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On the Efficacy of Artifice

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Objectivity

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1   The New York daily press in the late interwar years can be broadly but safely described as
fully in thrall to what the American philosopher John Dewey described as a 'spectator
theory' of knowledge.[1] The world 'out there,' that is, was presented, often insidiously, to
be a thing that might be apprehended with exquisite clarity, as if through a perfect lens,
to the satisfaction of a distinct embodied intelligence within.The character of
photography's application in the daily press of this moment can be understood as a direct
function of this conception. Photographs were presented, through the 'distortionless'
lens of the news page's halftone image, without crediting any particular camera operator
and without suggestion of the investments alive in both that operator and in the editorial
compass of the paper itself, as if they were objective, virtually unmediated visual
transmissions of the world's affairs.[2] The following essay considers, through the case
study of one otherwise unremarkable photojournalistic instance, how the short lived,
experimental New York City daily tabloid *PM* (1940–48) worked to trouble this prevailing
paradigm.

The Eastern Front Image

2   On Thursday, July 10, 1941, just three weeks into Nazi Germany's treaty-defying invasion
of the Soviet Union, readers of the popular front tabloid *PM*, anxious to understand the
world-historical events unfolding along the Eastern Front, are confronted by a decidedly
indeterminate journalistic display. The second and third pages of that day's edition pre-
sent an ensemble of three distinct communicative media, each one modifying the next,
and all serving to verify the utter inaccessibility of anything like reliable information .[3]

3   The textual and cartographic components are, although laced with ambivalence,
straightforward. The text reports skeptically upon partisan accounts of movements from
the front: a contradictory dialogue of claims, refutations, and counter-claims from both
Soviet and German spokesmen. Although the text betrays greater faith in the Soviet

narrative, neither side's version is given as authoritative. Two maps provide a cartographic counterpart to the textual report's contradictory oscillation: 'Moscow says Nazis beaten back,' 'Nazis claim capture,' and so on, with locations and movements graphically conveyed. But readers will have had greater difficulty anchoring their reading of the third, mimetic component, at top right of the page, in any understanding of the predictable operations of its medium.

4   It is unlikely that a reader would have identified this image, of a Soviet soldier taking four Germans captive, without qualification, as purely photographic. By 1941 the mechanical reproduction of photographs in daily newspapers was entirely commonplace. Moreover, as a new addition to New York's newspaper landscape, *PM* was eager to distinguish itself from the visual blandness of its competitor dailies and so had made a particular investment in a high quality production apparatus whose crisper, whiter paper; sharper, richer blacks; and superior fidelity to the tonal gradation of source imagery rendered self-evident any distinction between photography and drawing.[4] And while its drama's theater, some unidentified Baltic village, is pure ink and wash notation, the picture is in no way clearly flagged as the product of an artist's hand, whose identification was otherwise *PM*'s standard procedure. The caption offers little help. Readers are addressed only with an insistent ambivalence regarding the reliability of the attendant image: it suggests that the picture only *purports* to relate a certain set of facts – Moscow's 'version of the Russo-German war.' The question of the medium of documentation is set aside in favor of discussion of the medium of transmission – something about Moscow 'making use of its new radio equipment.' That the credit finally reveals that we are looking at something called a 'radiophoto' only clouds the issue, assigning an etymologically puzzling neologism to an already visually confusing image.

5   For regular readers of *PM*, however, radiophotos from Russia, with all their formal idiosyncrasies, would have already been familiar. Those readers would have encountered the previous day's report that, in a still experimental process, *photographs* were being transmitted by radio, despite synchronization problems and signal-corrupting electromagnetic storms, over the North Pole from Moscow to New York at a transmission time of between twelve and twenty minutes.[5] A caption accompanying a companion image of a group of Soviet infantrymen emphasizes the contingent nature of this technology's mimetic procedures, noting that 'their faces were distorted by a small error in radio transmission'.

