tools with which they have to work—that they are limited…Our attack on the truth will be well trained, well armed. That is all we can promise you.

Whether the truth takes us to the right or to the left we are not concerned…we can not help but feel that there is both truth and fiction in every platform.

The truth has always been, and is now difficult to arrive at. He is a fool who boasts it is there for the reaching out….

Our dedication to the truth”

Ralph Steiner confessed that many times he chose the photographs simply because he responded to the work. In this issue William McCleery wrote, “Ralph Steiner, our photography critic, and the other of us who selected these pictures were not trying to prove anything, we simply selected the ones we considered the best.”

The paper used such admissions to bolster its claim to honest journalism. In PM’s Weekly, William McCleery and Ralph Steiner also repeatedly called attention to the nature of subjective choice as evidence of the unique sensibilities and artistry of the photographer as well as of the unreliability of photographic images. Especially in the case of Weegee, PM made no attempt to hide the role of the photographer’s personal taste in making the image, and the paper’s staff photographers in particular were regularly celebrated and elevated to the rank of artists and authors.

The paper exposed its readers to an interrogation of photographic veracity for a number

58 Ibid., p. 401-401.
59 Steiner did a column on press awards, “News photographers ‘Hang’ Human Interest”, PM’s Weekly, March 23, 1941 pp. 48-49, and he stated in the text: “Not ribbon winners, just the ones I liked”.
60 William McCleery, PM’s Weekly, June 18, 1941.
61 An example of this was the paper’s celebratory reporting on press awards given to PM photographers. In Steiner’s column on press awards he called attention to “Alan Fisher of PM’s portrait of derelict who made a rather touching attempt to look sporty in carefully knotted tie, matching cap and coat which contrasted with his unshaven, broken nosed face.” Steiner quoted in “News photographers ‘Hang’ Human Interest”, PM’s Weekly, March 23, 1941 pp. 48-49.
of reasons. First, this was in response to the ongoing debate over the impossible ideal of objectivity that had preoccupied the press since the 1920s. According to Michael Schudson, by the 1920s journalists no longer believed that facts could stand by themselves in an increasingly complex world, or that information alone was sufficient to arm citizens to make knowledgeable decisions. The belief in press neutrality held by the American middle class during the Progressive era was ebbing, and skepticism and suspicion became increasingly prevalent, fueled in part by the rapid changes of modern life that accompanied the rise of a market society. This was further inflamed by practices in the press itself such as the conflation of public relations writing and the news. Many of the changes, which were the result of modernity, generated nostalgia for stability and authority among the general population. According to Michael Schudson, the widespread cultural influence of Freud and psychoanalysis also contributed heavily to understanding that even “facts” were influenced by memory, selectivity, dreams, and the unconscious. Such blows to what was rational influenced journalism in the 1920s and 1930s, giving rise to the ideal of objectivity, which emerged as “a method to explain a world in which even facts could not be trusted.”

After World War I, belief in facts was lost, and a new climate of cynicism and doubt arose. The conservative press responded by making objectivity a journalistic value in the 1930s. This was aligned with authoritarian certainty and served as a bulwark against the “drift and doubt” remarked on by European intellectuals of the Weimar period. Nonetheless, it was an impossible paradigm, which was overturned and made more complicated with the rise of the documentary ethos in film and photography and the alliance of these, and other art forms, with realism and public credibility. According to Schudson, “It

---

became an ideal in journalism, after all, precisely when the impossibility of overcoming subjectivity in presenting the news was widely accepted...precisely because subjectivity had come to be regarded as inevitable. 63

By 1930, a parallel debate over objectivity had entered the domain of the arts. During the early years of the Depression, the suffering of many citizens was ignored and was not pictured in most of the press. Further complicating the picture was the rise of the social sciences that quantified and managed social conditions. 64 Walter Lippmann, prominent political commentator, journalist and syndicated columnist in The New York Herald Tribune, was perhaps the strongest proponent of the ideal of objectivity. In his influential writing during the 1920s, he warned that the public became vulnerable to propaganda and agitation when they did not have access to facts about their world. He felt that the masses did not possess special wisdom and therefore the public had no interest in politics nor should it govern. 65 Lippmann became committed to the re-establishment of an authoritarian direction that correlated with his belief that those in favor of democratic reform were misguided in their faith in the public. As he stated, “The problems of modern life were seen as loss of authority and there was no one at the helm in a drifting world.”

By the mid 1930s, the rise of fascism and the Depression gave rise to widespread questioning of the future of democracy. The term “objectivity,” not known in journalism prior to WWI, was common and was being debated at Time and Fortune during Ingersoll’s tenure. The press union, the Newspaper Guild, was leftist and a site of intense internal conflict for control.

63 Schudson, p. 157.
between its Communist and anti-Communists members, which continued within \textit{PM}. The elusive principle of objectivity was used by many publishers opposed to the Guild as a way to challenge the union, while objectivity was also used in opposition to the “propaganda” coming from the left. At the time of \textit{PM}’s formation, a major issue became “not whether news shall be unprejudiced but rather whose prejudices shall color the news.”\textsuperscript{66} None of this could have failed to have been intensified as the world moved closer to war and espionage activities, exposed and reported on by \textit{PM}, were taking place.

The writings of philosopher and Columbia professor, John Dewey, countered the views of thinkers like Lippmann and provided a foundation for the brand of liberal thought that suffused \textit{PM}. Unlike Lippmann, Dewey-professed faith in the public which he defined on the basis of the idea of shared experience and he stressed the important role that direct experience played in learning. Dewey believed that the function of the press was to make ideas public and foster discourse. The philosopher saw the contingency of truth in a positive light because it called attention to the problem of authority in determining what constituted truth and who defined it. \textit{PM}’s regular education features, customarily photographed by Morris Engel, were directly derived from Dewey’s principles of active learning and direct observation. (Fig. 10) Dewey’s ideas about art were also in accord with the documentary spirit that took hold in the 1930s, “by going back to experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the aesthetic quality such experience possesses.”\textsuperscript{67} In \textit{Art and Experience}, first published in 1934, Dewey expressed views about art that criticized the separation of aesthetic experience from quotidian life. As he wrote, “Even a crude experience, if authentically an experience, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of esthetic experience than is an object already set apart from

\textsuperscript{66} Schudson, cit., pp. 156-157.
\textsuperscript{67} John Dewey. \textit{Art As Experience}. New York: Capricorn Books, 1958, (Orig. pub. 1934) p.11.
any other mode of experience.”

These ideas were expressed similarly in Ralph Steiner’s writing for *PM* and in the writing of influential critic, Elizabeth McCausland, who championed the new spirit of documentary photography.

McCausland’s writing enters the problematic territory of “objectivity” in different terms from the debate in journalistic circles. She reacted to an earlier artistic photographic practice and echoed Dewey when she wrote that, “photography is not art in the old sense. It is not a romantic, impressionistic medium, dependent on subjective factors and ignoring the objective. It is bound to realism [...].”

Objectivity for her stemmed from a rejection of the elitism of the Pictorialists and an attention to its anchoring in the “reality” of the overlooked. In a nod to the hard times McCausland described documentary photography as “an application of photography direct and realistic, dedicated to the profound and sober chronicling of the external world.”

Photography played a major role in the shift that accompanied the growth of modern media. In Weimar Germany, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin expressed skepticism toward photography as one of the new modern mass diversions. Kracauer critiqued these as “distraction” that were “constructed and multiple” behind their appearance as “natural and unique.” He saw the artificially ordered “mass ornament [as] the aesthetic reflex of the

---

68 Ibid., p.11.
70 Elizabeth McCausland, cit., p. 170. This discussion of Objectivity can also be considered in relation to the Weimar discussion of the “New Objectivity,” and the work of Albert Renger-Patzsch. Abigail Solomon Goudeau discussed how, in *Die Welt ist Schon*, visual elements were derived partly from Russian formalism but in a manner that twisted what began as in the service of revolution into something that was visually equivalent to the belief “that governing laws of form underlay all the manifestation of nature, as well as the works of man, and that the revelation of these structures yields both significance and beauty.” This corresponded to the obsession with fact and objectivity but related to advertising and the fixation on modern technology. Renger-Patzsch’s work was also cited by Walter Benjamin in “A Short History of Photography,” as constituting “fashion” and distinct from revolutionary photography. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style,” in Richard Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, p. 91; note 19, p. 93.
rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system.” How directly the ideas of these Weimar thinkers influenced the editors at PM is difficult to determine but a similar questioning spirit infused the newspaper. The shift in photography that took place in the United States during the 1930s partially reflected the search for identity and stability dominating the country. Instead of a search for authority, in a nod to the hard economic times, the documentary movement turned away from the self-conscious artistry and elitism of Pictorialism as well as the fascination with industrial modernism that mostly served commercial interests in order to focus on the ordinary and the overlooked. This type of work found an outlet in PM’s pages.

The term “objectivity,” like “documentary,” must be considered in terms of the dialogue and debates that focused the concerns and anxieties regarding the instability of modern life. According to William Stott, a documentary attitude in general was given credibility through its connection with “eye-witnessing” which applied to all new media, radio especially. Documentary in photography as well as film is associated with “realism” but has come to stand for social purpose and the exposure of what and who had previously been unseen and ignored. I will therefore refer to “social documentary.” The photographic image of American life in the years of the Depression became wedded to the work produced and publicized by the New Deal government’s Farm Services Administration’s Historic Section project as well as a documentary ethos which drew from nineteenth century realism. This work showed images of the

---


72 Photography in PM’s pages did often show evidence of the geometric, machine look associated with the New Objectivity and industrial modernism; however, this work focused on ships, planes, tanks and other equipment that contributed to arming for war. See appendix for some examples.

73 The term “social photography” as used by Maren Stange, cit., p. 91, 134.

74 Vials, cit., pp. xv-xvi.
overlooked, “the forgotten man” (or woman, as in the case of Dorothea Lange’s Migrant Mother) in part to justify government aid. The FSA functioned as a form of government-sponsored propaganda. Photographs of America’s most wretched citizens were intended to promote social reform and link back to pioneering reformists of the progressive era, in particular, Lewis H. Hine. Significantly, Hine, as well, has been considered “a successful propagandist.”

During *PM’s* first years, 1940-1942, the specter of a second global war and the widening hostilities abroad intensified the issues of bias, propaganda, objectivity and democracy that had preoccupied the press of the 1920s and 1930s. The possibility of war became an overriding concern for Ingersoll and his staff and it is through this lens that *PM’s* dedication to informing and thus educating its audience must be viewed. How did *PM*, a fervently anti-Fascist publication, dedicated to the presentation of news without the influence of advertisers and for the benefit of their readers, handle the question of “objective” truth that had become cogent in a climate of impending danger? How far did the urgency of the moment color *PM’s* mission to arm readers with honest information channeled by photography? How did its deeply embedded program of transparency towards investigative reporting translate to the photographic image? What and for whom was this aimed, and what did it look like?

The Sunday edition of the paper, *PM’s Weekly*, functioned essentially like a magazine and contained items of direct application to readers’ daily lives. Like an illustrated magazine,

---

readers could study it at leisure and hold onto it for a longer period of time than the daily paper. Because of this, the front and rear covers of this edition had great visibility and impact and photographs, which appeared on them, were chosen with great care. On November 2, 1941, the rear cover of *PM*’s Sunday issue bore a dramatic full-page photograph. This image was made to stand out further because of a full red border surrounded by another border of white. (Fig.11) Using this framing device evoked fine art conventions. The use of this practice in a newspaper blurred the boundaries between news and art and indicated that this particular image was notable for its aesthetic appeal as well as its timely content.  

By placing a strong image on the back cover of this section, the editor’s intention was to attract readers by provoking their curiosity and thus induce them to open the paper and read further. In this particular image by photographer, Morris Engel, a boy, blindfolded with a white cloth, stands alone slumped in a posture of submission. His back faces a blank wall onto which nine shadows are projected with figures pointing weapon-like objects at the blindfolded boy. In the late autumn 1941, a few weeks before Pearl Harbor, world hostilities were rapidly escalating and the paper was filled with reports and images of ship attacks in the Atlantic as well as the daily arrival of refugees fleeing Europe and Britain. (Fig. 12) In this climate, it is not a great stretch of imagination to suppose that viewers might have interpreted the objects held by the shadow figures as firearms. They would also likely have filtered the scene as the execution of a prisoner or a spy, according to popular visual tropes that were abundant in contemporary pulp literature. (Fig. 13) The caption supports this reading:

> This is the fate of a spy in a New York kids’ game of soldiers. The boys didn’t know the term, “fifth columnist.” They said: “He’s a spy. We gotta shoot him.” Most of the youngsters playing were of Italian extraction but that didn’t make any difference in whether they became “Americans” or “Germans.” He didn’t struggle much when caught behind “American” lines—even supplied his own

---

76 This practice of using borders was also explicitly associated with fine art in the paper’s “Gallery” feature in which full page images were also described as being “hung.”
handkerchief for the blindfold. Lots of “Germans” joined the “American” side to get in on the firing squad.

Two lines of type at the upper left read “Kids Play at War” and “continued” to direct readers to turn to the interior of the paper to see more on the topic. These lines were small in order to not interrupt the drama of the image but also to allow it to have its full impact on readers before revealing that this was children’s play. Below the image, bold type gives more information: “‘German’ Spy Faces Firing Squad in Mid-Afternoon.” The narrative text clearly demonstrates how the news had invaded the imaginary games of children.

The image is further complicated by the shadows, which conjure the impression of the familiar made strange, the innocent become sinister, according to surrealist preoccupations: dream, memory, and the unfiltered unconscious. These become more effective by being associated with “kids and their innocence at play.” Because we do not see the figures whose shadows appear, it can be assumed that the photograph was the result of a conscious choice on the part of the photographer and dependent on the time of day for its long shadows. The use of a direct quote in identifying that “He’s a spy” plays with the credibility of the eye-witness, and this statement makes a stronger impact because, readers are told, it comes from children. We can assume that editors, most likely William McCleery, played a major role in the decision.

Roland Barthes would comment on this practice in his essay *The Photographic Message*, proving that a caption, within a press ensemble, could add meaning to a photograph. As he wrote, ”Formerly, the image illustrated the text (made it clearer); today, the text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination”. Barthes also identified the modern newspaper as an ensemble, describing the press photograph as “an object that has been worked

---

on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms (of) which are so many factors of connotation: while on the other, this same photograph is not only perceived, received, it is read, connected more or less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs.79 The savvy editors at PM were well aware of this and worked with the language and cultural norms attached to an image in order to obliterate any claim of pure objectivity. They also knew how to entertain and make very serious information palatable to their audience.

By November 1941, New York City’s cultural climate was dominated by ideas of an impending war. The city, with its strategic harbor, was vulnerable to Nazi attack by air or sea, and anxiety was palpable. New York had been an active center of support for Republican Spain in its fight for its life against the insurgent Generalissimo Franco and his Fascist allies, Germany and Italy. The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, had galvanized and united significant numbers of New Yorkers of various ethnicities along the spectrum of the left in a local, anti-fascist united front which saw a stark contrast between forces of democracy and reform and those of tyranny. By 1940, when PM arrived on city newsstands, the Spanish Civil War was still a rallying point for the left and a symbol of the fight against all oppression. The world situation had grown far more dire as Hitler’s troops overran Europe. The Nazis’ takeover of Paris was completed at almost the same moment that PM’s debut issue appeared on newsstands. The United States, which had not interceded on behalf of beleaguered Republican Spain, was now sharply divided in a rancorous debate over whether the United States should officially intercede against the forces of Fascism which now threatened Great Britain, under attack from Hitler’s air-force.80 The voices opposed to aid for Britain were numerous and varied. After World War I, the United

79 Barthes, cit., p. 19.
States was wary of another unpopular entanglement, and much of the country was both still isolated and isolationist. “America First,” an anti-war movement that began on the campuses of Ivy League universities, spread and was eventually taken over by conservative forces. There were homegrown fascist sympathizers in the country, including members of the German-American Bund and followers of Father Coughlin, the rabidly anti-Semitic priest from Detroit. Of the elements of the Popular Front, the Socialist Party under Norman Thomas felt that any war was only good for the rich and it opposed intervention, while the CPUSA dropped its former anti-fascist position when Hitler and Stalin signed a treaty of non-aggression in August 1939.