6   Two days later, *PM* again features the technology, with a photograph of a technician receiving two of the three radiophotos just published. The picture's caption expands upon the earlier reporting to better explain the process: 'This is the machine that brings in Russian war pictures by radio from Moscow ... Pinpoints of light, actuated by radio impulses, "paint" [the] picture in a series of lines on [a] negative on [a] whirling cylinder.' [6] All of which enables the reader to make some inferences about how the Eastern Front image came to look as it did. Nowhere identified by *PM* as a drawing, the implication is that this image's original has at least a photographic basis, one whose Moscow original had been translated into a radio signal and subsequently reiterated after its stormy trans-arctic voyage into 'a series of lines' in New York, a process inviting extensive retouching by art department staff on one or both ends of transmission.[7]

7   The corrective retouching of photographs for publication in the daily press was, in the early 1940s, still a routine procedure, but not typically an especially *visible* one. As the authors of one contemporary pictorial-journalism textbook advised, retouching 'should

not be distinguishable in the halftone as something painted or added to the picture ... the worst that can be said of any retouching is that it shows in the halftone.'[8] Retouched all over, the Eastern Front image flagrantly defies this injunction, formally and contextually insisting upon its status as photographic *and* hand painted, objective *and* subjective in the figuring of its object. And this from an image that was avowedly only as good as Moscow's word, an image holding only the slightest suggestion of verifiable journalistic information. Why then, and this is the question that it will be the burden of the present essay to address, was it published at all?

The Journalistic Discourse of Photographic Objectivity

8   The popularly held notion that the photographic procedure guarantees a mechanical and thus unbiased and accurate copy of nature was woven from the very start into the formation of the objectivity ideal in American journalism. Following the decline of political-party patronage of American newspapers in the 1830s, the suddenly commercial enterprise of the penny press was forced to find a stable, authoritative, and marketable position with respect to the world upon which it would report. Although journalistic 'objectivity' as a fully realized program would not arrive on the scene until the 1920s, a dogged devotion to 'the facts' emerged as the most viable way forward, least likely to alienate partisans (including readers and the advertisers that sought them) on any given side of an issue, a position anchored in two contemporary and related formations in the popular understanding of humanity's relation to the world: an allegiance to Baconian empiricism in American science and the invention of photography.[9]

9   Géraldine Muhlmann has recently demonstrated the urgency of *visibility* as a guarantor of truth in a nineteenth-century American journalism that had come to associate speech with opinion and images with fact. Long before the appearance of the illustrated press, according to Muhlmann, 'journalism seems to have relied on the *eye, as opposed to the voice ...* the newspaper had to provide something to *see,* and had to cease (at last) to be content *... with saying.'*[10] This 'naïve empiricism,' as journalism historian Michael Schudson has described American journalism's investment in the idea that the world offers up (empirically perceptible) facts divorced from (all too human) values, found its favored metaphor with the invention of photography.[11] In 1851, for example, half a century before they would print photographic images, the Boston *Herald* boasted of its ambition to 'group and picture the events of the passing time, and daguerreotype them for the public eye,' while the New York *Tribune* was hailed as a 'faithful daguerreotype of the progress of mankind.'[12]

10   Almost as soon as the technology finally caught up with the metaphor and photographic images started appearing regularly in American newspapers during the first decades of the twentieth century, the discourse of objectivity had so fully insinuated itself into journalistic practice as to be codified as a professional ethical norm.[13] Professional codes, however, tend to be a function of disciplinary regimes, and it follows that both the popular and professional attitude toward journalistic objectivity was already on the defensive, subject to widespread public skepticism and internal professional apprehension.[14] Photography, then, enjoying an equally widespread confidence in the objective, evidentiary authority of its images arrived just in time to shore up the institution's otherwise vulnerable rhetorical edifice.[15] Objective textual reporting, that is to say, experienced a crisis of journalistic authority at approximately the same moment

that the periodical press came to prioritize a photographic mode of reporting at the absolute height of its evidentiary authority. This development was nowhere more visible – and perhaps nowhere more cunningly exploited – than in the photojournalism of Henry Luce's paradigmatic *Life* magazine of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

11   Luce was a pioneer in the modern tactical rejection of objectivity as a viable textual journalistic strategy, founding his first publication, *Time*, in 1923, on the premise that 'a man who thinks he's objective [is a] man who is deceiving himself.'[16] Luce recognized that the professional codification of an abstract and impossible ideal could hardly secure the credibility of any report on any subject. Authoritative interpretation was the key: effective journalism, according to Luce, must take positions, and those positions must reflect ideals (values) 'higher' than those of simple empirical non-partisanship. *Time* was the prototype for Luce's highly influential model of interpretive, partisan reporting, but it was in *Life*, with its privileging of photojournalism, that this philosophy found its sturdiest rhetorical armature.

12   What photography provided Luce's brand of interpretive reporting was its visual anchor in a mechanically witnessed and thus ostensibly veridical reality disentangled from subjective values. The popular trust in photography's evidentiary credibility was the linchpin of what cultural historian Chris Vials has described as *Life's* 'partisan objectivity.'[17] It was precisely through the preservation of the photographic connotation of mechanical transparency and the pairing of these 'transparent' images with textually interpretive and value-laden captions that *Life* was able to effectively and persuasively advance its anti-communist, anti–New Deal, corporatist, and socially conservative perspective as a 'reality' to its many millions of readers.[18] Despite being viewed as a magazine operating 'on the journalistic principle of *reporting objectively* the folk and folkways of the world – in pictures,' *Life* proceeded from the beginning with full knowledge that, as its one-time picture editor Wilson Hicks explained, 'pictures ... lend themselves to something of the same manipulation as words,'[19] *Life's* editors took every measure to minimize the visibility of its photographs' interpretive work. This was achieved through the programmatic suppression or bracketing of the *authoredness* (and thus interpretive nature) of its photographic images, both through the absence in its regular reporting of photographers' credits, and through the systematic isolation of photographs containing 'too much style' into portfolios specifically concerned with a particular photographic viewpoint.[20]

Luce, PM, and the Trouble with the Catherine Wheel

13   *PM* emerged as a dissident mutation from within the very culture just described. The new tabloid's publisher and creator, Ralph Ingersoll, had been Luce's protégé and the general manager of Time, Inc. until breaking with Luce just a year before *PM* began publication in the spring of1940 as an independent leftist daily newspaper, carrying no advertising, and operating with a daily circulation of around 200,000 readers. The story behind *PM's* development is of less interest to us here than the reasons behind its creator's break from Luce's Time company (on whose payroll Ingersoll developed his new newspaper): an incommensurability of politics and of conceptions of the place of objectivity within pictorial journalism.

14 The beginnings of an explanation of *PM*'s presentation of the Eastern Front radiophoto that opened this essay can be found in a brief consideration of how Luce and Ingersoll (and *Life* and *PM*) came to dissolve their relationship over the appearance, on the cover of the January 2, 1939, issue of *Time*, of a drawing by a little known Austrian aristocrat, the subject of which was the magazine's 1938 'Man of the Year': Adolf Hitler. According to Ingersoll, then still Time, Inc.'s managing editor, this choice for *Time*'s Man of the Year did not in itself present a serious crisis of journalistic integrity: the Man of the Year distinction had never functioned as an endorsement, but rather 'a bow only to the individual's news-worthiness in the world.' What created the fissure was the selection by *Time*'s editors, with Luce's tacit support, of an unambiguously deferential color photograph of the dictator for the issue's cover, one that Ingersoll viewed as consistent with conventional Great Man political or corporate portraiture: 'A glamorized version of the great newsworthy one: Hitler, clear-eyed and commanding, even his hair neat ... it is the very symbol of leadership.'[21] Unwilling to accept this image as representative of any responsible journalistic assessment of Hitler, Ingersoll set out in search of an alternative. On the advice of his psychoanalyst, he settled upon commissioning one Baron Charles Rudolph von Ripper:

15 'He was (a) a fine artist, (b) an anti-nazi, but (c) not a German (who might be attacked as self-interested) but an Austrian, and (d) and (e), both an aristocrat – titled – *and* a Catholic (no bait for red-baiters, he!). I got hold of the fellow [and] overnight he drew me, in pen and ink so that I could get a quick line cut made of it, *exactly* what I needed: a portrait of the most newsworthy man of the year 1938 but in a setting that left no doubt about how he had made the news that led us to choose him. The background – the whole cover's design – was a Catherine wheel on which naked bodies were bound, tortured and broken. And in one corner, accompanying the torture at an organ, sat our Man of the Year – a tiny figure but accurately drawn.'[22]

16 Having found a more suitable representation, and notably, in von Ripper, a thoroughly vetted *author,* Ingersoll quietly scrapped the original cover, publishing the Catherine wheel drawing in its place. This decision outraged Luce. As Ingersoll describes their heated discussion after the fact, Luce took Ingersoll's replacement of the editorially neutral, photographic Man of the Year portrait with a savagely critical artist's caricature as an absolute violation of his core journalistic principles. 'Have you any idea what you've done?' Luce demanded of Ingersoll; 'A basic tradition destroyed ... everything I've built ... in one gesture.'[23]