The left was riven by conflict between members of the Communist Party and more liberal left elements, and this manifested internally at PM among Communist and anti-Communist factions on staff. PM however, was very vocal on the issue of anti-fascist intervention by the US, and did not drop its opposition to Franco. In its continued coverage of Franco’s misdeeds, PM helped to keep the issue of Spain in the public eye.81 The paper’s editors repeatedly called for the United States to intervene in Europe and come to the aid of Britain, which was being subjected to repeated bombings by the Nazi air-force. Ingersoll personally reported from bomb-damaged London, and Ralph Steiner’s column of November 24, 1940 included images of the British carrying on under siege. In what was a call for aid to Britain, he wrote a text that went to the heart of the issue of photographic veracity, while stating the paper’s position on the international situation. As he wrote,

In a sense every photograph is a piece of propaganda. Even a ‘pure art’ photograph isn’t pure since it tries to ‘sell’ us on the idea that the world is a pretty place. It is not so important when some photographer’s Nude With Grapes fails to get across its message. But when a nation at war asks for our help, the pictures it uses to get across its message are very important. By looking at the pictures on

these pages - by seeing what is true and false in war propaganda pictures, readers can sharpen their sense of truth about all photographs. Photographers can learn that every photograph must have *a certain kind of truthfulness* to be effective.82

Significantly, since the mid 1930s, the public’s imagination had been fed by popular depictions of espionage, “fifth columnists,” false identities and camouflage in all media.83 German, Italian and later, Japanese Americans, were viewed with suspicion sometimes justifiably. (Fig. 14) *PM* conducted vigorous investigative reports on spy rings, one even lodged in the heart of NYC’s media capital at Rockefeller Center, and the paper went after the local German-American Bund at every opportunity. The mention of the Italian ethnicity of some of the boys in the November 2nd photo essay caption was significant. Despite the popularity of Mayor Fiorello Laguardia, Italians in the city were politically divided and had long been subject to discrimination and prejudice. Some viewed Mussolini favorably with a slant of patriotism. The owner of the largest Italian language newspaper in the city, *Il Progresso*, was a supporter of Il Duce. At the same time, a large segment of the Italian population in the city participated actively in labor and radical circles that were part of the Popular Front.84

By the early 1940s, spies, duplicity and false identity were ubiquitous in American popular culture. The attitude towards the truth or untruth of the photograph on the part of editors like Steiner was another aspect of a generally pervasive cultural doubt. “The Shadow,” one of the most widely heard radio programs of the 1930s, spawned a multitude of related pulp

82 Ralph Steiner, *PM’s Weekly*, November 24, 1940
83 Camouflage came into use during WWI when whole towns were disguised to throw off airborne bombers in this first conflict in which aviation played a role. *PM* reported on camouflage training in the NYC area and during his own military service that began in 1942, Ingersoll was involved in the creation of a “Ghost Army” which staged elaborate mock military units to deceive the Germans. See Hanna Rose Shell. *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance*. New York: Zone Books, 2012.
publications. (Fig. 15) False or mistaken identity was a movie theme familiar to the average American who attended the cinema at least weekly. The climate of doubt extended to the cinema and PM selectively covered movies that were alerted to what was happening in Europe, notably Charlie Chaplin’s 1940 classic The Great Dictator. In the same year, Alfred Hitchcock’s thriller, Foreign Correspondent, with a journalist as its central character, was inspiring U.S. audiences to find the truth about what was happening in Europe and prepare Americans for the inevitability of intervention.\footnote{Foreign Correspondent was the first Hollywood film by Hitchcock, who had fled to the US. Hitler’s minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, who wished to undercut the effectiveness of the film, called it “a masterpiece of shameless propaganda.” (http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2012/aug/27/favourite-hitchcock-foreign-correspondent) accessed 12/14/15. Even the popular film Meet John Doe played with the theme of a protagonist whose identity was coopted by the media for propaganda purposes and who was pawn in a fascist putsch.} PM, whose reporters crusaded to uncover spy rings in real time, went to great lengths to expose a scene in which a press camera was inaccurately transformed into a gun that was used to assassinate (“shoot”) a European dignitary in the Hitchcock spy film. (Figs. 16-17)

Consequently, the Morris Engel photograph of the blindfolded boy that appeared on the rear cover of the paper on November 2, 1941, and the photo essay which accompanied it, highlighted what had become the most pressing theme for Ralph Ingersoll and his staff: the need for activism in a world of war in order to protect the democratic system for all that they believed in fervently. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, the paper’s idea was that war needed to be fought in order to defend democracy in a plural rather than a typical or average America.

In anticipation of the need to mount a defense against fascist and militaristic regimes, FDR had signed a Selective Service and Training Act in September 1940, the nation’s first peacetime draft, which required all male citizens between 26 and 35 to register. This was, obviously, not a popular move and was given full coverage in PM. Ingersoll, who maintained a mutually supportive relationship with FDR, prodded the administration to take speedy action on
behalf of the British. The president, who had to contend with an uncooperative congress and strong isolationism, was being very cautious. Therefore, the prominence given to the photographic image of a boy tied to a pole, who couldn’t see because of his blindfold, was deliberately and strategically chosen as a way of raising the question regarding the future of young boys in the country and mobilizing a public outcry. The threat from abroad was unseen and insidious, like the shadows at home that dominated the news during the fall of 1941, merely weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

To mark its first anniversary and call attention to the fact that photography was so central to the paper, on June 18, 1941, PM ran a seventeen-page photography section comprised of sixty images arranged in a sequence. A group shot of the paper’s staff photographers was also included as a tribute. (Fig. 18) Almost without exception, the chosen images represented a city inhabited by ordinary people rather than an abstract, empty urban environment. (Fig. 19-20) The layout of the page spread titled “The Sidewalk” set up vertical images at both right and left that emphasized the ability of the built environment to dwarf city residents. In the left hand image tall buildings form a narrow canyon making the people on the streets look miniscule while the right hand photo by Weegee brings a throng of people to the windows and fire escapes of the building that fills the frame. The bottom of this image shows a street crowded with people. Two different views, one of an almost empty city, the other of a densely populated one, flank three images of life on the street, showing a large sullen overweight policeman who dominates the active street behind him. The other two are Engel’s photograph of smiling workers giving out campaign literature for FDR and being confronted by a sour faced woman, and an image by Margaret Bourke-White where a man is emerging from a cellar door in front of an empty storefront window where unclothed dress models bear a for sale sign while another sign indicates that the
store and basement are “to let.” The images in the next spread, “The Working People,” celebrate labor: a bus driver at work, women picketing a brassiere manufacturer carrying clever signs, “A Union Contract or Bust” and “Uplift in Wages”. On the bottom, a couple sunbathes on a beach and in a full page image on the right, a bricklayer stands in shirtsleeves and suspenders near the edge of a roof, looking directly at the photographer. Behind him, in the distance, is the city skyline including the Empire State Building. The message is that this is the kind of New Yorker that built the city. Another text in the issue told readers that for an additional dollar, they could also purchase a hardcover version of the photo pages, titled The Year’s Best Pictures. In this anniversary issue, William McCleery, the editor of the weekend edition, referred to this public of ordinary citizens, who filled both the photographs and the city itself, as “the uncelebrated.” In Ingersoll’s new paper, images of the “uncelebrated” and ordinary “real” people took up space that other tabloids usually filled with Hollywood stars whose perfect faces were the results of cosmetic and photographic fakery. In a twist on celebrity, the paper gave photographs of plain people the same prominence as famous ones. Accordingly, a regular feature in the weekend magazine followed a young, “uncelebrated” workingwoman through a variety of “The Adventures of an Ordinary Girl.” Young Lillian Kodak (irony is accidental here) received celebrity treatment as she starred in the series that also began in June 1941 and was photographed by portrait lighting pioneer, staff photographer Mary Morris. (Fig. 21)

---

86 An example of the self advertising in PM: “Special Christmas offer: 3 Months gift subscript plus a 60-page book of the Picture Stories of the year only $3. A Picture Book FOR Non-Subscribers line drawing of book on left, bold $1 holly above and below. Text “If you live in New York and do not wish to subscribe to PM but would still like to have a copy of the Big Book of dramatic Picture Stories of the Year—here’s how to get it: For yourself, or as gift to a friend or both. Simple send $1 plus 10C for mailing ($1.10 total) for each copy. This big book of Picture Stories of the year contains picture stories of life on New York streets... of draftees in army camps... around the clock with New York’s police department... and scores of other pictures of the year—pictures that live as long as they’re to be looked at- all in a book that you will want for your library—a book that any friend of yours will prize. Send for it today to: PM Box 81, Times Square Station, New York, NY PM, Wed Dec 10, 1941, p. 30.
William McCleery wrote the introduction for this first anniversary and admitted the bias necessary to make choices:

Ralph Steiner, our photography critic, and the other of us who selected these pictures were not trying to prove anything - we simply selected the ones we considered the best. What and how a newspaper thinks is revealed by the subjects its writers choose-and are assigned-to write stories and editorials about. But the subjects its photographers choose-and are assigned-to photograph are more revealing of the newspaper’s FEELINGS about people and things.

This album is certainly revealing of PM’s feelings in one respect, at least. In the files of no other newspaper or magazine would you find pictures of so many wonderful but uncelebrated people. Uncelebrated people usually get their pictures taken only when they win sweepstakes or commit crimes of passion.

Abe Lincoln is supposed to have said, “God must have loved the common people. He made so many of them. Our photographers must love plain people; they’ve taken so many good pictures of them. Of course, you can take pictures of plain people and their kids without loving them-but not, I think, good pictures."

87 William McCleery, PM’s Weekly, June 18, 1941, 16.
Chapter II

Ralph Steiner: The Camera Cannot Lie

“The camera eye cannot lie,” is lightly said. On the contrary, the camera eye usually does nothing but lie.

Elizabeth McCausland, Photo Notes, January 1939

“The camera cannot lie.” That cliché is a lie itself, because every camera lies unless it is in the hands of an expert craftsman with a passion for the truth [...] “The camera cannot lie” is true only in the sense that it is a little harder to tell a complete falsehood with a camera than with words. The thing to bear in mind when “reading” photographs is that none of them can tell the full truth about a man. You must see a lot of pictures before you can make up your mind about who he really is.

Ralph Steiner, PM’s Weekly, February 2, 1941

This essay published by Ralph Steiner in PM on February 2, 1941 is very significant in relationship to my earlier discussion of PM’s treatment of photography as a message. Ralph Steiner, PM’s photography columnist, points out that a single photograph has its limits in giving a true picture of any person, and speaks of the camera as capable of “falsehood.” (Fig. 22) Steiner’s position reiterates that of critic Elizabeth McCausland who wrote that the camera did nothing but lie. These assertions, though, found a wide range of interpretations and applications. In his capacity as photo critic for PM, Steiner set out to educate his readers to understand that any shred of truth conveyed by photographs required knowledge and active observation on the part of both photographer and audience. Steiner explained these ideas in a weekly column, which was a forum where all the different strands of the photographic culture of the day were presented and discussed. Steiner examined important issues from a perspective that was sympathetic to the working-class readers as he advocated for photography as an art form that was grounded in a quotidian reality and based on a photographer’s connection their subject.

By 1940, despite the growing popularity of photography and the expanded accessibility of photo reproduction in illustrated magazines and newspapers, the general audience still naïvely accepted photography as a vehicle for factual information. In his February 2, 1941 column, Steiner used multiple, seemingly simple portraits of political figures and celebrities graphically organized in a grid to expose the basic nature of photography. (Fig. 23) He deliberately incorporated contradictory captions beneath the different images of the same person to point out how easily words could change the meaning and hence, the reception of a photograph. Here, he also pointed out that a still photo represents only a brief moment in time, by nature a selection, that is inadequate to convey the complexity of any human, let alone some of the multifarious and controversial political figures included in this particular array of portraits. In a relatively straightforward manner, this column highlighted the way the publication used text to direct meaning. Each individual whose portrait appeared in this particular column was represented by two or more different images. The photographs were selected to show celebrities with different facial expressions and gestures. In a nod to popular entertainment, a few of the subjects were relatively neutral such as the actress Joan Crawford whose captions described her as either “Sweet” for an image in which she is looking down, or “Brassy” where she looked directly at the camera smiling broadly. Known for her ability to turn her smile on and off for the camera, Crawford proved, through Steiner’s captioning, the constructed nature of Hollywood celebrity.

Some of the others pictured, such as Earl Browder and Norman Thomas, were especially controversial in the fractious political climate of the American left of 1941. Both Socialist Party heads, Thomas and especially Browder, who was the head of the U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA), were derided at *PM* for their opposition to U.S. intervention abroad. Browder was extremely controversial in February 1941. *PM* included him in a double page illustration of five
columnists in which a large illustrated Hitler pulled the strings of enemies of democracy. Browder’s cartoon figure was in the lower tier in the company of notorious American fascist sympathizers, anti-Semites and anti-interventionists such as Father Coughlin, Henry Ford, Lindbergh, and the Grand Wizard of the Klu Klux Clan.\footnote{“The Fifth Column and Its Fellow Travelers”, \textit{PM}, October 18, 1940.} In Steiner’s column, Earl Browder was represented by four images, the most of any subject. These bore the captions: “Benign,” “Gentle,” “Sour,” and “Sinister”. (Fig. 26) The first two photos showed Browder smiling or lighting a pipe and because of the flat, white quality of the faces, these look obviously retouched. “Sour” caught him looking intensely at something and could have supported a range of verbal descriptions. In “Sinister,” the CPUSA leader squints while looking to the side from under the brim of a fedora in an image that could have easily come from Weegee’s repertoire of gangster photos. These captions clearly altered and oriented the readings of these portraits. Browder was a controversial figure because of the CPUSA’s withdrawal from the anti-Fascist coalition of the Popular Front in support of the 1939 treaty between Hitler and Stalin. This added to a particularly fraught situation within \textit{PM} where there was discord between the Communists and anti-Communists on the paper’s staff. Such a divide made the invocation of multiple perspectives even more relevant.\footnote{Paul Milkman, cit., pp. 48, 110-111.}

These portraits were meant to demonstrate what the text on the first page of the column illustrated, explaining the technical limits of photography:

The camera records shape, color, tone and form. It is foolproof only in its recording of shape. It usually lies about the others. For instance: before the days of panchromatic film, red hair “came out” too dark - now it registers too light. Tone values are falsified by incorrect exposure or development; “marshmallow” faces look expressionless or dopey […] And too flat, shadowless lighting distorts a face’s form.

On the following page, the Browder photos, marked ”Benign,” “Gentle,” showed facial
tones that illustrated precisely what the words of the text described: facial tones that were too white and too flat. In the picture of Browder lighting his pipe captioned “Gentle,” his face looks like a mask, an illustration or a badly transmitted radio-wire photo, inaccurate and falsified by retouching. The obvious black outlines of Browder’s face, hair and hands contrast with the bleached skin tones. Normal retouching practice at *PM* involved the use of opaque pigment to block out portions of the background in order to make subjects stand out. Considering how skillfully this was routinely accomplished, it is more than likely that these pictures of Browder, which may have come from a source other than *PM*, were chosen for Steiner’s purposes.

The association of Browder’s face with drawing and the interference of a human hand implies thorny and intricate issues of artistry and subjectivity which Jason E. Hill addressed in his discussion of early radio transmitted photos from the USSR in *PM*.\(^92\) Hill proposes that *PM* purposely used similar, poorly realized photographs to convey to its readers that photographs too could exhibit elements of human interference, and were less than neutrally objective, and above all, should be scrutinized carefully and approached with skepticism. The inclusion of such obviously retouched images of Browder was meant to convey a message that a “gentle” or “benign” Browder was a complete fake. This effect supported Steiner’s claim that “you have to see a lot of pictures of a man before you can make up your mind about who he really is.”\(^93\) In his reasoning on portraiture and photography, Steiner revealed his own roots in the European Workers’ Photography movement, which had become the Film and Photo League and the New York Photo League, where Steiner was a founding member.

Steiner’s message conveyed the idea that it is impossible to show a true picture of

---


\(^93\) Ralph Steiner, *PM’s Weekly*, February 2, 1941, p. 47.
anyone, especially anyone “celebrated,” which in the case of Earl Browder, also meant “notorious.” These words resonated with those used by Alexander Rodchenko, the revolutionary Soviet pioneer of radical formalism who understood how photography conveyed a whole new impression of the human figure captured in time. As he said, “one has to take different shots of a subject, from different points of view and in different situations, as if one examined it in the round rather than looked throughout the same key-hole again and again.” For Rodchenko, photography defied the painterly “synthetic portrait.” As he stated, “don’t try to capture a man in one synthetic portrait, but rather in lots of snapshots taken at different times and in different circumstances!” If this statement was written in the spirit of a revolution that saw artists as active participants in the larger society and creators of a new collective consciousness, Steiner used similar words to reveal the temporal and contingent.

The politics of photographer and filmmaker Ralph Steiner were closely aligned to the rest of the editorial staff at the paper. He wrote the weekly column on photography that appeared in the second part of the Sunday edition of PM from the paper’s beginning in 1940 until 1942 when he and his wife, photo staffer Mary Morris, departed for Hollywood. Section II of PM’s Weekly was devoted to photo features. Some of these showcased full-page single images but many, including Steiner’s own column, were conceived as multi-image layouts. Features in this Sunday

---

94 Browder, Soviet spy, General Secretary and head of the CPUSA, was an extremely controversial figure of the American left. Under Browder, the CPUSA was loyal to Soviet policies no matter what and saw these as the best way to defeat Fascism including support for the pact signed between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939, which turned things upside down for the American left. In February 1941 Browder had been sentenced to four years in prison by the U.S. government for “passport irregularities.” He was released early once Hitler invaded the USSR in June 1941 and the U.S. and the USSR became allies. (http://spartacus-educational.com/USAbrowder.html) accessed 3/14/16.

95 Alexander Rodchenko, “Against the Synthetic Portrait, for the Snapshot” (1928), cited by Abigail Solomon-Goudeau, in “The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style,” Richard Bolton, ed. The Contest of Meaning. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, p. 87. Steiner, who participated in the exhibition “Film und Foto” in Stuttgart, in 1929, may well have come into contact with these ideas.
section emphasized entertainment and leisure, and were aimed at a working class audience.

Steiner’s column was one of the first weekly columns on photography to ever appear in a newspaper. Although there were columns on photography in scientific magazines such as *Popular Photography* and *Scientific American*, these were devoted to the craft of photography and touched on technical matters. To the contrary, Ralph Steiner used his column to present a broad and democratic range of photographic work for the purpose of instructing “the reading and picture looking public... about photography, photographs, photographers.” As he wrote, “we hope to do it without boring them, or even letting them know they’re being educated.”

The eclectic weekly photography column covered formal elements that contributed to popular subject matter, usually in the context of topical issues. In his role as “*PM’s Photography Critic*,” Steiner analyzed advertiser’s techniques, and gave exposure to photographers whose work he felt deserved greater recognition, such as some of the men and women who took pictures for FSA. The work that illustrated Steiner’s subject matter was broadly democratic in scope and included photographs taken by amateurs and professionals, including some of the leading figures in the field, both past and present, and in a wide range of applications - fashion, advertising, aerial photography, documentary and social reform images, and work that was

---

96 Scientific American advertised its photography column in US Camera 1940, p. 239.
98 Ibid.,
99 The title “photo critic” was first appeared in Steiner’s column in 1941. Further research is required to find out who added it. It was possibly a decision involving Steiner and McCleery.
100 Steiner wrote separate full columns on Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein and Marion Post, who added Wolcott to her name later. See “Marion Post is a Top woman Photographer”, *PM’s Weekly* August 17, 1941, pp. 48-49; Dorothea Lange, *PM’s Weekly*, June 22, 1941, pp. 48-49; Arthur Rothstein “Rothstein Makes Sociology Come Alive”, *PM’s Weekly*, April 6, 1941, pp. 46-47. Ben Shahn, Walker Evans as well as Rothstein and Marion Post also appeared Steiner column dedicated to the Sherwood Anderson and Ed Rosskam’s book, *Small Town, PM’s Weekly*, October 13, 1940, pp. 46-49.
classified as fine art.\textsuperscript{101}

Steiner’s column addressed the heightened concern at the paper over the ability of images used in advertising and propaganda to seduce and manipulate an unsophisticated public. An important underlying intention behind Steiner’s lessons on the volatile nature of the meaning of any image was to insure that the public was not taken in by the propaganda photographs created by Joseph Goebbels’ sophisticated Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which were beginning to filter out of Nazi Germany. This also spoke to what had been a general concern with propaganda for at least a decade, including that produced by the USSR.\textsuperscript{102} Paradoxically, within this column, as elsewhere in the paper, PM’s own bias was evident through language that foregrounded the newspaper itself as a trustworthy, truthful source of news material in an ocean of information and misinformation.

During the 1930s, photography had become a popular interest. The field was diverse, exciting and marked by fluidity. There were overlaps between media: photo, film, written word and radio.\textsuperscript{103} Amateur photography expanded, partly due to advances in camera and film technology, which made picture taking easier for amateurs as well as professionals. Roll film enabled photographers to shoot continuously without reloading, opening up the potential for action sequences and the capture of implied movement. The greater sensitivity of film also made it possible to take pictures in more challenging lighting situations than ever before. John Raeburn identified that there was a “picture hunger” among the general public and pointed out, that the

\textsuperscript{101} See “Doctors Who Take Pictures for Fun Get Few Good Ones,” PM’s Weekly, January 12, 1941. Ralph Steiner wrote on May 4 1941, p. 48: “Next week the American Youth Congress and Friday magazine will officially announce the winners of a national photography contest called ‘Youth in Focus’...I saw all 1000 entries....”

\textsuperscript{102} The American Institute for Propaganda Analysis was formed in 1937 allied with Columbia University and among its members were the very different top PM political and labor reporters, I.F. Stone and James Wechsler. See D.D. Guttenplan. American Radical: The Life and Times of I. F. Stone. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.
camera and photo equipment market was a bright spot in the otherwise dismal Depression economy. In the 1940 issue of the U.S. Camera Annual, photo critic Elizabeth McCausland wrote that, “in 1935, the total value of all photographic materials and instruments sold in the US was $75,000 […] In 1937 it was estimated that New York’s 7,000,000 owned 1,500,000 cameras, and that 1,300,000 photographs were taken weekly in the city.”\footnote{104} Raeburn attributes some of the richness of the field to the increasingly broad audience created by exposure to photography through accessible spaces, such as the First International Photographic Exposition at the Grand Central Palace in 1938, and the annual Leica and U.S. Camera exhibitions at Rockefeller Center. This public was also able to see a growing number of photo-illustrated books and magazines, including those devoted solely to photography. Among the most important ones were Thomas Maloney’s U.S. Camera annuals, along with the exhibitions and the monthly magazine of the same name, beginning in 1935. An increasingly informed audience helped to fuel greater demand for the pictorial which coalesced into a decade of vitality for a democratic visual form well suited to the tenor of the time, an era of the so-called “common man.”\footnote{105}

Raeburn’s study also points out that the boundaries between photographic genres were far more fluid. In 1940, medium specificity was still not solidified and the process of creating a photographic fine art canon was just beginning.\footnote{106} PM further complicated things by publishing images that had aesthetic quality and possessed news value. As discussed earlier, the paper

\footnote{104} See John Raeburn, cit., p. 9-10: “More than 50 percent of American families owned a camera and made some six hundred million pictures a year, spending $100 million doing so. Snapshots …accounted for much of this, but many who wielded cameras had more artistic goals.” See T.J. Maloney, ed., U.S. Camera 1940, The One Hundredth Year of Photography, New York, Random House, Inc., 1939, p. 10.

\footnote{105} Raeburn, cit., p. 2

\footnote{106} Beaumont Newhall’s History of Photography appeared in 1937 and with Ansel Adams, he put together the first exhibition for MOMA’s newly established Department of Photography in 1940. In addition to historical figures, this included work by young photographers Ruth Bernhard and Helevitt who were featured in Steiner’s PM column. See Raeburn, cit., p. 293-294, 358n4.
countered and disrupted the trend in news journalism that obscured the presence of the photographer in order to perpetuate the myth of objective fact. Fueled by editorial boldness and passionate conviction, and taking advantage of the permeable margins between genres, *PM* published the work of Weegee and other photographers like Morris Engel who developed distinct signatures. Both photographers, as well as others who were published by the paper, had their work exhibited in fine art venues. Steiner, a pivotal figure at *PM* and in the contemporary photography network, was, in his work as critic and artist, a participant in this phenomenon.

In her 1939 essay “Documentary Photography,” published in the New York Photo League’s magazine, *Photo Notes*, McCausland described the trend of “strong creative impulses seeking an outlet suitable to the serious and tense spirit of our age... an application of photography direct and realistic, dedicated to the profound and sober chronicling of the external world.” Her words, which had their counterpart, and were illustrated in Steiner’s work for *PM*, contradicted the art-for-art’s-sake approach that had held sway in the early decades of the twentieth century. This approach, associated with Pictorialism, privileged inner states, attributed work to “genius,” and had a tendency to fetishize the fine print. Steiner made reference to this in “New ‘U.S. Camera’ Shows a Trend Away From Photography for Photography’s Sake,” his column on December 1, 1940, (Fig. 27) where he presented a selection of light-hearted images that had popular appeal: three boys stacked one on top of another rushing down a hill on a sled.

---

107 Images taken by Weegee and run in *PM* were included in exhibitions at MOMA and in two consecutive shows at the Photo League in late summer 1941. Helen Levitt and Morris Engel also exhibited in fine art contexts. Lewis W. Hine, who was recognized in *PM* on several occasions, was re-emerging due to the efforts of Elizabeth McCausland and Berenice Abbott who put together a major retrospective and catalog of his work in 1939 at the Riverside Museum.


109 Ralph Steiner, “New ‘U.S. Camera’ Shows a Trend Away From Photography for Photography’s Sake” *PM’s Weekly*, December 1, 1940, pp. 48-49.
an expressive duckling with an open bill, and an image in which a large chrysanthemum matched the size and shape of the tops of the bald heads of two men intently examining the colossal flower. It is somewhat unclear how these images, delightful as they are, “Show a Trend Away From Photography for Photography’s Sake,” but in their common appeal and straightforward camera technique, they were a far cry from the airy pretensions and snobbery of Pictorialism. According to Cara Finnegan’s definition, Pictorial photography had pure and specific artistic intent.\(^{110}\) Jason Hill has also made the point that the separation between the daily press and “art” was yet another product of mechanized industrial production, leading Walter Benjamin to write his seminal “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Steiner, who was a tireless promoter of both the artistic and documentary value of photography, took a similar position and provided support and exposure for an important public venue that was dedicated to promoting and elevating photography as a “popular” form of fine art. In his work for \textit{PM}, Steiner broke new ground by not treating news journalism, documentary, and art as mutually exclusive.

There was ample evidence that the fluid borders of 1930s photography described by Raeburn were still the norm during \textit{PM’s} early years where bold editorial policies translated into a willingness to experiment with the format of the visually coherent photo essay. This was still a relatively new form in pictorial magazines and definitely new in the daily press. An example of this flexibility can be seen in \textit{PM’s Weekend Gallery}, which presented individual portfolios, such as those of Morris Engel and Helen Levitt, but also work that addressed controversial topical concerns, according to the visual conventions used to display fine art. \textit{Gallery} spreads generally consisted of five to seven pages with a single large photograph per page. In the same spirit, the text described the photographs as being “hung”. A notorious example of \textit{PM’s} unique merging of

the artistic with the politically timely was the debut of émigré photographer Lisette Model, edited by Ralph Steiner. To Model’s dismay, this portfolio of portraits from the series Promenade des Anglais, 1933-1938, was distorted by captions and headlines that overzealously described the subjects of the work as responsible for the fall of France while they were merely denizens of a popular resort. In addition to the Gallery feature, multi-image photo spreads were introduced such as the timely Morris Engel series, Kids Play at War, which had a distinct political undertone and agenda.

Although Steiner had little writing experience before he was hired at PM, he was in a uniquely well-qualified position for the job due to his long experience in the media. His dedication to sorting out what mattered in photography and debunking photographic reliability was grounded in his own background and experience in the conflicting realms of commercial photography and radical politics. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s (and onwards) photography generally had played a large and crucial role in what Jordana Mendelson has called the “making [of] the rhetoric of fantasy and persuasion visible.” It became a mainstay of the advertising industry that fueled magazine publishing. Ralph Steiner embraced commercial photography in those years, no doubt to earn a living, yet he often simultaneously used the medium as a form of critique of consumerism, with a political leaning to the left. Between 1924 and 1936, his work appeared frequently in magazines such as Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Ladies Home Journal, The

Woman’s Home Companion, and The Delineator, usually to promote consumer goods.\textsuperscript{114} His fine art images appeared in art publications such as Hound and Horn where one of his most well known photographs, wicker chairs in dappled light, appeared in the final issue.\textsuperscript{115}

Ralph Steiner received his formal photographic education at the Clarence H. White School of Photography in New York City from 1921 through 1922, as did other PM photographers, such as Margaret Bourke-White, and his wife, Mary Morris.\textsuperscript{116} The White School, begun in 1914 by Clarence White, a Socialist associated with the Pictorialist movement, was one of only a few formal photography programs of its day. The school taught a balance of art and commercial photographic applications and was influenced by the educational theories of philosopher John Dewey, with an emphasis on engaged learning and immediate experience. Although there was an association with Pictorialism at the school, White’s students were introduced to modern photography via lectures by photographers like Paul Strand. They were also well prepared to take advantage of opportunities in the new field of advertising. White’s teaching was open to European models in which photography, modern art and commercialism intersected. The 1931 Exhibition of Foreign Advertising and Industrial Photography at the school’s Art Center in New York introduced Steiner and his fellow students to the work of European photographers Florence Henri, Germaine Krull, Moholy-Nagy, and Dziga Vertov.\textsuperscript{117} Steiner’s own photographs appeared in the landmark 1929 exhibit, Film und Foto, in Stuttgart,

\textsuperscript{115} Raeburn, cit., p. 23.
\textsuperscript{117} Yochelson, cit., p. 6.
Germany, and it is most likely that he was well aware of the advanced European trends in photography at that time: unusual vantage points, attention to geometry, repetition, and active exploration of the possibilities of the mediums of film and photography. He used similar technical and stylistic means in his commercial work and in his personal fine art, and he sometimes used the same image for both purposes.\footnote{Carol J. Payne, cit., p. 12. Steiner’s commercial images contributed to the promotion of consumer culture that was directed primarily toward women, and this work stood in ironic contrast to the consumer pages in \textit{PM} headed by his friend, radical fashion designer and activist, Elizabeth Hawes.}

According to a study by historian Carol Payne, beginning in the late 1920s and intensifying during the early 1930s, Steiner became involved in New York avant-garde art circles where he was exposed to radical politics and grew to distrust commercial visual culture.\footnote{Payne, cit., p. 13.} Payne focused on a few images to support this point. For example, Steiner’s \textit{Self Portrait with Billboard}, taken in 1929, in which Steiner poses before a large billboard while desperately hugging a large view camera to his chest, looks like a parody of the portrait and advertising conventions of the era. (Fig. 28) In this image, a fractured centerline intersects the figure of Steiner whose clutching hands reverse the position of the truncated hands on the billboard, a reversal that she interprets as implying an upending the advertisement itself. As this image suggests, it is likely that Steiner, given his political trajectory, would have become ambivalent.

Although Steiner continued to photograph for advertisers and magazines throughout his career his doubt is reflected in his writing and choice of topics for \textit{PM}. On September 28, 1941, in a column titled, “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original” (Fig. 29), Steiner described advertising agencies in his text as “big, hurried money-making factories” and he revealed some of the means by which advertising
agencies seduced viewers. Nonetheless, his text also explains that advertising could use photographs as entertainment and thus extend the creative possibilities of the medium but that this happened relatively rarely and was of value only if readers were not deceived. Steiner used an appropriately light and humorous touch when he discussed creative photographic trickery in his two columns, that came under the rubric of “Eye-Catchers”. For the first of these, he devoted space to showing straightforward, formally strong and honestly amusing images, such as a chicken with splayed legs and bedraggled feathers and a baby whose skeptical expression was strange on one so young. His second column published a short time later, “Eye-Catchers, Here Are Some More Gems by Advertisers: The Camera Lied, but You Like the Tricks” showed images that were entertaining although they had clearly been manipulated such as a tiny man asleep in a cup of coffee, a cross legged woman with six arms dresses as a Hindu goddess, and a large image of three masked “surgeons” “operating” madly on an unseen patient with a wrench, a saw and drill as their surgical tools. This group of images in particular consisted of images that were either deliberately staged or were the result of taking scissors and glue to the original photos. (Fig. 30) These montages were chosen by Steiner to illustrate the role that photography played in deceiving the public. He implied that what was important was learning to distinguish reality from the trick, and wrote:

About 20 years ago the buying public saw the beginning of a flood of photographs in advertising that flowed deeply ever since. Before the flood started, advertisers had mostly used drawings to sell you their goods. Then they got the idea that you thought the camera couldn’t lie-that you’d believe and buy better from a photograph than from a drawing. The advertiser, of course, retouched and glamorized the photographs of his products-sometimes beyond recognition-but you weren’t supposed to know about that. Now, after two decades, most of you know that a photograph that makes a ford look as long as a Lincoln isn’t gospel truth [...] even if these pictures are the result of scissors, paste and retouching, rather than of straight photography, they are more honest (they make no attempt to deceive you) and more fun than their ‘realistic’ and ‘truthful’ forbears.121

120 Ralph Steiner, “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original,” *PM’s Weekly*, September 28, 1941, pp. 48-49.
121 Ralph Steiner, “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original,” *PM’s Weekly*, September 28, 1941, p. 48-49; “Eye-Catchers, Here Are Some More
Toward the end of his time at *PM*, Steiner reiterated his preference for more “honest” practice, no matter what form it took. On April 12, 1942 in “Here Lies the Camera,” he wrote:

> When photographers take reality for a joyride, they have to spend a great deal of time and effort. When they use trickery just for fun, the results are worth the bother, but when they use it to manufacture art I’m reminded of the wisecrack made by Dr. Samuel Johnson at his first violin concert. His friend Boswell told him that violin playing was very difficult. “Sir” said Johnson, “I wish it were impossible.”

Toward the end of the 1920s, when Steiner became open to the ideas of the radical left, he was in the company of many artists and intellectuals, including Paul Strand, whom Steiner deeply admired. At the time, Steiner’s images were appearing in fine art journals and he was engaged in formal experimentation in films that reflected a modernist machine aesthetic such as *H2O*, *Surf and Seaweed*, and *Mechanical Principles*. Like many artists in the 1930s, he adopted a documentary style and an American vernacular “iconography” in his noncommercial photos and films. Negative experiences with radicalism eventually turned Steiner toward a liberal and reformist perspective to which he continued to adhere during his time at *PM*. Like many other artists of that era, he became firmly committed to social issues: a more equitable distribution of wealth, workers rights, concern for the weak and the forgotten, and respect for the dignity of the “common man.” However, this was always tempered by his strongly aesthetic motivation.

In 1931, Steiner joined the newly formed Workers’ Film and Photo League (WFPL). This cultural offshoot of the Workers’ International Relief organization begun under Communist Party sponsorship in Europe (Germany and Russia) and then spread across the United States was formed to disseminate a record of conditions and issues that affected workers’ lives. It was also

---

Gems by Advertisers: The Camera Lied, but You Like the Tricks”, *PM’s Weekly*, October 5, 1941, p. 48-49.

122Steiner, “Here Lies the Camera,” *PM’s Weekly*, April 12, 1942, pp. 16-17.
dedicated to counteracting the bourgeois fantasies nurtured largely by the Hollywood film industry. Steiner became an instructor in the short-lived Harry Alan Potemkin Film School, which had developed out of the Workers Film and Photo League. Members of the WFPL split between those who were concerned with limiting group productions solely to accurate reporting of labor actions and those who accepted aesthetic elements in accordance with the ideas of Soviet cinema pioneer, Dziga Vertov. Among the latter were Steiner, Paul Strand, Leo Hurwitz and Irving Lerner, who formed their own film collective NYKino, which maintained a less dogmatic perspective that embraced the aesthetic along with the political.

While part of NYKino, Steiner worked with members of Harold Clurman’s collectively oriented Group Theatre on the satirical film *Pie in the Sky*. This experience with theatre and drama had an influence on Steiner’s film-making and on some of the later choices he made at *PM* in terms of directing readers to distinguish authenticity from drama. Steiner’s theatre experience is evident in an early column from 1940 that compared the genuine emotions of the subjects of news photos, including seminal images by Weegee, with the work of actors. (Fig. 31) In “These Are Real People Showing Emotion…and These Are Models ‘Acting’ Emotion”, *PM’s Weekly*, February 23, 1940, four candid, dramatic, emotional images of subjects reacting to...