17 The structural integrity of Luce's journalistic system depended upon the image-text dynamic that I have just enumerated: the image had to be allowed to perform its objectivity function if the partisan textual rhetoric that accompanied it was to maintain its authority. Ingersoll's recognition that a 'neutral' pictorial representation was not neutral at all, whether photographic or otherwise, and his taking action on that recognition – on no less visible a surface than the cover of *Time*'s Man of the Year issue – posed too great a threat to that system. Within a year Ingersoll was no longer with the company. Later, he reflected on the importance of this episode to his conceptualization of *PM*: 'My feeling that the Nazi state was a challenge to everything we believed in was so forthright that I felt *objectivity itself partisan ...* It was the problems that Hitler posed the world, then, that first interested me in the limits of journalistic objectivity.'[24]

The Fine Art of Radiophoto

18   While Ingersoll ultimately rejected the assumptions informing Time, Inc.'s pictorial journalism, he was not about to abandon his insider's knowledge of the rhetorical workings responsible for the persuasiveness of its presentation. On the contrary, *PM* was established primarily as a daily platform for the advancement of photojournalism as a socially progressive instrument, one fully equipped with a sound understanding of the mechanisms behind so much of existing photojournalism's dissimulation. A simple repetition of Luce's photographically anchored 'partisan objectivity' but to contrary political ends would have been an insufficient measure. Certainly, photojournalism would have to be the principal weapon in *PM*'s progressive arsenal, but to use it effectively, it would have to be transparent, not in its images (that assumption was already all too present), but in their rhetoric and in their framing. For *PM*, as we will see, the necessary move would be to strip photographic evidence of any semblance of *immanent* authority, only then to rebuild the possibility of credible photojournalistic discourse from the ground up.

19   All of which might give us entry into addressing the question posed at the beginning of this essay: Why did *PM* publish that strange and seemingly irrelevant Eastern Front image? I propose three interrelated answers. First, militantly anti-fascist, *PM* sought to convey useful information about developments along the front, but it did not want to mislead or permit itself or its readers to be misled by unreliable reports, verbal or visual. The significance of Nazi Germany's invasion of to the Soviet Union in June 1941 for political and intellectual alignments in the United States, particularly with respect to the then still hotly divisive question of intervention, cannot be overstated. The story thus demanded *PM*'s full journalistic attention. But how does one illustrate the uncertainty of a faraway and contested front photographically? The Eastern Front image, while providing a 'photographic' visual counterpart to its internally contradictory companion media (textual and cartographic), bears no formally ascertainable guarantee of the truth value of its claims, indeed it calls these into doubt.

20   Second, this image, and its attendant explicating apparatus, appeared precisely because radiophoto was a technology through which images of the world's news were being transmitted to readers of newspapers. The first successful experiments in the wireless transmission of photographs were conducted in 1913, and, following advances by the Radio Corporation of America, radiophoto had been in limited commercial use for the transmission of legal and financial documents, news photographs, and, in the case of the American Pavilion of the 1937 Paris World's Fair, architectural drawings, since the mid-1920s.[25] Regular transatlantic radiophoto service had been available between London and New York since 1926, and between Berlin and New York since the late 1930s. The initiation of the service from Moscow to New York in July 1941 represented a noteworthy development only insofar as it represented the first availability of the wireless transmission of news photographs from the Eastern Front of the war not subject to Nazi censorship. Its greater significance lay in its service as a technological emblem of a new spirit of cooperation prevailing between the United States and the Soviet Union, an already troubled partnership that had been markedly strained by the USSR's signing in August 1939 of a nonaggression treaty with Germany. Rather than simply presenting this new technological capability as a visual portal across space and time into the unmediated

realities of a far-flung front, *PM*'s editors downplayed its images' descriptive potential, instead foregrounding their partisan character and technological foundations. *PM* proffered the Eastern Front image as a marker of only its own implicitly political tactical function as a news image, a placeholder for meaning within a photojournalistic field predicated on the notion that historical complexities can be compressed and made visible – and therefore knowable – with the publication of a single, legible image.[26]