---

124 See Alexander, cit., p.174: NYKino joined the Russian word for film with “NY” and US nationalism to USSR avant-garde film ideas and socialist politics especially the ideas of Dziga Vertov.  
125 In “Look at These Pictures,” *PM’s Weekly*, August 4, 1940, Steiner provided instruction on a basic element of photography by examining how cropping an image could influence its interpretation. This was the only occasion in which he used his own work; a photograph of two men engaged in an animated discussion at a table first shown in tight close-up. On the next page, the full un-cropped image reveals the context of the discussion to be a director speaking to an actor at the end of a Group Theater rehearsal in a large room filled with empty chairs. See Jason E. Hill, “Lisette Model’s Explanation: Ralph Steiner, *PM*, and the Journalistic Frame,” *Oxford Art Journal*, 38.1, 2015, pp. 95-115.  
126 Ralph Steiner, “These Are Real People Showing Emotion…and These Are Models ‘Acting’ Emotion”, *PM’s Weekly*, July 28, 1940, pp. 48-49.
traumatic situations were chosen on the left-hand page. These were juxtaposed with two large and two small pictures on the facing page with actors exhibiting an array of much milder expressions. None of these show the extreme distress of the subjects on the left who have been captured in the midst of disturbing events. By inviting readers to actively compare reality versus fiction through the subjects’ expressions on the two pages, Steiner calls upon them to observe closely and directs his audience to become involved as participants themselves. On August 24, 1941, Steiner revisited this theme about emotional expression with a column title “Look Again! These Photos Prove Muscles Not Eyes Give Facial Expressions Their Meaning”. (Fig. 32) This is another good example of the way Steiner’s two page spreads often exhibited the graphic coherence of a photo essay. Identifying the subject of the small photograph in the center of the strip of three images at the bottom center of the spread, as a confessed ax murderer, Steiner suggested that his readers engage actively with the image: “ask yourself what in each expression gave you the clues. Take a piece of paper and block out the mouth of the ax murderer. Then he just looks interested. His mouth and arm gesture give him the wild look of fear.”\textsuperscript{127} The dramatic hand gestures in each of the chosen photographs were orchestrated to direct the reader’s gaze to provide an active experience. The hands of an eclectic variety of expressive subjects stand out because they are lighter in tone than surrounding elements. Vertical hands in the photos at both far left and far right bracket the horizontal hand movements in the central images. Viewers’ eyes were drawn to the pale, dramatic face in the culminating photo at the bottom of the page. This image and Steiner’s written directions to readers was central in proving the point that “this eye-through-the-soul television is bunk...muscles may not sound poetic” but the direct action of

\textsuperscript{127} Ralph Steiner, “Look Again! These Photos Prove Muscles Not Eyes Give Facial Expressions Their Meaning”, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, August 21, 1941, pp. 48-49.
multiple muscles, and hard observation, were what were responsible for expressivity.\textsuperscript{128}

After an internal disagreement, Steiner left NYKino and formed Frontier Films with Strand and Hurwitz. He then worked as a cameraman for Pare Lorentz on films such as \textit{The Plow That Broke the Plains} (1936), \textit{The People of the Cumberland} (1937), \textit{The River} (1938), and \textit{The City} (1939). Steiner also photographed and directed \textit{The City} with Willard Van Dyke. This film, conceived in collaboration with urban theorist Lewis Mumford, was made for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City. In the spirit of \textit{PM}, the film placed humanity before the machine; it included scenes of children’s play and called for better urban environments and urban planning. As the prologue’s narrator recited, “Year by year our cities grow more complex and less fit for living. The age of rebuilding is here. We must remold our old cities and rebuild new communities better suited to our needs.”\textsuperscript{129} By 1940, NYC Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia was actively engaged in obtaining federal funds for infrastructure and housing upgrades, and the city was benefitting from multiple projects.\textsuperscript{130} All films in which Steiner participated mixed non-fiction with dramatic re-enactment, giving him firsthand experience in the controversy surrounding documentary truth – the same kind of controversy that he infused in his address to \textit{PM} readers, as observed earlier in his treatment of human emotions, their realities and illusions.

As an outgrowth of his experience in the film on the left, Ralph Steiner created work that treated quotidian subjects with both art and emotional connection, championing the ordinary and the overlooked as relevant photographic subjects. On August 11, 1940, Helen Levitt’s images of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
New Yorkers first appeared in *PM’s Gallery*.\(^{131}\) Seven months later, Steiner featured her seminal images of children’s street drawings in the first of two columns on the photographer.\(^{132}\) Steiner described these photos, which were originally taken by Levitt while she was working for the WPA, as revealing “What Goes on Inside the Minds of New York Children.” (Fig. 33) The spread in this column consisted of six small images of chalk drawings arranged in two simple rows of three over three, displaying commonplace, easily overlooked sidewalk artwork. The drawings showed a detective, a gangster, a “no good” woman, a couple embracing, and a magic button to a secret passage. (34) The drawings revealed something of the harsh life of the streets as interpreted by children based on their understanding of sex, violence, magic and powerlessness. Children’s lives and their artistic output had been receiving cultural attention based on Freudian theories of the unconscious.\(^{133}\) In addition, there was a modernist attention to the art of primitive, folk cultures, and the mentally ill. By highlighting these drawings, Steiner called attention to the small, powerless and overlooked, and the need for reform of the mean streets. At the same time, he paid homage to an artist he wished to recognize for her emotional connection to her subjects. On the right-hand page, Steiner chose two photographs to show, as he stated, “the world from which the small artists arose.” If these works - a group of African American boys sprawled haphazardly on a stoop and a multi-ethnic group of small boys in tattered clothing playing with a large empty frame - are now firmly part of a 20th century fine art


photographic cannon, their treatment of ordinary people and of the inner lives of lower class children were novel in an artistic context, and the advocacy of a central figure like Steiner for such work was significant. Beneath a seventh, small image of a chalk drawing of a boxer in action Steiner’s caption called attention to “the Superman influence,” evoking the popular champion of the powerless, the “pushed around.” This was a reminder of PM’s self-assigned mission. These ephemeral drawings, the traces of overlooked and unsung New Yorkers, were worthy of notice according to Steiner who stated, “[...the big credit goes to Miss L not so much for taking the picture - anyone who can focus and expose decently could have done them - but for seeing that such commonplace material was full of life and interest. [...]”

Steiner joined a small group of others, affiliated with the NY Photo League, who championed and expanded the range of subjects that could be treated seriously. His theme that the ordinary, “the little subject,” was worthy of the camera’s thoughtful attention came up again and again in his column. Levitt’s chalk drawings were essentially found objects and expressive but not self-conscious. They were isolated from their surroundings through being photographed but Steiner restored something of that background and made it clear that the boundaries between art and life were porous. The distance between what could be considered high or low also depended on alert seeing, emotional connection and lastly, technical skill. In the spirit of honesty that reigned at PM, Steiner also revealed that Levitt used a “trick device,” and he drew attention to the tenuous relationship between art and life when he wrote: “The drawings come from sidewalk jungles like this. Kids draw a thin line between make-believe and bloodlettings. Their

---

134 Levitt’s work on children was included in “Sixty Photographers”, an exhibition put together by Beaumont Newhall and Ansel Adams to inaugurate the new Photography Department at MOMA in December 1940. See Sandra Phillips, cit., p. 32.
gang battles are SERIOUS business. “Here they come fellers!”  

For Steiner, the antecedents of this approach that elevated the commonplace and saw such subjects as possessing aesthetic merit on their own were to be found in the work of documentary pioneer, Lewis W. Hine. Through the efforts of Steiner, McCausland and his former student, Paul Strand, Hine was beginning to re-emerge from a period of obscurity and penury and was being embraced as a role model by a younger generation of photographers, especially those affiliated with the New York Photo League. As Maren Stange has observed, Lewis Hine’s work was utilized to support bureaucratic social reform that was consonant with the reigning modernist industrial capitalism. However, this was not PM’s position. The paper wished to honor Hine’s achievements that had recently culminated in new laws against child labor. (Fig. 35) PM also helped the elder photographer by publishing work he made for the Amalgamated Clothing Worker’s Union at a time when assignments were scarce. Steiner devoted a full column to Hine on June 16, 1940 to mark the placement of his work with the Russell Sage Foundation and again six weeks later on August 25, 1940. (Fig. 36) This portfolio consisted of symmetrically arranged photographs; a small horizontal over a vertical, placed at right and left of the layout, and flanking a large central image. The images touched on all the issues at the core of PM’s and the Popular Front’s agenda: labor conditions, racial justice, ethnic identity and most important, decent conditions for children of all races. The centerpiece of the spread was a large image of a group of young children bent over their work, assembling

---

137 Ralph Steiner, “Lewis Hine’s Camera is a Weapon in Fight for Social Justice”, PM’s Weekly, June 16, 1940, pp. 48-49. Jason Hill tells that this referred to a sign that had hung in the office of the Film and Photo League.
artificial flowers at a table in a cluttered, dimly lit room.

As it is known, Hine had devoted great effort to the eradication of the abuse of child labor. This cause was only just being addressed by legislation that was upheld by the Supreme Court in February 1940, 30 years after the work was first circulated, and sadly, only three months after the photographer’s death. *PM* marked that occasion by publishing a classic Hine image of a young mill worker and paying tribute to the role that Hine’s images had played in bringing “emotional understanding to an issue that was known intellectually.” In his August column, the second to feature Hine, Steiner honored the elder photographer as an example of greatness and set forth the ideas that were to infuse so much of his contribution to *PM*:

Some photographers have the idea that to make a great photograph they must portray epic schemes. So they do things like arranging nudes in ‘symbolic’ poses and labeling the result ‘Humanity’. But all were advised in English composition class to write about things close to us-things that meant something to us. That is also a basic truth of photography—the photographer must care about his subject if he wants his audience to care about the photograph.138

Some of his columns were devoted to photographers associated with the FSA. Among these were Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein, who was the photo editor at *Look*. Steiner also singled out his former film assistant, Marion Post Wolcott, described as a “Top Woman Photographer...” who “wanting to photograph things that matter (she) got a job with the U.S. F.S.A.”.139 (Fig. 37) The layout of this column is notable for the way the two largest images, one of a relaxed group of young black cotton pickers, and the other, a soothing scene of fishermen, are treated. Both photographs stand out in the overall page design because they are strongly defined by borders. This device created an effect similar to a cinematic zoom shot that was used

138 Ibid.
139 “Marion Post is a Top woman Photographer”, *PM’s Weekly* August 17, 1941, pp. 48-49; Dorothea Lange, *PM’s Weekly*, June 22, 1941, pp. 48-49; Arthur Rothstein “Rothstein Makes Sociology Come Alive”, *PM’s Weekly*, April 6, 1941, pp. 46-47.
to provide variety and texture and was a strategy that *PM* editors, most likely William McCleery, began to use in other multi-image photo essays.\(^\text{140}\)

According to Raeburn, today, the FSA images define the very look of the Depression years. Nonetheless, this was not the case in their time. One of Steiner’s intentions in showcasing work associated with the FSA was to give Stryker’s program much needed exposure. Steiner wrote in tribute to Stryker that he “[...] has been step or god father to more good photographers than any other man since the beginning of photography.”\(^\text{141}\) Although FSA photographs did appear in the picture magazines, especially *Look*, and progressive publications such as *Survey Graphic*, the publication of these images was unusual in a daily newspaper. Considering this work sympathetically in an aesthetic context, which included presenting some of the photographers as individual artists, elevated Stryker’s project and helped fulfill Steiner’s general championship of photography as an art form. This complimented Stryker’s strategy that was to create a record that was intended to call attention to rural conditions in order to ameliorate them.

In an important departure from his usual column, on October 13, 1940, Steiner dedicated four pages of extensive photographs to coverage of the book *Small Town* (published October 21, 1940).

\(^{140}\) A shot using a lens whose focal length is adjusted during the shot. [...] A zoom normally ends in a close-up, a zoom-back in a general shot. Both types of shot imply a rapid movement in time and space, and as such create the illusion of displacement in time and space. A zoom-in picks out and isolates a person or object, a zoom-out places that person or object in a wider context. A zoom shot can be seen, therefore, as voyeurism at its most desirably perfect.” [http://www.springhurst.org/cinemagic/glossary_terms.htm#Zoom](http://www.springhurst.org/cinemagic/glossary_terms.htm#Zoom) accessed 3/14/16.

The device of strong borders to create the impression of a zoom can also be seen in “Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original”, *PM’s Weekly*, September 28, 1941, p. 49 and *PM’s Weekly*, October 5, 1941, “‘Eye-Catchers, Here Are Some More Gems by Advertisers: The Camera Lied, but You Like the Tricks”, p. 48. See also “Kids Play at War,” discussed in Chapter III.

\(^{141}\) Ralph Steiner, “‘Small Town’: A New Book Presents Great Pictures of Rural America Taken by US Government Photographers”, *PM’s Weekly*, October 13, 1940, p. 48.
1940), edited by photographer Ed Rosskam with text by Sherwood Anderson. This review showcased photographs from the book chosen from the files of the FSA by Ed Rosskam. Images by Marion Post, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein and Walker Evans were reproduced on this occasion and the text praised the work of Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee whose images were not shown. (Figs. 38-39) William McCleery wrote the introductory text for this review and Steiner contributed a section of text and captions. The header on the second page emphasized the people and ordinary features of small America: “The Small Town: Its People Make it the Backbone of America.” The American small town was a topic that had long captured the public interest. It was the subject of widely known and influential sociological research by Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, published as the best-selling book, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*, in 1929. The Lynd’s chose Muncie, Indiana as an average American city. It was arguable that predominantly white Muncie was typical in an increasingly heterogeneous America. Muncie was soon studied by advertisers to find out what was typically American, and use the information for marketing purposes. The Lynd’s 1937 follow-up study, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, another social scientific search for "typical America”, presented a “detached and "objective" portrait of U. S. culture” and reinforced “the very aspects of that culture that the Lynds had originally meant to question.” Roland Marchand points out that *Life* was fascinated with the average, as well as the importance

---

142 *Small Town* was officially reviewed in PM on October 20, 1940 one day in advance of its publication date on October 21. Steiner’s column was a preview.
143 Steiner, *PM’s Weekly*, October 13, 1940, pp. 46-49.
of the commercial sector, and exposed readers to the Lynds’ studies.\footnote{Roland Marchand “Life comes to Corporate Headquarters” Doss, Erika, \textit{Looking At Life Magazine}, Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001, pp. 123-135. Margaret Bourke-White “Muncie Indiana is the Great U.S. Middletown”, \textit{Life}, May 10, 1937, pp. 15-23.\textsuperscript{146}} \textit{Return to Middletown}, 1937 was the subject of a Margaret Bourke-White \textit{Life} photo essay on Muncie Indiana, the actual “Middletown” which capitalized pictorially on the widespread nostalgia for the simplicity and stability of pre-modern, rural America in the face of rapid change. Compared to \textit{Life} magazine’s coverage that reinforced the study for its “truth” about the U.S., the review of \textit{Small Town} in \textit{PM} sees the American town through a less nostalgic lens and the photographs of shabby houses and unsmiling residents reveal that conditions were not ideal. Steiner reinforced this in his captions and McCleery wrote that small towns had certain disadvantages including “narrowness, lack of economic and cultural freedom.” The specter of war, a topic of great concern at \textit{PM}, as McCleery wrote, made small towns important because,

> City planners insist that the big city has outlived its usefulness and that there will be a migration back to the small town. To underline the words of the city planners there is the noise of the bombers. The big city’s exceptional vulnerability to air attack is a new and dramatic reason for decentralization of people, government, commerce and industry.\footnote{William McCleery, “The Small Town”, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, October 13, 1940, p. 46.}\textsuperscript{147}

The caption accompanying a Ben Shahn photo of a frowning couple suggestively, observed that, the photographer “uses their suspicion of his camera to show the limitation of their lives.” Next to this is an image by a pleasant looking older couple to show the good side of small towns. Reading across the row of photos, under an image by Walker Evans with a man in a military uniform, the caption describes that the photographer “asked himself what this face represented in terms of friendliness, intelligence, background.” The final image in the row, by Rothstein, presents a man holding a rifle and looking out over a scene below of land filled with generic, boxlike dwellings. Steiner’s caption reads, “Arthur Rothstein’s picture of an Alabama company town during a strike says that even under ‘normal’ conditions it isn’t fun to have to live in a
company house; to have to buy from the company stores; to have to follow the company’s rules enforced by the company’s cops.”\textsuperscript{148} Steiner doesn’t say if the man is one of those cops but his figure looming over the scene is ambiguous and suggests surveillance.

Steiner favored straightforward work that was more appropriate to the conditions of the Depression years and showed the life and image of ordinary citizens. He summed up his attitude with, “A good photograph must not be dull, but the road to interesting pictures is not necessarily through stunts, tricks and fakes.”\textsuperscript{149} In a column on George Platt Lynes, a financially successful photographer known for contrived, surrealist influenced pictures of Greek statues and the classical human figure, Steiner commented on celebrity and artifice as well as photography that was both excessive and out of the reach of average citizens by writing a sarcastic headline: “For $100 You Can Have Your Picture Made by the Man who Put Horns on Katherine Hepburn.”\textsuperscript{150}

In his columns on the formal tools that helped to make photographs visually effective Steiner chose as his examples photographs that mixed art and entertainment with current affairs. Even these columns which advised the \textit{PM} audience on formal issues such as cropping, lighting, background, incipient movement, framing and pattern show evidence of Steiner’s and \textit{PM}’s political views. A column titled, “‘Framing’ Doesn’t Necessarily Make a Picture Good” makes effective use of diagonal lines and circles to orchestrate the two pages into one comprehensible layout and illustrates the use of formal elements in the service of meaning.\textsuperscript{151} (Fig. 40) Two small photographs, emphasized by blue borders and captioned “Not Recommended,” show individual figures framed within a single pair of spread legs that have been separated from the

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{PM’s Weekly}, October 13, 1940 pp. 48-49.
\textsuperscript{149} Ralph Steiner, “Some Photographers Make England Look Like This, But Sensitive, Sensible Photographers Make England Look Like This”, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, November 24, 1940, pp. 47.
\textsuperscript{150} “For $100 You Can Have Your Picture Made by the Man who Put Horns on Katherine Hepburn”, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, November 2, 1941.
\textsuperscript{151} Ralph Steiner, “‘Framing’ Doesn’t Necessarily Make a Picture Good,” \textit{PM’s Weekly}, December 15, 1940, pp. 48-49.
bodies to which they belong by cropping. The overall effect of this inverted “V” framing is somewhat suggestive but mainly, it is just silly. In contrast, Steiner chose two other photographs, which made use of similar disembodied legs to illustrate how framing could enhance meaning. In the photograph at the lower left, a single, trouser-clad, male leg pairs with a wooden crutch. At the apex of the framing shape, the second trouser leg is empty and pinned up, partially concealing the shape of an amputated stump. Visible within the center of this framing device are the light colored trousers of a marching drum-major that stand out and repeat the shape made by the ensemble of amputated leg, crutch and the remaining leg. The quasi-military marching figure and the suggestion of severe injury connect this scene to military exploits both past and present. A group of spectators lined up on the other side of the street in a diagonal complete the image. It could not have been lost on readers that this composition made a reference to the spirit of sacrifice for the country which reflected *PM*’s political position that US entry into war was necessary to defend American democracy and that the unpopular draft, instituted by FDR in October, 1940, was defensible.

In the largest photograph on the right-hand page, a framing device successfully adds a meaningful design element. Here, a group of men seated on the ground, gazing out intently and straining forward, are framed between a pair of female legs in high heels. Another leg, belonging to a second woman, appears at the far left. These women at first seem to have been reduced to mere body parts, especially legs, a quasi-erotic preoccupation of the time that appeared regularly in magazines including *Life*, and *Friday* as well as in *PM*. In the Steiner column, the feminine legs have been photographed from behind at close range and the photographer’s vantage point, and hence the viewer’s, appears to be from the less usual perspective of the women themselves. What they see are the rowdy men in the audience. These women, who might be some type of
entertainers or even strippers, were represented by their own view of their audience. This by implication indicated that they were aware and therefore more fully realized than merely a pair of well-shaped legs. The photograph upended the more common point of view, the male gaze, which would have been of the woman as seen by the male audience. In such seemingly straightforward columns, Steiner, through his choice of photographic examples, not only instructed his audience on photographic technique but also simultaneously inserted fairly radical editorial viewpoints. By educating readers, he was attempting to remedy some of the conditions criticized by Kracauer, and occasionally, Steiner’s proto-feminism surfaced.

In contrast to Steiner’s regular photo advice, the popular camera magazines, including *U.S. Camera*, paid a great deal of attention to technical details, most likely due to the influence of the photo equipment industry, which was the source of most of their paid advertising. Counter to this practice, Ralph Steiner pointedly ignored photographic minutiae such as lenses, aperture, film and shutter speeds, and refused to supply such data even when his own photographs were included in *U.S. Camera*.152 Remaining consistent with the newspaper’s anti-advertising policy, his writing focused on photographic “seeing” instead of technology and in keeping with the pro worker culture at *PM*, he never implied that good photography was dependent on expensive equipment. His readers were directed to look more deeply and to detect dishonesty in photography, as Steiner suggested. At the same time, his audience was encouraged to take pleasure in the practice of taking pictures at any level.

When the Workers’ Film and Photo League disbanded in 1935, Steiner joined the still photographers who formed the separate New York Photo League a short time later. He shared

---

152 When Steiner’s own photographs were included in *U.S. Camera* annuals, he ignored the protocol in the publication which printed data such as lens, aperture etc. for every photographer and image included in the pages at the back of the edition. See Cara A. Finnegan. *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Books, 2003, p. 131.
their orientation which combined radical politics and increasingly, aesthetic principles. This group promoted politically conscious documentary photography with an emphasis on the working class and was dedicated to using photography as an instrument of social change, inspired by Lewis W. Hine, who had been the teacher of Paul Strand.\textsuperscript{153} Photo League photographers provided an image of the urban poor and working class and served to give them the visibility that Roy Stryker and his photographers originally gave to the rural poor in the context of the Depression. The Photo League acted from an insider’s, not a reformer’s, perspective. This new group in New York provided a place to learn the craft of photography for a nominal fee as well as camaraderie, space to work, and a broad forum on all things related to photography, including the history of the medium. This historical legitimization was being codified in the late 1930s, due to the efforts of League advisors and activists photographer Berenice Abbott, critic Elizabeth McCausland, and Beaumont Newhall whose \textit{History of Photography} was the catalog of the first comprehensive exhibition of the medium of photography at the MoMA in 1937.

The League clearly aligned itself with social documentary photography envisioned by Elizabeth McCausland. In the League’s newsletter, \textit{Photo Notes}, August 1938, she also wrote, “Upon the photographer rests the responsibility and duty of recording a true image of the world as it is today.”\textsuperscript{154} The work by the young photographers of the League adhered to many of the principles espoused repeatedly by Steiner, who along with a number of important photographers connected with \textit{PM}, like David Eisendrath, Weegee and Margaret Bourke-White, lectured and


advised them. In 1942, Steiner also devoted a column to the merits of the League as a good and economical place to study photography. On separate occasions, he featured the project on the Pitt Street neighborhood on New York’s Lower East Side by League members, Walter Rosenfeld and David Joseph, and on other occasions, he used individual images by many of the young League photographers, including Max Yavno, Sol Libsohn, Dan Wiener, and Harold Corsini.\footnote{Ralph Steiner, “Best Buy is a School that Teaches Students to Make Pictures as Good as These,” \textit{PM’s Weekly}, April 16, 1942, pp. 28-29; Ralph Steiner, “Young Cameramen Get Under Pitt Street’s Skin,” \textit{PM’s Weekly}, January 5, 1941, pp. 47-49.}
PM starts off at the most critical moment in the history of the modern world. The news is too big too terrible, to seem for a second like a break for a newspaper coming into being. Instead it dwarfs us. It pitches us... into the midst of horror. Those responsibilities are too great for us to dress up in fine language. We have no desire to use rhetoric or big words. Even the little words are words of baffled and anonymous people everywhere too filled with confusion for us to fall back upon.

So far as we are concerned others can set up as prophets and judges and seers. We, if we can, would like to set down as much of the truth as we can find worth printing. We know how often and how glibly that has been said. We know how seldom and how laboriously that has been done. For to discover the truth is one of the hardest things in the world. We start off believing that we have the courage always to tell the truth. But we know too that we must have the discernment to spot it, the patience to unearth it, the force to make it stand out. Perhaps we cannot do all that. But if we can, no matter how else we fail, we shall be a good newspaper.

Ralph Ingersoll

The photo essay, “Kids Play War” or “‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’” (Fig. 41) on Playground” by Morris Engel illustrates further how PM editors shaped photographic narratives that favored U.S. intervention while supporting individual photographers’ artistry. Engel, who had a strong connection with the New York Photo League, was one of their youngest and consistently one of their best staff photographers. He had a magical rapport with children at a time when children were of central concern at PM and in the culture at large, especially in consideration of an approaching war. The importance of children was partly the result of the lingering effects of the Depression and the consequent difficulty of raising families. Children were also of particular interest in the news because of new studies in the field of psychology, which focused on childhood as a separate stage of development and recognized the importance of play. Additionally, there was interest in the art of children from within the art world in regard to a mythical search for authenticity, which comprised the expressions of primitive cultures and

156 PM, June 18, 1940, vol. 1, no. 1. This text was reprinted for emphasis during the early months of the war two years later on the paper’s anniversary. See PM, Friday June 18 1942, p. 2.
the study of the mentally disabled. This interest in children was manifested in a cultural trope that began in the mid 1930s, parallel to the rise of the U.S. Popular Front: that of the plucky, rather than abject, urban child. This found its expression in theatre, in comic books and films.  

The photo essay “Kids Play War” brought together many of PM's concerns, which revolved around the threat of war. The essay capitalized on the readers’ familiarity with and appetite for the cinema, while commenting on current news. 

Throughout PM’s first years, unfolding international events dominated the news and the domestic controversy between those who were against and those who were in favor of the United States being drawn into the struggle against Fascism became increasingly more fierce. Britain was already engaged in a desperate defense against the formidable Nazi air force and desperately needed U.S. aid. Once some aid was provided in the form of loans of military equipment, and convoys of supplies were shipped across the Atlantic, the American ships incurred the danger of attack from German U-boats that patrolled the waters and even lurked close to New York’s vulnerable harbor.  

The PM’s editorial position was stridently in favor of United States’ direct involvement in the overseas struggle against Fascism. Significantly, when the photo essay titled “‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’ on Playground” appeared in PM’s Sunday supplement on November 2, 1941, the war had come even closer to the American shores.  

The story was representative not only of Engel’s distinctive artistic vision but of the way such a vision could be merged with topical issues. This represented a point of intersection between photojournalism as published in PM and the New York Photo League, where Engel was  

---

157 I am referring to popular films like “Our Gang Follies of 1938,” the play, “The Dead End Kids” and others.

158 In September 1940, the United States instituted an innovative program, “Lend Lease,” to provide significant aid to U.S. allies fighting Germany, Great Britain in particular. This was a way of circumventing the 1939 Neutrality Act that prevented the U.S. from selling arms by exchanging arms for access to British bases. See Olson, cit., pp. 273-287.
an active member. This photo essay also illustrated how *PM* editors worked to shape a story that satisfied the political outlook of the Popular Front while also pointing out that truth in photojournalism was never without bias. The essay appeared at an early turning point along the trajectory toward war, at the beginning of a process in which separate ethnic identities were beginning to merge into a single-minded, patriotic Americanism.\(^{159}\) The dramatic shadow image on the back cover of the issue of *PM*, discussed in Chapter I (See Fig. 11), and the two page layout with ten images of boys playing “war” in an abandoned lot, were symbolically addressing the escalating drama in U.S. and world history.

During the months preceding this November photo essay, international tensions had steadily escalated, and finally culminated with the official entry of the U.S. into war against the Axis powers December 11, 1941. Throughout the autumn of 1941, daily news and headlines reported steady hostilities including news from the USSR under siege, Jewish persecution in Europe, severe aerial attacks on the British allies, and news of the Germans’ predations on merchant ships in the Atlantic. The latter precipitated widespread fear regarding the vulnerability of New York Harbor. For months, FDR, who had strong and mutual support at the paper, had been moving far too slowly and cautiously for *PM* editors. This was especially true of Ralph Ingersoll who literally declared war on behalf of *PM* in a series of editorials beginning in April 1941. Under the heading, “Well, What Are We Going to Do about It?,”\(^{160}\) Ingersoll and his staff consistently discussed that war was unavoidable. The April 25, 1941 issue included photographs


\(^{160}\) Milkman, cit., pp. 63-66,
of Nazi atrocities committed against Jews and book burnings.\textsuperscript{161} By the fall, the situation was becoming increasingly dire and was announced in a crescendo of dramatic headlines. On October 8, 1941, the front page of \textit{PM} read, “The War News Is All Bad, Russians Admit Nazis are Closer to Moscow Than Albany is to New York,” and then again, “News like this is likely to continue until this country gets to delivering help--help in real volume.” Similarly, ominous headlines marking escalating tensions appeared almost daily during the following weeks, and included the torpedoing of American merchant ships with attendant loss of lives and the discovery of German U-boats in U.S. and international waters.\textsuperscript{162} One week before the Engel playground spy sequence appeared, FDR fought congress into permitting U.S. ships to be sent into war zones.\textsuperscript{163} Things were literally beginning to sink in.

On Tuesday, October 28, 1941, \textit{PM} republished the original proclamation of its positions in its entirety, “We are against People who push other people around whether they flourish in this country or abroad….”\textsuperscript{164} On the morning of October 30, 1941, the American ship, the Reuben James, was torpedoed by a German U-boat as it was escorting a convoy of ships bringing war materials to Britain, resulting in the loss of American lives.\textsuperscript{165} This was important

\textsuperscript{161} Milkman, pp. 65-66. See also, “Could You Live in a World Dominated by Men Who Did These Things?,” \textit{PM’s Weekly}, April 25, 1941, pp. 1-17.


\textsuperscript{163} Sunday, October 26, 1941, a “FDR’s Leaders Force Neutrality Showdown, Senate Committee Votes 12 to 11 to Send US Ships Into War Zones.”

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{PM} Tuesday, October 28, 1941, p. 21. \textit{PM} often republished statements of its passionate positions.

\textsuperscript{165} See Woody Guthrie, quoted in Robert Shelton, ed., \textit{Woody Guthrie, Born to Win}. New York: MacMillan1976, p. 73: “Most songs that last the longest are the ballads that tell you a story about the news of the day. I can’t invent the news every day. Nobody can. But I can do my little job, which is to fix the day's news up to where you can sing it. You'll remember it lots plainer if I can make it easy for you to
enough to inspire a song that became an enduring anthem of the American left. Between October 30 and November 9, 1941, *PM* covered this and other ship attacks extensively while this news was largely ignored by most of the country.\(^{166}\) Engel’s photo series of young boys playing at war was part of a critical climate in which the U.S. had sustained its first casualties of the undeclared war. Appropriately, one week before, Ralph Steiner had used his photography column to comment on the exhibition *Image of Freedom* at the Museum of Modern Art, and had included MoMA’s call for entries: “Let us look at these United States now, when our lives and all that gives them meaning are threatened.”\(^{167}\)

On October 19, 1941, *PM’s* front page announced Ralph Ingersoll’s return from his globe-circling tour, “Seeing All Fronts in Anti-Fascist War.” During this trip, he visited Britain, Russia and China. According to *PM*, he was “the first newspaperman to return from censored news territory with such a complete picture of the world-wide struggle.”\(^{168}\) This feature, in a week long series of his vividly written reports, appeared on November 2 – significantly, on the same day when the paper published the Engel photo essay. In this issue, Ralph Ingersoll focused on Soviet youth and commented that, “Young people rule Russia without elders’ advice.”\(^{169}\) In that issue, and in the paper the following day, on November 3, there were reports by journalist I.F. Stone on “How the Spanish Phalanx Fronts for Fascists in the USA”. These news items reignited readers’ fresh memories of the Spanish Civil War in which civilians, including

---

\(^{166}\) See the National Archives and Records Administration: A People at War. ([http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/prelude_to_war/uss_reuben_james.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/prelude_to_war/uss_reuben_james.html)) accessed 3/25/16.

\(^{167}\) *PM’s Weekly*, October 26, 1941, p. 48.

\(^{168}\) “This was part of an announcement in advance of the series. *PM*, October 19, 1941, p. 1.

\(^{169}\) *PM’s Weekly*, Sunday, November 2, 1941, p. 13.
children, were victims. It is against this background that Engel’s photo essay must be considered.

This photo essay addressed the call for the United States to enter war against Fascist Europe. Additionally, it exhibited *PM*’s commitment to social reform, focusing on the well being of children and the amelioration of slum conditions, and thirdly, it capitalized on the widespread cultural importance and concern for children. The photo essay played off the centrality of photographs of children in advertising in order to arouse the public’s anxiety over the destiny of the most “uncelebrated” and vulnerable of New York’s citizens and stimulate an active call for intervention in what was still a European conflict. First and foremost, the welfare of children had received major attention in *PM* from its beginning. The paper ran regular features on education, nutrition, children’s artwork, and appropriate urban play space. New research in child development received full attention, especially in the context of the toll of war on the very young. The image captioned “Curiosity Helps a Mind Grow” by Mary Morris (Fig. 42), was part of a weekly series that presented readers with information on child development. In spite of the header that suggests growth and alertness, this picture shows a young child dangerously climbing towards an open window, pointing out how and why children are vulnerable. The text, written for a government pamphlet available to *PM* readers, describes the strength of the child’s inner urges to explore his surroundings, and explains that these impulses render children unable to heed directions and be safe. This focus on children and their susceptibility intensified as world events became more threatening. On September 23, 1940, the paper’s headlines reported “8 Child Refugees Torpedoed” and from the earliest issues, picture stories on young refugees seeking shelter in the U.S. appeared with startling regularity. (Fig. 43)

Peter Killian’s image of a kilted Canadian soldier leaping in mid-air as he points a rifle at

---

170 “Curiosity Helps a Mind Grow”, *PM*, October 4, 1940, p. 11.
a hanging target marked “Adolf” was published a year before the Engel essay for a story, also photographed by Killian, documenting the serious military training of Canadian soldiers in Halifax.171 (Fig. 44) The title of this essay, “Halifax: Where War Comes Closest to America,” was consonant with PM’s and the Popular Front’s internationalist outlook and countered prevalent U.S. isolationism. This photograph, like Engel’s blindfolded spy, ran prominently on the cover of Section II of the weekend edition and provided a lighthearted and eye-catching invitation to the more serious story consisting of full-page images that followed.

The full two-page layout of the Engel photo essay (See Fig. 41) consists of ten photographs numbered one to six with a separate strip of four smaller images on the right, sequenced vertically. The overall action of this story is about a group of school age boys, roughly between 10 and 12, who are absorbed in a mock battle. Their ‘weapons’ are pieces of scrap wood and their makeshift battlefield is a rough and empty lot bordered by a blank concrete wall beyond which are glimpses of their urban environment. The terrain of dirt and rocks on which the activity takes place is similar to the settings of many other photographs of the time that were taken to show harsh conditions, particularly if they involved children. It is likely that the lot would have also evoked the images of bomb-damaged Britain that had been circulating in the paper for months (Figs. 45-46) and that were part of the pervasive war chronicle in which children had become a central subject, as outlined earlier.