21 The third reason reinforces the previous two, and this is *PM's* commitment to fostering a culture of visual literacy fully cognizant of the troublesome nature of photographic evidence. In a reversal of the sort of common nineteenth-century operation where reproductions of artists' drawings were presented in albums and the illustrated press as if they were reproductions of photographs,[27] *PM* presented a photographic image as syntactically indistinguishable from a drawing, just as prone to subjective intervention and representational distortion as any artist's sketch, in order, I argue, to make visible the contingency of photographic truth. This image is presented as evidence only of the fact and conditions of its own production, of its own transmission, of its own dissemination. Here we have credible evidence not of events along the front, but of desire: the *desire* to transmit an image by radio from Moscow to New York, the desire to illustrate a story whose conflicting truths would seem to fall outside the competence of photography to portray. We are left not to accept the truth of its representation, but rather to consider its purpose and ponder its motives.

The X Factor and the Third Effect

22 Wilson Hicks, the principal architect of *Life's* photojournalistic program, was also one of photojournalism's most formidable theorists. In *Words and Pictures*, his 1952 book on the theory and practice of photojournalism, Hicks identifies the two principal, and intimately connected, rhetorical operations responsible for the form's considerable persuasive power. The first of these, what he calls the 'X factor,' describes the beholder's share: the interpretive absorption of the reader into the interplay of the photograph and its caption:

23 'The very foundation of the form rests on its extraordinary ability to induce a phenomenon wherein the total of the complex – that is, pictures and words together – becomes greater than the sum of its parts. This phenomenon is caused by the addition of an X factor to the joint impression made on the reader's mind by the mediums' acting in concert ... Fresh pictures and words evoke in him mental images of remembered objects and actions, or abstract concepts which have previously become a part of his emotional or intellectual background. Thus there is derived out of the reader's interpretative process an overvalue which aids and increases his understanding of the facts, ideas or feelings conveyed to him, and *enhances their sense of reality*.'[28]

24 Already Hicks describes a powerful myth-making regime. By inviting the empowered reader into the construction of meanings already delimited by the tendentious terms set forth in the pairing of image and text, the picture-editor can increase his reader's 'understanding of the facts, ideas, or feelings being conveyed to him,' however suspect, while enhancing 'their sense of reality.' But Hicks is not done yet, for he has only accounted for the work done by pairing the single image with its caption. Photojournalism, as it is understood by Hicks, consists not simply in the connection of photographs with captions, but in the creation of meaningful relations amongst these pairings. Hicks's second operation, the 'third effect,' describes the meaning-making

power of the juxtaposition, *either spatial or temporal*, of these distinct image-text pairings, whose 'individual effects are combined and enhanced by the reader's interpretative and evaluative reaction.'[29] In the pages of *Life*, this elaborate apparatus of 'overvalue' worked to draw the reader into an enhanced sense of 'the reality' of the Lucean, 'partisanly objective,' 'facts … being conveyed to him': the evils of communism; the merits of free enterprise, the threat of organized labor, the proper adherence to traditional gender roles, and the rest. *PM*, under the editorial guidance of both Ralph Ingersoll and Sunday picture editor William McCleery, both of whom would have worked with Hicks at Time Inc. and at the Associated Press, respectively, operated with full knowledge of the mechanics and power of this same photojournalistic system, but applied it to radically alternative ends, turning it, as we will see, in on itself to expose its dissimulative potential.

25   As is suggested by the need to scan, as we did earlier in this essay, three sequential issues of *PM and* the broader history of its journalistic moment in order to make a certain kind of sense of the Eastern Front image, the evidence to support the preceding argument about its publication cannot be found in just the one image or image-text ensemble alone. *PM*'s program of visual pedagogy, and the role of photojournalism within it, must be absorbed as a whole, each image and image-text ensemble informing the meanings available in any other. If a pictorial critique of the myth of photographic objectivity is indeed the key to understanding the logic of the Eastern Front image, the proof will be found not just in the history of that myth's development, application, and theoretical refutation, or even within the arc of reporting into which it was inscribed, but across the whole of *PM*'s pictorial activity, in its X factors and in its third effects.

Against 'Photographic Objectivity'

26   On Sunday, September 15, 1940, some ten months prior to the publication of the Eastern Front image, readers encountered a far more explicit instance of *PM*'s disavowal of the authority of photographic evidence. A spectacular, full-page photograph illustrating what appears to be a successful Nazi bombing mission is presented under the headline: 'A Dramatic War Picture, But is it a Phony?'. Far from a rhetorical question, the issue is taken up with care in the accompanying caption:

27   'The negative of this picture purporting to be a remarkable split-second record of a German plane attack on a British merchantship was offered for sale to PM. Some PM photographers examined the print and dubbed it a phony, said the plane had been pasted on the picture of a ship and rephotographed. The picture was bought from DeWitt Shank, an American who said he had received it through connections in Germany and was starting a new picture agency. Shank said he wasn't a photographer, and received the negative from a picture agency in Germany. He said he believed it was a true picture. Some PM photographers still think it is fake. What is your opinion?'[30]

28   Here *PM* is less concerned with using photography to report on the goings-on of Nazi military aggression than with illuminating the processes through which visual information of that aggression is presented: darkroom and art department practices, unsolicited sales calls, photo-agency dealings, and editorial meetings. *PM* questions the image's visual coherence and, having drawn troubling conclusions, assesses its provenance, ultimately signaling the fallible processes through which news photographs are obtained.[31] The object of this photograph's evidentiary burden is not the effectiveness

of any particular Nazi bombing campaign, but the credibility of photographic evidence itself. Implicit is the idea that such critical evaluation will always be appropriate to confrontations with photographic evidence. Explicit is the idea that photojournalistic manipulation is important news by its own right. But most importantly, readers are advised that engaging photographic evidence necessitates critical evaluation and debate.

29   *PM*'s readers encountered the tabloid's most forthright pedagogy in the conduct of this critical engagement within Ralph Steiner's Sunday column, News of Photography. For Steiner, the sophisticated analysis of photographic material was as straightforward a necessity to readers as radio listings, movie times, or consumer news. Through such essays as 'What is Truth in Photography?' and 'How to Read a Photograph,' Steiner implored readers to recognize the artifice at work in all photographic representation, whether artistic, commercial, journalistic, or otherwise. Whether writing about an artist he adored, such as Helen Levitt, or on strategies for resisting Nazi propaganda, Steiner's position was essentially the same: 'the process of interpretation and selection go on just as much in the minds of photographers as in the minds of any other kind of artist.'[32]

30   What is of central importance here is that the logic of Steiner's photographic pedagogy insinuated itself directly into the substance of all of *PM*'s journalism, from news of naval combat, as we have seen, to local reporting. An April 1944 photo-essay, 'Where There's Smoke, There Must Be a Picture,' offers an object lesson in the artifice, if not the artistry, of photographic reportage. Assigned by editor Russell Countryman to cover a fire at the Lerner shops in Manhattan, frequent *PM* contributor Weegee provided only a portrait of a young woman, Ruth Flax, cradling a mannequin that the photographer had likely supplied. As the caption reports, he had been trained to look for the human interest angle.[33]

31   This image, had it appeared alone, would have been entirely commonplace within Weegee's already recognizably distinctive corpus. What sets *PM*'s handling apart, aside from the explicit identification of the photographers involved, is the almost obsessive concern, on the part of both photographers and editors, with illustrating the interpretive eccentricity motivating the construction of Weegee's picture. The second photograph in the sequence, taken by Dan Keleher, insists upon the reader's recognition of the Flax picture as primarily an expression of Weegee's physicality and sensibility, shifting the essay's subject from the 'human interest' of Flax, or the fire, to that of Weegee and his choice to photograph Flax rather than the more conventionally newsworthy firefighter to his left. *PM*'s art department heavily retouched Keleher's photograph to emphasize this point, inking in the details of Weegee's trench coat and whiting out the perimeter of his black slacks against the stippled glare of the wet pavement to heighten the visibility of the physical contortions required for Weegee to frame his picture just so.

32   The particular character of Weegee's photograph, the essay insists, is borne not of events but of the photographer's intellectual choices and physical comportment. *PM* pushes this further still, printing a third photograph by Arthur Leipzig, who had been 'rushed in' apparently to guarantee that even Keleher's photographic act not slip into its own mythic invisibility. This evidentiary infinite regress spirals deeper with the presentation of Leipzig's evidence of Keleher's proof of Weegee photographing Flax. The positioning within the layout of Steve Derry's final image of the Lerner fire at bottom right is *PM* photo-editor Sally Pepper's summation. In a satisfying visual pun, Keleher is shown to have his back as though deliberately to the smoking Lerner building, opting to record the highly subjective operations of photojournalism over the signal news event that he and

they had been recruited to document. 'The fire' according to the penultimate caption, 'was a dud.'[34]