The captions that accompany Engel’s images cue readers in to the action in a manner that evokes the omniscient narration of the newsreels popular at the time:

These boys are playing at war on a sand-pile in Greenwich Village, NY. While America debates how far to intervene, kids all over the city have switched from playing cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians to playing war. Usually it’s ‘Germans’ against ‘Americans’ but the kids call the game just “soldiers.” Adults may find such play grim but to the boys it’s just a game. Here ‘Germans’ defend the hill against the ‘Americans.’172

172 PM’s Weekly, November 2, 1941, p. 62.
A white headline that stands out on a red banner spanning the entire left-hand page announces and identifies the action: “‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’ on Playground.” The opening image right below the banner works like an establishing shot, using a strategy employed in cinema and in popular comics. Lines of laundry suggest the poor and working-class identity of this urban locale. A church with a cross and domed steeple, visible in the distance at the far left, identifies this as an ethnic community unified by Catholicism.173

These elements, which appear small in the overall image, are not minor details. Since the church could have been cropped without destroying the flow of the layout, it must be assumed that the information that it provided was important, and that the editorial decision to include it was deliberate. According to a fellow member, this would have been the kind of detail that Morris Engel, a student of Sid Grossman and others at the New York Photo League, would have been trained to notice.174 Such subtle cues implied that this community in Greenwich Village was Italian. This element emerged later in the story, in the final image on the last page, with the text reading, “Most of the youngsters playing were of Italian extraction but that didn’t make any difference in whether they became ‘Americans’ or ‘Germans’.” This seemingly odd reference, intended on the surface as a comment on the fluidity of identity in children’s play, touched on the issue of who was American, and who was in the fight against the Axis. There were longstanding

173 PM was concerned with discrimination against Catholic ethnic groups but also attempted to convince Catholics, who were divided, to support intervention. Milkman, cit., p. 66, and “What Are Catholics Going to do About it?,” PM, May 1, 1941.
174 According to an interview with former Photo League member, Sonia Handelman, Sid Grossman trained students so that they noticed details such as buildings and streets as well as faces. See David Gonzalez, 15 Years That Changed Photography, November 4, 2011. (http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/04/15-years-that-changed-photography/?_r=0) accessed 12/16/15. See also: Elizabeth Jane Van Aragon, The Photo League: Views of Urban Experience in the 1930s and 1940s, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 2006.
xenophobic suspicions regarding the loyalty of New York’s Italian-American community until the final declaration of war following the events of December 7, 1941 leveled ethnic divisions and united the majority of citizens against the common enemies.\textsuperscript{175}

Ethnicity was a central issue at \textit{PM}, a paper that championed pluralism and was committed to fighting discrimination against minority religious and ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{176} Within the paper, as in the country as a whole, the issue of what constituted an “American” was an important topic. \textit{PM} acknowledged this while it served a diverse urban population to whom it deliberately gave visibility. By picturing a variety of New Yorkers, \textit{PM} provided for its audience a sense of unified identity and agency fulfilling the role of print in constructing community that is at the heart of Benedict Anderson’s theories.\textsuperscript{177} In a complete break with most contemporary press practice, minority New Yorkers, including African Americans, were not only pictured, but were shown in everyday activities, at their jobs and at home with their families, and African American children were often represented together, as friends, with white kids (Figs. 47-48)

On December 24, 1940, the day of Christmas Eve, the publication deliberately gave its answer to the question “What Makes an American?,” by presenting a three-page story on a Jewish family, the Levines. (Fig. 49) The symmetrical double page at heart of this spread reveals a couple, identified on the previous page as Jewish immigrants from “Polosk,” represented in a variety of ordinary activities: sitting at their dinner table, working at their store, relaxing, trafficking…. In one image, Mr. Levine sits reading in their living room filled with artworks and

\textsuperscript{175} The actual U.S. declaration of war took place on December 11, 1941. FDR waited until Germany declared war first so there could be no doubt on the part of U.S. isolationists that a draft and full mobilization was absolutely necessary. See Olson, cit., pp. 429-434.

\textsuperscript{176} The one exception to this, discussed by Paul Milkman, was the stereotyping of Asian Americans, particularly those with Japanese ancestry. See Milkman, cit., pp. 162-164.

\textsuperscript{177} The idea of the role of “print capitalism,” and the visibly constructed nature of culture in community formation, is at the heart of Benedict Anderson’s theories of the formation of nationality and also applies to related social categories like ethnicity. See Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism}. Revised Edition London and New York: Verso, 1991.
antiques indicating a respect for culture and education as well as hard work.\textsuperscript{178}

At the top of the layout of “‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’ on the Playground” the red title banner also drew attention to a large advertising sign painted on the wall of the building, which formed the backdrop of the stage-like space where the boys moved up and down a barren slope. In the center of that wall-sign, in a partially visible circle, large letters form the word “Hygrade” advertised a brand of hotdog or frankfurter, the popular ballpark food item associated with sports events like baseball and the American working-class. “Hygrade” was the original brand of ballpark hotdog throughout the 1940s. Originally developed by a meatpacking company in Frankfurt, Germany, it had become associated with the United States in an ironic parallel to the shifting ‘American’ and ‘German’ identities of the boys playing below the sign.

The words “Dominates,” and “USA,” just below “Hygrade,” could be considered as a subtle echo of the struggle taking place in the empty lot and was perhaps suggestive of the possibility of German domination in the events of the world at large. In previous months, \textit{PM} had published several illustrated stories on what life would be like if the U.S. if the Nazi had taken over.\textsuperscript{179} It is reasonable to assume that the editors of the paper were well aware of the subliminal potential that ubiquitous billboards and signs could add to the interpretation of images. As discussed in Chapter II, Ralph Steiner had produced work that exploited the implications of found signage and posters. Within \textit{PM}, Weegee, with his unique combination of wit and poignancy, often used found text to add meaning to his photographs. (Fig. 50) In general, there are numerous other familiar examples of photo work that pointedly incorporated public


\textsuperscript{179} Illustrated story by Jack Coggins on life in the U.S. if the Nazis took over – find date. There were also many stories on life in Germany and in occupied countries, such as, for example, “The Camera Sees Life under Nazis”, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, October 6, 1940, pp. 16-17.
advertising during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{180}

Of the six major images in the Engel photo story stretching across the two pages the most potent within the layout is the image numbered “2,” where the boys’ wooden “rifles” thrust at sharp angles and the their figures become large, looming presences due to their proximity to the camera’s lens. Diagonals created by the overlapping legs, arms, and falling bodies of these boys give an overall dynamism to this group. On the page beside this image, the photograph numbered “6” features two boys in the act of firing their makeshift weapons while a third boy in the middle clutches his chest, throws his head back, thrusts out his left arm and leans into a fall on his back, as if he has been hit. This boy, with his closed eyes and upturned face, seems a parody of Robert Capa’s iconic Spanish Civil War photograph, “The Falling Soldier,” an image which was published in \textit{Life} in 1936 and that would have certainly be known to \textit{PM}’s editors. It was also likely that local readers, many of whom had actively supported the cause of the Spanish Republic in their fight against Fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War, would have found something familiar about the falling boy in the act of sacrificing himself.\textsuperscript{181}

In order to take photographs “2” and “6,” Engel had to be close to his subjects and shoot from a low vantage point that left little physical distance between them. This amplified the eyewitness quality of his essay. The children acknowledge neither the presence of the camera nor

\textsuperscript{180} The most obvious example of this can be found in the work of Walker Evans, as well as Peter Sekaer and Weegee in \textit{PM}. See Appendix.

\textsuperscript{181} In the weeks before and after the playground battle series, \textit{PM} published several references to posters from the Spanish Civil War. On October 1, 1941 on page 5 a blurry radiophoto from Sovfoto ran with the caption “This isn’t an old picture of the Spanish Loyalists preparing to defend Madrid. It was send by radio from the USSR yesterday...” Another reference to Spain was made on November 12, 1941, in a report on Ingersoll’s recent trip to the USSR, “Russian War Posters Mix Humor and Bitterness.” Robert Capa’s work appeared in \textit{PM}, credited on at least two occasions, and Ingersoll wrote on the photographer’s behalf when he sought to immigrate to the U.S. See Richard Whelan, \textit{Robert Capa: a Biography}, New York, Ballantine, 1985, pp. 218, 223.
the photographer whose closeness to his young subjects seems psychic as well as physical. The qualities of spontaneity and lack of pretension that distinguished Engel’s work for *PM* also marked his later film work. This artless style and the ability to identify with his subjects without being obtrusive was characteristic of other photographers, who, like Engel, were members of the New York Photo League. Among them, one thinks of Helen Levitt.\(^{182}\)

All of these photographers identified closely with the people they photographed. According to League member, Walter Rosenblum, “We feel deeply about the people we photograph, because our subject matter is our own flesh and blood. The kids are our own images when we were young.”\(^{183}\) Early street photographers were known to have assumed invisibility whereas Engel portrayed his subjects with an intimacy that could only come from proximity and yet allowed them a remarkable degree of naturalism. Although Engel stood almost in the midst of the mock battle, the boys remained completely absorbed in carrying on their activity. The connection between these unselfconscious subjects and the photographer left no doubt that the work could not have been the result of an impersonal, mechanical process. Furthermore, such natural proximity contributed to a close interaction with the reader.

The separate series of four smaller square vertical photographs at the far right of the page can aptly be considered to function as a “mini-movie” titled, “This is What Happens When a Man’s Wounded.” The individual captions of each of these images reinforce and call attention to

---


the cinematic quality of the strip by describing the action sequence: “Shot by ‘Germans,’ red-headed Gerald registers movie-inspired agony;” “He sinks to the ground…” The first photograph reveals “Gerald” leaning into a fall, the second shows him sprawled in the dirt. In the third, he is discovered by the other “soldiers,” and in the final frame, he is transferred to a wood plank “stretcher,” and carried offstage, as an arrow at the bottom of this image directs readers to turn the page. This fourth image could certainly have been inspired by scenes from the movies as well as by the real-life adult military training that the boys would have seen being rehearsed with the goal of getting prepared for war coming to the home front.

In this sequence, the reference to motion pictures is also strengthened through the use of thin black borders that graphically link the individual shots. The newspaper was increasingly more experimental in its use of sequences, inspired by the style of European photojournalism. This style was slowly beginning to influence American publications after finding favor in Life. As discussed in the first chapter, roll film equipment added new possibilities for press photographers who had previously used the classic Speed Graphic which had the advantage of a large negative providing great detail but necessitated changing film after only one or two shots. Engel’s essay and others by him were shot with a Rolleiflex that combined the advantages of both cameras by using a roll film, in a format larger than the “miniature” cameras, like the Leica.184

This kind of fluid camera work mastered by Engel, who also had film experience and had worked with Paul Strand, was due to an interplay between still photography and film, characteristic of this era. Comic strips with their arrangements of individual cells were also a visual influence. PM’s weekend editor, William McCleery, very likely had a hand in the Engel

184 The Leica camera, introduced by Oskar Barnak in 1924, originally used 35mm. motion picture film. The stitching together of fragmented images into strips was borrowed from cinema and was a practice used by other picture magazines including Life. See Gisele Freund. Photography & Society. Boston: David R. Godine, 1982, pp. 127-130
layout, and it is significant that McCleery had created a series of comic strips for PM in collaboration with artist, Charles Martin, around this time. These presented pro-intervention, anti-fascist narratives in which animal characters stood in for thinly disguised national and international figures such as Adolf Hitler and Charles Lindbergh. They appeared in 1941 and ran until the war began. 185

During the 1930s, most Americans viewed at least one movie a week and were accustomed to newsreels. In particular, Henry Luce’s popular March of Time newsreels presented dramatic reenactments of newsworthy events in a documentary style that capitalized on the credibility of film’s realism. It must be noted that a sense of the dramatic was almost innate at PM and fit in well with Ingersoll’s own flamboyant personal writing style. Editor William McCleery wrote plays, while Ralph Steiner had been influenced in his film work by The March of Time. Furthermore, his contacts with the Group Theatre had contributed to his understanding of dramatic elements within documentary work. 186 In many ways, a magazine or a picture newspaper like PM, which put skill, effort and willingness to experiment into photo sequences, functioned as a stationary newsreel that could be examined according to the readers’ choice of time and place. 187

Dramatic reenactments had become a staple of documentary film and it is in this tradition

---

185 William McCleery who had full charge of PM’s Weekly and its later incarnation as Picture News, worked on a series of comics with artist Charles Martin during the tense autumn months of 1941. On November 10, 1941, a comic headlined “Monday’s Moral Movie” called attention to the fluidity between cinema and other media, and featured “Tugboat Burtie” whose cook was named “Mimi First” in a jab at the America Firster’s. PM, November 10, 1941, pp. 16-17. PM introduced regular comic strips in 1941.


that Engel’s essay of the dramatic play of boys in their urban play-space can be understood. Prior to being hired at PM, Morris Engel had worked as a cameraman for Paul Strand’s drama/documentary Native Land, released in 1942. Accordingly, FSA photographer and Look editor, Arthur Rothstein, commented on how magazine photography had much in common with directing pictures. In 1942, he claimed that, “each photograph is required to tell its part of the story as clearly and vividly as possible. It forces the photographer to become not only a cameraman but a scenarist, dramatist, and director as well.”

Morris Engel, born in 1918, was raised in a working-class, single parent household in Brooklyn. Cinema indelibly marked his childhood experience, and he described Hollywood movies as “the comfortable darkness of a better world.” In 1936, at age eighteen, he enrolled in photography classes at the New York Photo League, where he worked with Berenice Abbott, Aaron Siskind, and Sid Grossman, and discovered the Rolleiflex. He also was influenced by Paul Strand who lectured at the League during those years. As he wrote, Strand conveyed “the continuity of standards from an established artist to a beginner”. Possibly Strand was offering the encouragement that Lewis Hine, one of his (Strand’s) teachers might have offered him. On the basis of a portfolio of photographic work, Strand invited Engel to work with him as a cameraman on the filming of Native Land, and it was Strand who referred the young photographer to Ralph Steiner at PM. Steiner, recognizing his talent, gave him his debut in PM’s Gallery in June, 1940. This included photographs of New Yorkers at Coney Island, and showed the young photographer’s skill at handling intimacy and remaining unobtrusive in front of

189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
plebian New Yorkers. (Fig. 51) During his early years at the Photo League, Engel worked on Feature Group projects, the most important of which was “Harlem Document,” under the leadership of Aaron Siskind.\(^{191}\) In 1939, Paul Strand curated Engel’s one-man show at the New School, commenting thus,

> Morris Engel’s photographs are both important in themselves and as a part of a vital development in American photography. In the past four or five years the tradition, of which Lewis Hine is the outstanding pioneer, has received a strong new impulse that has brought fresh air into the stale atmosphere of a very empty photographic pictorialism. An ever growing number of photographers, many of them still young, have turned their cameras upon their environment and have begun to document both America and the time in which they themselves live.\(^{192}\)

By the time he was hired as a staff photographer at \(PM\), Morris Engel had been an active member of the New York Photo League for four years. Years later, he described that working at \(PM\) had been like, “taking the elevator to heaven”:\(^{193}\)

> Images such as Engel’s large close-ups of the “battling” boys, marked 2 and 6, zoom in on action and also fulfill Ralph Steiner’s August 10, 1941 definition of still photographs successfully capturing movement. As he stated, “Thrilling photos have to catch Details That Suggest Movement,” and further, “…only a motion picture camera can photograph action-the


\(^{193}\) “Suddenly I took the fast elevator to heaven,” Engel said at 80. Morris Engel, of the PL??, according to his daughter, Mary Engel, this was his dream job. See David Margolick, “\(PM’s\) Impossible Dream,” \textit{Vanity Fair}, January 1999, p. 125. Engel held onto his final pay stub from \(PM\), 1947 for the rest of his life. This material is archived in the Engel-Orkin Archive.
photographer must catch a ‘feeling of action’ if his pictures are to move…”194 Mary Engel, Morris’s daughter, remarked that in Engel’s highly acclaimed postwar films, each frame was composed like a still photograph. This can be seen as a counterpoint to “Kids Play War” in which the still pictures capture incipient movement and suggest barely contained action.195

This analysis of ‘‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans’ on the Playground’’ is offered as evidence that the editors of PM were willing to take aesthetic chances and run photographs that made the presence of the photographer clear.196 These are not the static, disembodied images typical of most newspapers at the time and they also begin to introduce more adventurous visual practices. The trajectory of the entire sequence on pages 62 and 63 eventually snakes diagonally downward to the lower right corner, and the lines of the last image lead the eye to a white arrow indicating that the story continues on the following page. Another header creates suspense with these words, “And Then, the ‘Americans’ Capture a ‘German’ Spy Behind the Lines.” When the viewer turns the page to the final image on the rear cover, the vertical composition of the “spy” and the shadow executioners halt the visual flow of the series and end the playful action of the preceding pages. The series climaxes with the introduction of the specter of war and its consequences. For the moment, the ‘Americans’ are victorious – echoing the hope of PM’s editors and very likely, most of its readers.

Those who followed the entire story were certainly aware that this was all about a game.

194 Ralph Steiner, “Thrilling photos have to catch Details That Suggest Movement,” PM’s Weekly, Sunday August 10, 1941, pp. 48-49.

195 The remark about the carefully composed nature of each of Engel’s film frames was made by his daughter, Mary Engel, in a conversation in June 2014 at the Engel-Orkin Archive.

196 In addition to the other points discussed, there is a blurry object in the foreground of the photograph numbered 2. It is perhaps a part of the photographer, such as a knee as he knelt down to avoid getting hit during the heated play-battle?
The caption redirected attention to play and the idea of who and what is American. However, the visual narrative remains open. The interpretation of the captured spy image allowed for multiple narrative possibilities, reflecting the global political reality of the moment. *PM* editors indicated that what was play was becoming deadly serious, and for many, the future was at stake. Ralph Steiner wrote in reference to the work of Helen Levitt, “Kids draw a thin line between make-believe and blood-lettings. Their gang battles are SERIOUS business. “Here they come fellers.” This also applies to the Engel work.

One week after the Engel series ran, the theme of slavery was woven through *PM’s* Weekly. A full-page photo appeared under the caption “European Jews Marked by Star of David are Slaves in Hitler’s Armies.” A few pages further the paper also aluded to the possibility of slavery in relation to the U.S.’s African American minority. In the section on “Labor News,” a story titled, “State-Run Employment Office Eliminating Bronx Slave Market” followed up on an earlier story on the existence of such a market. This article praised government’s steps to reform a notorious street market for domestic workers, mostly female and black, who were subjected to humiliating conditions as they desperately sought day jobs. This “domestic slave market” crusade was important enough to have been exposed in earlier photo essays and was also referred to again a few months later.