33 Such was the photojournalistic discourse constructed by *PM*'s tactical interweaving of image and text, of third effect and X factor, eliciting in its reader her store of 'mental images of remembered objects … and abstract concepts' to be brought to bear upon each fresh encounter with yet another image-text within the photojournalistic complex. How then could it have been otherwise than that the unmistakable inscription of the handmade into the photographic within the Eastern Front image, and the plain declaration of that same image's imbrication, through its captioning, into Moscow's partisan narrativization and technological mechanizations, was presented as no more or less than a warning to take care, to withhold judgment, to be skeptical of its claims to authority?[35] Nothing was more urgent to *PM* than the defeat of fascism in Europe and its cognates at home. A difficult task lay in wait for the tabloid, one that would be aided in no meaningful way by the photographic sustenance of hopeful illusions predicated upon unchallenged assumptions about the photographic medium.

NOTES

1. John DEWEY, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn, 1960), 23. See also Raymond BOISVERT, *John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 35; and Yaron EZRAHI, 'Dewey's Critique of Democratic Visual Culture and Its Political Implications,' in *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy*, ed. David Michael LEVIN, 315–36 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

2. On the discursive disembodiment of press photography, see Barbie ZELIZER 'Journalism's "Last" Stand: Wirephoto and the Discourse of Resistance,' *Journal of Communication* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 78–92.

3. *PM,* July 10, 1941, p. 2–3.

4. On *PM*'s technical innovations, see John TEBBEL, *The Marshall Fields: A Study in Wealth* (New York: Dutton, 1947), 191; and Roy HOOPES, *Ralph Ingersoll: A Biography* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 216. The best overview of *PM*'s formation and editorial program can be found in Paul MILKMAN'S *PM: A New Deal in Journalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1997). Milkman's study provides an excellent foundation for further research into *PM*'s photographic activity.

5. 'Russia Radios its First War Pictures Over Top of World,' *PM*, July 9, 1941, p. 4.

6. *PM*, July 11, 1941, p. 32.

7. Two weeks later, *PM* would note the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*'s predilection for 'heavily retouched photographs,' a predilection whose basis may well be rooted in the visual logic of socialist realism. See 'Russian Radio Pictures Show Tank Battlefield and Moscow Bomb Damage,' *PM*, July 25, 1941. On the dynamics of Soviet photography and socialist realist painting, see Leah DICKERMAN, 'Camera Obscura: Socialist Realism and the Shadow of Photography,' *October*, no. 93 (2000): 138–53. Thanks are due to Andrés Mario Zervigón for bringing this association to my attention. Katerina Romanenko also cites technical reasons for the Soviet retoucher's heavy

hand. See Katerina ROMANENKO, 'Photomontage for the Masses: The Soviet Periodical Press of the 1930s,' *Design Issues* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 34.

8. Laura VITRAY, John MILLS, and Roscoe ELLARD, *Pictorial Journalism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), 150–51. A copy of this volume was recently discovered by Carol Quirke bearing the stamp: 'Property of *PM*.' See Carol QUIRKE, 'Camera Work: News Photography and America's Working Class, 1919–1950' (Ph.D diss., City University of New York, 2005), 80.

9. Dan Schiller, 'An Historical Approach to Objectivity and Professionalism in American News Reporting,' *Journal of Communication*, December 1979: 49.

10. Géraldine MUHLMANN, *A Political History of Journalism* (Malden: Polity, 2008), 13–14 (emphasis in the original).

11. On 'naïve empiricism,' see Michael SCHUDSON, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic, 1978), 5–6.

12. Dan SCHILLER, 'An Historical Approach' (note 9), 49.

13. Schudson traces the institutionalization of the objectivity norm to its initial articulation in the American Society of Newspaper Editors 1922–1923 Code of Ethics: the 'Canons of Journalism.' See Michael SCHUDSON, 'The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism,' *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (2001): 161–62.

14. Schudson observes that '… while objectivity, by the 1930s, was an articulate professional value in journalism, it was one that seemed to disintegrate as soon as it was formulated. It became an ideal in journalism, after all, precisely when the impossibility of overcoming subjectivity in presenting the news was widely accepted.' Michael SCHUDSON, *Discovering the News* (note 11), 157.