The setting of Engel’s photo essay in a derelict play space, served a dual purpose. First, as I mentioned earlier, it resembled the images of areas of London that had been destroyed by

---

198 *PM’s Weekly*, November 9, 1941, “European Jews Marked by Star of David are Slaves in Hitler’s Armies”, p. 4. On page 11, under Labor News, “State-Run Employment Offices Eliminating Bronx Slave Market,” p. 11 (no photo) This was a follow-up on a long-standing *PM* crusading story.
199 Domestic Slave market returned in *PM’s Weekly*, January 16, 1941, pp. 14-15, also July 15, 1940 “Negro Women Wait on Street Corners All Day to Get 10c-an-Hour Employment” with illustrations by Reginald Marsh.
German bombs. It was also representative of the classic urban slum environments that had benefitted from reformist and government programs. In neighborhoods such as the one in which Engel’s subjects played, a good deal of urban life was lived on the streets and figured prominently in Depression era art. Many of the paper’s readers and photographers in 1941 would have recognized this environment from art and/or from their own experiences. Reflecting PM’s consistent support for the beneficial effects that government programs could have on the lives of children from the working class, and protesting the decline of such programs, the captions which accompanied “Kids Play War” made a pointed reference to the fact that the space would soon be turned into a proper playground.

In another photo essay that defended New Deal efforts, three pages of the Weekly on September 8, 1940, had been devoted to “The Problem of Keeping City Kids Off the Streets”. In this series, also photographed by Morris Engel, each of the three full-page images depicted a group of boys either playing with toy guns in a lot filled with debris, or sitting in a circle playing what looks like a game with cards or die. A third photograph captures two boys clinging dangerously to the rear of a moving truck. The captions lament the lack of “…Enough Satisfactory Playgrounds in New York,” or that “Many Kids Think It’s More Fun to Run Wild in the Streets.”

Another major Morris Engel photo story reinforced the need for government aid in improving children’s lives and was intended as a direct defense of WPA sponsored play streets for New York children. This crucially timed essay marked the transition between the ebbing of reforms of the New Deal era and the government’s change of focus toward alliance with industry

200 “The Problem of Keeping City Kids Off the Streets,” PM’s Weekly, September 8, 1940, pp. 61-63.
201 PM’s Weekly, September 8, 1940, pp. 62-63.
in anticipation of war production. To call attention to the closing of a supervised WPA funded play-street, this opened with an image of a winsome young girl, dwarfed by her oversized, obviously hand-me-down coat. (Figs. 54-55) It continued on the following pages with more pictures of the same girl sequenced in a vertical strip which recorded her animated and playful interaction with a young boy. The remaining photographs show children, including an interracial group, engaging in safe, orderly, supervised play.\textsuperscript{203}

In the \textit{PM} spirit of dignifying members of the proletariat, a caption from Engel’s November 2, 1941 sequence made a pointed reference to both the relative poverty and the resourcefulness of the boys at play:

> The two armies clash on the sand-pile. Weapons are improvised from odd bits of wood—may start off as machine guns and end up as swords or even clubs. In this game, the boys’ realism did not carry into the slugging stage—no one was hurt. These children live in tenements-only three out of twenty own toy guns.\textsuperscript{204}

This attitude continued a trend of the time. Photographs of children playing in derelict urban spaces had a long established association with social documentary photography that can be traced directly to Lewis Hine and his work for the Child Labor Committee. However, during the 1930s, such imagery became a visual culture trope in New York City, drawing on a trend inspired by a popular play of the early 1930s, \textit{The Dead End Kids}, by Sidney Kingsley. This play enshrined the spunk and sensible inventiveness of slum children and did not present them according to tropes of these years - pitiable victims, Victorian cherubs, or the pampered children created by advertisers to induce consumers to buy their products or else, feel like inattentive parents. A direct reference to \textit{The Dead End Kids} appeared in Margaret Bourke White’s \textit{PM} series on working class Hoboken, New Jersey, published on August 12, 1940. Here, a headline

\textsuperscript{203} Many a Beautiful Friendship Has Started on a New York Street...There Are Lots of Good Games Kids Can’t Play Without Supervision*, \textit{PM’s Weekly}, June 29, 1941, photographs by Morris Engel, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{204} \textit{PM’s Weekly}, November 2, 1941, p. 63.
asked the question, “These Are Hoboken’s Children: Are They All ‘Dead End’ Kids?,” and the photograph taken from above showed a group of children playing in the middle of the street on a hot day under the spray of a fire-hydrant. (Fig. 56).205

The cultural prominence of children had even greater significance during the Depression. The difficult economic times that were only just beginning to end in the early 1940s, profoundly affected the ability of citizens to support families, and many postponed marriage and childbearing. According to Robert McElvaine, adult turmoil due to economic hardship also caused many children to suffer, and he called attention to the fact that “the hardships many families faced in the Thirties led children to assume greater responsibilities at an earlier age,” and “children (especially boys) were called upon to supplement meager family incomes.”206

*PM*’s picture stories on children also reflected a growing cultural interest in the mix of fantasy and reality that was characteristic of children. Some of this was in part due to the influence of surrealism that valued the unexpected, the unconscious, and the unmediated. The surrealist inflected work of Henry Cartier-Bresson had been exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, one of the most important exhibition sites for European modernism including photography. Cartier-Bresson had two shows there in 1933 and 1935, and another one at the Photo League in 1940.207 His images of boys playing in the ruins of Seville, Spain (caused by bombing during the early days of the Spanish Civil War), were included in the 1935 exhibition.

---

205 Other references to the “Dead End Kids” in *PM* included a May 23, 1940, photo by Gene Badger, photographer, which was captioned “A Hot Weather Fashion Preview by the Dead End Kids” and displayed a scene at the East River identified as “3 pm., temperature 90.7”. This photo captured a group of boys on a rock under a bridge mostly in their own natural bathing suits, which had been strategically retouched *PM*, May 23 1940, p. 13.


Cartier-Bresson had contact with the Photo League. His work was not only exhibited there but also, the League provided a forum for discussion. For all these reasons, his work would have been known to both Morris Engel and Helen Levitt. \(^{208}\) (Fig. 58) The contact of these young photographers with the influential work of Cartier-Bresson would have occurred at the same time as cultural interest in the children of the working class surged and inspired a torrent of imagery. Morris Engel participated in the “Harlem Document” Project under Aaron Siskind, who also inspired him, at the Photo League before he began at *PM*. (Fig. 59)

By 1940, another significant factor contributing to the cultural importance of children was a new understanding of their psychology and development. Anna Freud, Melanie Klein and Karen Horney did groundbreaking work in psychoanalytic theory applied to children during the mid thirties and early forties. Childhood was beginning to be understood as a separate life-stage with its own distinct psychology. Foundational research in child development was also being systematically conducted in the United States at Yale University under Arnold Gesell who, through observation using film and photography, described norms and patterns of behavior common to all children. \(^{209}\) Psychiatrist, Anna Freud, a war émigré herself, studied the effects of war and separation on children while articles by Karen Horney, with advice on how to allay children’s anxieties made their way into *PM*’s pages in the context of British bombing and fears of attacks in the U.S. An important element that impacted the editorial choice of publishing Engel’s photographs of boys’ war play was the warning of a possible war that could spread to New York City and its exposed harbor. In this context, boys, such as the ones photographed at

\(^{208}\) Cartier-Bresson had a show at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1935 that included the 1933 photos of boys playing in the ruins in Seville, Spain. According to Elizabeth Gand, Levitt saw the show. It is very likely that Engel and other young photographers associated with the Photo League saw it as well. See Elizabeth Margaret Gand, *cit.*, 2011.

play, were more vulnerable because they were faced with the additional threat that within a few years, they might well have to serve genuine military combat duty if U.S. draft was to continue. More than playground turf was at stake and this gave the series a resonance beyond the Greenwich Village lot in which the action took place.

The prominence of images of children in *PM*, at the Photo League, and in the work of Helen Levitt and Morris Engel, drew on a belief in the value of careful observation of the seemingly insignificant. Like the advice Ralph Steiner gave to aspiring photographers in his column for *PM*, this work exhibited a personal vision and depth of feeling, and it was balanced with respect for simple subjects. Such photography allowed children their own natural space and, as Elizabeth Gand has pointed out, it made visible what the Dutch theorist of play, Johann Huizinga, made clear in his 1938 work, *Homo Ludens*, stressing “the fundamental seriousness of play in the making of human culture.” Huizinga studied play as a meaningful aspect of all cultures and viewed the play of children as an important rehearsal for life. Like Dewey, Huizinga stressed the significance of direct experience as the basis for learning. By 1940, the seriousness of child’s play had been magnified because of the growing possibility of war. Morris Engel channeled many images into PM that referred to these issues – the innocence of childhood and the peril of the incoming war. In 1942, one of his photographs was published, which addressed this point, showing elementary students carrying one another as if wounded and dramatically emulating adults’ practices in anticipation of civilian war casualties. (Fig. 60) What they were being exposed to is evident from er, Ray Platnik’s 1941 image of gas mask wearing civilian defense volunteers carrying a young boy who is “acting” the part of a wounded civilian. (Fig. 61)

A strand of the ongoing conversation regarding child development appeared in

---

advertising where photos of mostly innocent, coddled, and sheltered children were used to sell a wide range of products creating one of the favorite icons of consumer culture in mass circulation picture publications. (Fig. 62-63) At the other contemporary extreme, children were used as icons of vulnerability in work made by FSA photographers Dorothea Lange and Ben Shahn, among others. Children had become effective symbols of the social breakdown of the Depression. The figure of the street child was highly effective because it could signify at the same time the “ills of poverty, the rise of fascism, and the threat war…” and as in Engel’s images, it functioned as a counterbalance to earlier depictions of portraying the poor and working class as abject.
Conclusion

The “Uncelebrated” Truth

Following the text in the column on Helen Levitt’s childrens’ sidewalk drawings, Steiner included a post script stating that the editor of *PM’s Weekly*, William McCleery, “asks me to tell photographers that he will buy and publish the best photos of novel and interesting children’s sidewalk drawings sent to him.” The early “PM’s Gallery” appearances of work by Levitt and Engel had been presented, inaccurately, as unsolicited. On October 27, 1940, a photograph by a reader named Fred Gund titled, “America is a Nation of Nations” showing a sober elderly couple sitting side by side on the subway was identified in the caption as a reader’s submission. It read:

> A young photographer saw this couple on a New York subway train, snapped their picture and brought it to PM. He did not know who they were or where they were going, but he thought—and we agree—that the picture clearly said ‘America is a place where good people from foreign lands come to live in friendly association with people from other foreign lands’.211

On February 25, 1941, in his column “Plain People, Caught Off Guard, Make Good Pictures,” Steiner presented an entire series of candid shots of subway riders. All of these images were taken by the same Fred Gund with the exception of one of a sailor cuddling his date, by photographer Lou Stouman, and showed an array of New Yorkers: a priest, an Asian couple, two girls in hats, a man resting his head on his arm in a subway worker’s uniform and two plain, lone men who stare ahead blankly lost in their own thoughts. (Fig. 64) Steiner’s text made the case for photographers to look at the “uncelebrated.” He acknowledged that photographers usually chose to,

> point (their) his camera at subject matter which is extreme: the very poor of the slums or the very rich of Park Avenue; criminals dead or alive, celebrities… bums or glamor girls. But the man

---

211 “America is a Nation of Nations,” *PM*, October 27, 1940 p. 42.
with the camera hardly ever bothers to record that large part of the population, the middle class. He concentrates on the extremes rather than on the middle group because he is looking for dramatic material to make you gasp, to knock your eye out... If the photographer can search out and set down, as in the pictures on these pages, the essential characteristics of ordinary people, his photographs can have a special kind of interest for us. He can show us what is moving, important and even exciting under the every-day surface.

Along with the others on the editorial staff of *PM*, Steiner reserved his greatest censure for propaganda photos produced by the Nazis, especially those that seemed benign on the surface, such as images of Hitler posing with children. The most important concern at *PM* was the defeat of Nazism abroad and at home. A clear example of Nazi propaganda appeared in *PM’s Gallery* on Sept 22 1940, which featured full-page images of a benign, revered Hitler as a kind father figure surrounded with children and or being thronged by adoring German citizens. As Carol Payne has carefully studied, Steiner subverted the propaganda of these visual messages through the captions. She asked, why would *PM*, a vehemently anti-fascist paper, reproduce photos that “at first glance seemed to promote” an image of Hitler as benign at “that crucial historic moment?”

By exposing readers to these images accompanied by text and captions written by *PM* editors which foregrounded photographic and contextual manipulation, viewers were alerted to the falseness of these images and their intentions to deceive. Payne suggested that Steiner played a major role in sensitizing readers so they would not fall for such propaganda.

In order to reinforce *PM’s* outspoken calls to address the critical world situation, Steiner also devoted several columns to deconstructing German, Italian and Russian propaganda in a straightforward attempt to educate readers so they would not be vulnerable to sophisticated lies used for evil purposes. The Nazis were known to use photographs to reinforce their support from

---

the U.S. right and fan the divisiveness of the American debate. Such propaganda was also important to *PM* because it was used to fuel U.S. isolationism by convincing homegrown groups such as the anti-Semitic “America First” of the reasonableness of the Nazi regime. An example of this program is “McWilliams, local Fascist Candidate, Faces His Future Undiscouraged.” This reference to the future is negated by the appearance of the local German Bund presidential candidate in a covered wagon, while the photographer’s viewpoint from behind the horse’s rump, implies an association between the homegrown fascist, McWilliams, and a horse’s ass.

With his writing for *PM*, Steiner did his part to remedy some of the shortcomings in the public’s understanding of the flood of photographs. In doing so, he did his part to defend democracy for all citizens including immigrants, and along with the other members of the paper’s editorial staff, managed to combine the heroism and entertainment value of the superheroes so popular in the public’s imagination in a crusade for visual literacy and popularization. Many of the photographs by amateur and fledgling photographers not only were images of uncelebrated New Yorkers but the makers of these images were themselves “uncelebrated” and Steiner validated their efforts and summed up his attitude to recording the present this way:

Too many photographers try too hard. They try to lift photography into the realm of ART because they have an inferiority complex about their craft. You and I would see more interesting photography if they’d stop worrying about ‘genius’ and ‘self-expression’ and instead would apply horse sense to the job of recording the look and feel of their own era.

---

214 See Milkman, cit., on how *PM* went after Lindbergh and the Coughlinites. Specific columns by Steiner on fascist imagery ran Jan 19 1941 when he advised readers to “Study Nazi Art’ with Open Eyes and Crossed Fingers” pp. 48-49.
215 “McWilliams, local Fascist Candidate, Faces His Future Undiscouraged,” *PM*. July 8, 1940, p. 16: “The main spying and propaganda activities that took place in America were through isolationist circles.” *PM* was correct in identifying domestic fascism and calling it out. These were the most helpful to the Germans who wanted to keep the US out of the war. Payne, cit., p. 35.
216 Ralph Steiner, *PM’s Weekly*, April 27, 1941, pp. 48-49, column on Jessie Tarbox Beal.
Children were the ultimate “uncelebrated” at *PM*. Significantly, the paper’s funder and benefactor, Marshall Field, was the president of the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children. Since the Spanish Civil War, imagery of children had been used to illustrate the new horrors of modern warfare. Posters of dead children as victims of air attacks by Fascist forces had circulated widely and would have been well known in New York’s large antifascist circles. Picasso’s “Guernica,” in which Franco’s innocent victims were graphically and powerfully presented, had recently been exhibited at MoMA in 1939. Stories of Jewish persecution were beginning to filter out of occupied Europe, and although this was not receiving much press coverage elsewhere, *PM* was alert to the brutality. The rubble filled lot in which Engel’s subjects played was a symbol of the potential regression of civilization and because of the youth who played in it and the knowledge that government programs would soon transform the space, it also stood for hope for the future. In 1941, paralleling what was happening across the U.S., the leftist Almanac Singers broke from their previous recording material on the rights of labor and began to turn their attention to war. Woody Guthrie’s lyrics marked the end of one era and the beginning of an all out effort to fight Fascism, which would require a belief in superheroes.

Now tonight there are lights in our country so bright  
In the farms and in the cities they're telling of the fight.  
And now our mighty battleships will steam the bounding main  
And remember the name of that good Reuben James.

---


218 *PM*’s I.F. Stone and John Lewis and Crawford claimed that the sinking of the Reuben James forced the United States into war. Because of the peacetime attacks on US Ships, naval losses had already surpassed those of the entire World War I. Milkman, p. 67.

219 Woody Guthrie From the Almanac Singers album: DEAR MR. PRESIDENT (Keynote Album 111), 1942.
After Pearl Harbor, imagery in *PM* showed a change as the nation united in an all out effort to win the war. This focused on all citizens including women and children who, by July, 1942 were being swept up in aiding the war effort. (Fig. 65) Alan Fisher’s photograph of a young boy, draped with old pots shouting to residents of a building above to send down their unneeded metal cooking equipment, shows how widespread and urgent the war effort had become. The boy, who was about the same age as the boys engaged in mock battle in Morris Engel’s photo series, was collecting pots and pans that were intended to be melted down as scrap and turned into equipment for use in war production. The child’s pose, his hand placed to show how he had to amplify his voice and how strenuously he was engaged, exemplifies *PM* humorous approach to a very serious matter.  

This young figure, was photographed to make him look monumental and therefore, emphasize the importance of his task. This reinforced the call for all American citizens regardless of age, economic class, racial, religious or ethnic background, to take part in defending the country and their ideals. This image incorporated *PM*’s principal themes – its representation of the underrepresented, its concern for youth, mobilization against the enemies of democracy even if this meant bringing the United States into war and here, the translation of widespread anxiety into action on behalf of a larger community.

Photography was an intrinsic element of the political program of *PM*, which drew on the ethos of the Popular Front. It was important that this work was visually compelling and had

---

220 The same image overlaid with large red letters that read “GIVE,” appeared in U.S. Camera 1942 functioning as a poster to help fight the war. U.S. Camera, 1942, p. 143.
entertainment as well as social value partly because PM’s unusual business model was based not on commercial advertising but on reader loyalty and was tied to a humanism that was deeply oriented towards the well being of its working class audience.

PM made a deep effort to educate and activate this audience via an understanding of the nature of the photographic message at a critical time of rising threat of fascism from abroad. Not only was the paper dedicated to informing its readers using the highest standards in written journalism but its unique attitude towards visual literacy and the ambiguity of photography as media set it apart from the great majority of picture publications of its time and makes the study and understanding of its history important for us today.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cleland, T. M. *Harsh Words: An address delivered at a meeting of the A.I.G.A. February 5, 1940*. Newark, New Jersey: The Carteret Book Club, 1940.


*PM* preview issue June 14, 1940-1947

*Friday*, 1940-1941

*Life*, 1937-1938

*Coronet*, (April 1942 and June 1942).


Secondary Sources

Books:


Articles and Essays


Illustrations

Fig. 1
*PM*, July 19, 1941, “AFL Electrical Workers Vote to Strike Today to Protect Wage Scale”
unknown photographers
Fig. 2
*PM.* January 16, 1941, “Negro Domestics Earn Pittance in ‘Slave Markets’”
Fig. 3

*PM’s Weekly*, February 9, 1941, “PM’s Baby” photograph by Mary Morris
Fig. 4

*PM*, July 22, 1941

“Yesterday at Coney Island...Temperature 89...They Came Early, Stayed Late”

photograph by Weegee
Fig. 5

*PM*, January 8, 1941, photograph by Morris Engel,
Fig. 6

*PM*, October 16, 1940, photograph by Steven Derry
Fig. 7

*PM*, September 12, 1941
Will These Flags Be Raised Against a Foreign Power?

The Government's Sail and Flag Shop in Brooklyn Navy Yard makes all flags for the U.S. Navy—American flags, signal flags, special flags for the President,abinet members, admirals and other naval officers. Expansion of the navy has forced the shop to increase the number of its machine units and personnel. It now operates on two 8-hour shifts, turns out 500 to 900 flags a day. When this picture was taken there were 63 girls working, but by the end of the week the number had reached 108. The shop expects to add a third shift soon but needs time to get new help. Cost of flags from 85 to 95 cents a day. Eighteen have worked in the shop for 20 years or more.

Photo by Margaret Bourke-White, PM staff.

Fig. 8

*PM*, August 1, 1940, “Will These Flags Be Raised Against a Foreign Power?” photograph by Margaret Bourke-White,
Fig. 9

*PM*, August 14, 1941, “Family Album” photograph by Alan Fisher,
“It’s a tadpole that intrigues this first-year pupil at P. S. 201, Brooklyn. She’ll learn by observation that the queer things grows into a frog”.

“What Foes of Public School ‘Fads’ Are Attacking”, *PM*, October 13, 1940

photograph by Morris Engel.
Fig. 11
‘German’ Spy Faces Firing Squad in Mid-Afternoon”
*PM’s Weekly*, November 2, 1941, photograph by Morris Engel,
Fig. 12
*PM*, March 20, 1941, “Submarine Warfare Is Directed Against Babies Too….”
photograph by Leo Lieb.
Fig. 13
Cover, Spy Stories, The Fact Group, September 1939
Fig. 14
PM, June 29, 1941, “FBI Seizes 29 in Nation’s Biggest Spy Roundup” unknown photographer
Fig. 15
Cover, *The Shadow*, July 15, 1939
Wanger Mixes

With History

By COLUMBA ANDRE

Walter Wanger, producer of Foreign Correspondent, also his brother, and mighty handsome himself in a young tycoon kind of way, has an affinity for intemperate agents. He introduced a scene that ought to scare him, and sometimes does.

For instance, in a gesture small but very dear to his heart at the moment, that is, in Foreign Correspondent, there's a Dutch sequence that indicates Holland was peopled with a certain country's spies. Part of the sequence, the background stuff, was actually shot in Holland, then just about ship to be sent to America. The ship was torpedoed and sunk in the English Channel, so it was Busted again. This time the ship carrying it made port. A couple of weeks later, Germany invaded Holland, and spies assorted Germany's way.

Called the Turn

Then there's a sequence in a London broadcasting station, smash in the middle of a news broadcast to America. London was bombed. Well, a week ago, London was bombed. But just in case, they had another version. In that one, the broadcasting station was in Paris. Any way they figured it, Foreign Correspondent called the turn.

Wanger has mixed with happy a couple of weeks. He's in England, in fact, in Italy in 1939. In 1939, Italy would have prospered England, if only England had asked it. That's what Wanger says. He used to have lunch with Chas every day.

"Chas, what's all this talk about us and Hitler? Just because my wife visiting her sister in Berlin, you'll think I meant something.

And Mussolini, once when he was chatting with Wanger, said,

"I love your country. I love America. Tell me, why does the New York Times say such terrible things about me?" So Wanger told him.

"Done, if the newsmen would only show some of the wonderful things you're doing, the public would be surprised. Instead of all that warlike jockeying and drilling of children, maybe you'd understand you better.

At any rate, that's the way things were with England, America, China, Mussolini, and Wanger. But England didn't notice it, and then the Italian press started to print some fantastic kind of things, and Italy went with Germany.

Failed Again

Another time Wanger failed to change the course of history, he recalls, was after the World War. Wanger had been working in George Carlin's propaganda service, so he understood that kind of operation.

A friend of his, Bill Miller, was Wilson's press editor at the time. Wanger tried to get Miller into the act. Miller, however, was the type of doing a regular propaganda campaign, like the Liberty Bond drives, or the Peace Treaty and joining the League of Nations in America. Propaganda for Peace, "Support the League and Sign the Treaties," it would go. If it had worked out the way Wanger figured it, that would have been the end of war forever. But there was a slip somewhere, and all that happened was, it gave the secretary for Permanent nations, appointed by Walter Wanger, was Bill Miller.

Fig 16.

PM's Weekly, August 25, 1940

"Foreign Correspondent’ Sees an Assassination"
Fig. 17

*PM’s Weekly*, August 25, 1940

“An International Incident Staged by Hitchcock”
Photographers Whose Pictures Make Up New York Album

These are members of PM’s staff of photographers: kneeling, 1. to r.: John DeTitta, David Eisenstadt, Jr., Ray Flatsick, Goeke Bujgor, seated: Morris Engel, Leo Lieb, Mary Morris, Peter Killian, Morris Gordon; standing: Irving Haberman, Hugh Broderick, Steve Derry, Alan Fisher, Martin Harris, Weegee. Those represented in the album, but not pictured are: Margaret Bourke-White, Bill Bruk, Dan Israel, Fonzo Jacob, Helen Levitt.

Fig. 18

*PM’s Weekly*, June 18, 1941
Photography Staff
Fig. 19

*PM’s Weekly*, June 18, 1941, “The Sidewalks” photographs by David Eisendrath, Martin Harris, Morris Engel, Margaret Bourke-White, Weegee
Fig. 20
*PM’s Weekly*, June 18, 1941, “The Working People”, photographs by Morris Gordon, Morris Engel, David Eisendrath, Martin Harris
Fig. 21
photograph by Mary Morris
What Is Truth in Photography?

By Ralph Stover

"The camera cannot lie." That cliche is a lie itself, because every camera lies unless it is in the hands of an expert craftsman with a passion for the truth. On these pages are photographs which make contradictory statements about people, as some of these pictures must be wrong.

The camera records shape, color, tone and form. It is foolproof only in its rendering of shape. It usually lies about the others. For instance: before the days of panchromatic film red hair "came out" too dark; now it registers too light. Tone values are falsified by incorrect exposure or development; "marshmallow" faces lack expressiveness or depth (see Moulpie on the next page). And too flat, shadowless lighting distorts a face's form.

Even when a photographic portrait tells the truth in all the above categories it can tell only a small portion of the truth. It can be a true picture of a man during the particular 1/100 of a second in which the shutter was open but he is a false clue to the man's real nature. What would we think of George Washington if the only picture record we had was a photograph taken when he blinked? (See Stainer on page 40.)

"The camera cannot lie" is true only in the sense that it is a little harder to sell a complete falsehood with a camera than with words. The thing to bear in mind is "reading" photographs is that none of them can tell the full truth about a man. You must see a lot of pictures before you can make up your mind about who he really is.

Huntress This is Mrs. Martin Johanssen in 1912, in the days when she was making movies with her husband in Africa. It is a straightforward photograph without pretty make-up, lighting, posing, or softened edges. She looks like a real woman, full of energy and good humor, who was able to withstand the hardships and dangers of a safari.

Peacherino This is Paramount's version of Mrs. Johnson taken in 1939. She looks like a kittenish ingenue at Hollywood High who couldn't hit the side of a barn door at forty paces.

Nice Guy This is the Al Smith of the brown derby and the sidewalks of New York. He's the fine fellow whom everybody liked. Not only because he was a jolly good fellow, but because as Governor of New York he was a courageous, mild-mannered champion of the poor.

Bad Loser This is the picture of a man whose day is over, who surrounds himself with memories, sits in his old general armchair, acquires a new window, and has the expression of a dispossessed, overwhelmed, unfortunate, who knows what is coming.
Fig. 23
“What Is Truth in Photography?” PM’s Weekly, February 2, 1941
Fig. 24

*PM*, October 18, 1940, “The Fifth Column and Its Fellow-Travelers”
Fig. 25
Detail, Earl Browder from “The Fifth Column and Its Fellow Travelers”
PM, October 18, 1940
Fig. 26

“What Is Truth in Photography?”, PM’s Weekly, February 2, 1941, Earl Browder, detail p. 49
Fig. 27

“New ‘U.S. Camera’ Shows a Trend Away From Photography-for-Photography’s-Sake”

*PM’s Weekly*, December 1, 1940
Fig. 28
Ralph Steiner, *Self Portrait With Billboard*, 1927
“Eye-Catchers. You Rarely See Them as Unusual as These… Advertisers Don’t Have to be Too Original”, *PM’s Weekly*, September 28, 1941
Fig. 30

"Eye-Catchers, Here Are Some More Gems by Advertisers: The Camera Lied, but You Like the Tricks" PM's Weekly, October 5, 1941
Fig. 31
These Are Real People Showing Emotion…
…and These Are Models ‘Acting’ Emotion”
*PM’s Weekly*, February 23, 1940
Fig. 32
“Look Again!: These Photos Prove Muscles, Not Eyes, Give Facial Expressions Their Meaning”, Ralph Steiner, *PM’s Weekly*, August 21, 1941
Fig. 33
“Wall and Sidewalk Drawings Show What Goes On in the Minds of New York Children”
*PM's Weekly*, March 2, 1941, photos by Helen Levitt
Fig. 34
Detail from Ralph Steiner, “Wall and Sidewalk Drawings Show What Goes On in the Minds of New York Children”, *PM’s Weekly*, March 2, 1941, Photo by Helen Levitt
Fig. 35

“Child Labor Victory Comes Too Late for Camera Crusader”,

*PM*, February 5, 1941
Fig. 36
“Marion Post is a Top Woman Photographer”, *PM’s Weekly* August 17, 1941
Fig. 38

“The Small Town”, *PM’s Weekly*, October 18, 1940
Photographs by Walker Evans and Marion Post
Fig. 39
“The Small Town: Its People Make it the Backbone of America...And Their Lives Are Sometimes Beautiful, Sometimes Miserable”, *PM's Weekly*, October 18, 1940
Photographs by Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, Walker Evans, Marion Post
Fig. 40

“’Framing’ Doesn’t Necessarily Make a Picture Good”, PM’s Weekly, December 15, 1940
Fig. 41
“‘Americans’ Battle ‘Germans on Playground,” Morris Engel
*PM’s Weekly*, November 2, 1941
Curiosity Helps a Mind Grow

“Adults are too likely to overlook those impulses within the child which demand attention and which the child is called upon to obey. One of the dominant forces of the young child’s life is curiosity. It is stimulated by practically everything that is strange and new, or such things as are in motion or can be set in motion or controlled by the child. The child, responding to this inner urge and obeying the impulse to investigate, to demonstrate his power, and to satisfy his curiosity, may disobey—may not even hear—a command coming from without.” Child Management, Children’s Bureau Publication No. 143, U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. Cost 10 cents.

Photo by Mary Morris, PM Staff

Fig. 42
“Curiosity Helps a Mind Grow”, PM, October 4, 1940, Photo by Mary Morris
Fig. 43
“77 Weary Child Refugees From Old Britain…Find Food, Safety and Sleep in This New World”, PM, August 27, 1940
Fig. 44
“Halifax: Where the War Comes Closest to America”, PM’s Weekly, October 20, 1940, photograph by Peter Killian
Fig. 45
“Raid Survivors Comb the Rubble For Bits of Their Battered Toys”
*PM*, September 14, 1940
“British Kids Find an Invincible Air Raid Shelter: The U.S.A.” “Nazi Bomb Left This Mother and Child Homeless”, *PM*, August 22, 1940
"New York’s First Negro Cop Ends 30 Year on Force", PM’s Weekly, June 29, 1941
photographs by Alan Fisher,
When Fallers Need a Friend:

These are two kindergarten boys waiting to be called for at the close of the first day of school last Monday.

(Other picture on Page 42.) Photo by Morris Engel, PM Staff.

Fig. 48

“When Fallers Need a Friend”, PM’s Weekly, September 14, 1941, photo by Morris Engel,
“What Makes An American,” cont. “They Have a 4-Room Apartment Full of Things They Admire…But They Spend Nearly All Of Their Time at the Store”

*PM*, December 24, 1940
Fig. 50
“Just Add Boiling Water”, photograph by Weegee, 1937
Fire at American Kitchen Products building on Water Street
Fig. 51
“PM’s Gallery Presents NEW YORKERS – Unposed Portraits”, *PM’s Weekly*, Section Two, July 21, 1940, photograph by Morris Engel
Fig. 52
“The Problem of Keeping City Kids Off the Streets,”
*PM’s Weekly*, September 8, 1940, photograph by Morris Engel
Fig. 53

“PLAY PLACES: There Aren’t Enough Satisfactory Playgrounds in New York…
…and Many Kids Think It’s More Fun to Run Wild in the Streets”

*PM’s Weekly*, September 8, 1940, photographs by Morris Engel,
Play Streets Set Back By WPA Cuts

Fig. 54
“Play Streets Set Back By WPA Cuts”
*PM’s Weekly*, June 29, 1941, photographs by Morris Engel
“Many a Beautiful Friendship Has Started on a New York Street...There Are Lots of Good Games Kids Can’t Play Without Supervision”

*PM’s Weekly*, June 29, 1941, photographs by Morris Engel
Fig. 56
“These Are Hoboken’s Children: Are They All ‘Dead End’ Kids?”
*PM*, August 12, 1940, photographs by Margaret Bourke-White
Fig. 57
Photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Seville, Spain, 1933
Fig. 58

*PM’s Weekly, PM’s Gallery*, August 11, 1940,
“Battle on a Precipice” “Fact of Life” photographs by Helen Levitt
Fig. 59
Photograph by Aaron Siskind, from the “Harlem Document”, 1932-1940
“Children Turn Experiences Into Drama in Program That Makes Learning More Vivid”, *PM’s Weekly*, Sunday, March 15, 1942, photographs by Morris Engel
Air-raid wardens carry off "victim" of a "bombing" during blackout at Port Washington, L. I.

The U. S. A. Begins Trying Out Its Civilian Defenses

At 8:34 o'clock last Friday evening in suburban Port Washington, where the trans-Atlantic clip-
pons used to land, a siren shrieked. It was a
warning for everyone to turn out lights. Then
sounding a bombing attack, a coast-guard
plane roared in repeated dives over the town
and red lights and magnesium flares set off
around the Sands Point school provided atmo-
phere for a rescue project staged by volunteer
firemen, women ARP workers, Boy Scouts and
Red Cross nurses. The practice blackout, called
"almost perfect," by an observer in the coast-
guard plane, lasted seven minutes. Afterward,
a mobile kitchen at the school served sand-
wiches and coffee to "refugees." On the same
evening that Port Washington's 25,000 residents
doused their lights, New Mexico's 300,000 resi-
dents incapacitated "beyond expectations" in a
state-wide blackout. It had been ordered by
Civilian Defense Director LaGuardia because
New Mexico borders a foreign country. Mean-
while, Mr. LaGuardia appointed Mrs. FDR an
assistant director, and the Vermont Legislature
resolved that the U. S. A. had been in armed
conflict since FDR's first order, so Ver-
monters in service were entitled to a 30-da-
month bonus.

Fig. 61

“The U.S.A. Begins Trying Out Its Civilian Defenses”

PM’s Weekly, September 21, 1941, photo by Ray Platnik,
From the beginning, give him variety to stimulate both appetite and growth! *** First variety: Gerber's Cereal Food. It's uniformly smooth and tasty. Pre-cooked: add milk or formula and serve. *** Second variety: Gerber's Cooked-in-milk Strained Cereal. It actually has more calcium and phosphorus than vegetables. Highly palatable, too! *** Third variety: Gerber's Strained Oatmeal. It's pre-cooked, dried and flaked, ready to serve. Just add milk or formula. All three are enriched in vitamin B. Send for free samples—see coupon below.
Fig. 63
*Life*, 1942
“Plain People, Caught Off Guard, Make Good Pictures”

*PM's Weekly*, February 25, 1941, photos by Fred Gund and Lou Stouman
Fig. 65
“A Small Boy Yells Loud for Pots and Pans…New York Housewives Shower Them Down”,
*PM*, July 22, 1942, photo by Alan Fisher,