15. Michael Simon BESSIE, *Jazz Journalism: The Story of the Tabloid Newspapers* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1938), 69; and Dona SCHWARTZ, 'Objective Representation: Photographs as Facts,' in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, ed. Bonnie BRENNEN and Hanno HARDT, 168 (Urbana: Illinois, 1999).

16. Michael SCHUDSON, *Discovering the News* (note 11), 149.

17. Chris VIALS, 'The Popular Front in the American Century: *Life* Magazine, Margaret Bourke-White, and Consumer Realism, 1936–1941,' *American Periodicals* 16, no. 1 (2006): 81–87.

18. *Life*'s photographic activity has been exhaustively chronicled by scholars too numerous to mention. Erika DOSS's collection, *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington DC: Smithsonian, 2001) serves as a succinct point of entry into this literature.

19. 'This is the *Life* Story,' *The Quill*, May 1938, quoted from Barbie ZELIZER 'Journalism's "Last" Stand' (note 2), 87; Wilson HICKS, *Words and Pictures* (New York: Harper, 1952), 42, quoted from C. SQUIERS, 'Looking at *Life*,' in *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from 1850 to the Present*, eds. Liz HERON and Val WILLIAMS, 144 (Durham: Duke Univ. Press).

20. This argument is indebted to a synthesis of the rich critical literature on *Life*'s photographic operations, especially that of Chris VIALS, 'The Popular Front' (note 17) and C. SQUIERS, 'Looking at *Life*' (note 19), and Wendy KOZOL, 'Gazing at Race in the Pages of *Life*: Picturing Segregation through Theory and History,' in *Looking at Life Magazine*, ed. Erika DOSS (note 18), 159–75. The quotation is from Roland BARTHES, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), 85, quoted from SQUIERS, 'Looking at *Life*' (note 19), 144.

21. Ralph INGERSOLL, 'High Times,' unpublished manuscript, 353–54, Ralph McAllister Ingersoll Papers, box 15, folder 3, Arthur Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University.

22. Ibid., 354–55 (emphasis in original). See also, Frederick S. VOSS, Man of the Year: A TIME Honored Tradition (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1987), 10–11.

23. Ralph INGERSOLL, 'High Times' (note 21), 356.

24. Ralph INGERSOLL, The Story of PM/How come PM (first checking draft, 1955), unpublished manuscript, 27, Ralph McAllister Ingersoll Papers, box 14, folder 13, Arthur Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University (emphasis added).

25. A.W. COLE and J.A. SMALL, 'The Transmission of Pictures by Radio,' in *Proceedings of the Institution of Electrical Engineers* 99, no. 62 (November 1952), 22–23; *RCA: Radiophoto* (New York: RCA, 193?–[n.d.]); Jennifer S. LIGHT, 'Facsimile: A Forgotten "New Medium" for the 20th Century,' *New Media & Society*, no. 8 (2006), 360. For a brief historical overview of fax technologies, see Jonathan COOPERSMITH's, 'The Changing Picture of Fax,' in *Presenting Pictures*, ed. Bernard FINN, 116–28 (London: Science Museum, 2004).

26. Jörg HUBER discusses the dangers of photojournalistic legibility in 'Reading-Seeing-Understanding: In Praise of Illegibility,' in *Covering the Real: Kunst und Pressbild, von Warhol bis Tillmans*, ed. Roy ARDEN and Hartwig FISCHER (Basel: Kunstmuseum Basel, 2005).

27. See, for example, Martha SANDWEISS *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), 148 and 287–88.

28. Wilson HICKS, *Words and Pictures* (note 19), 7 (emphasis added).

29. Ibid., 34. Here Hicks confines the third effect to spatial juxtapositions. In his later development of the concept, 'The Third Effect,' in *Photographic Communication: Principles, Problems and Challenges of Photojournalism*, ed. R. SMITH SCHUNEMAN, 77–78 (New York: Hastings House, 1972), Hicks emphasizes the relevance of the concept to such juxtapositions seen at different times.

30. *PM*, September 15, 1940, p. 12.

31. William J. MITCHELL advises today's audiences to carefully scrutinize digital photographs, now technologically 'unstuck' from their referent, both for their 'coherence' and their 'provenance' before accepting the legitimacy of their claims. *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-photographic Era* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 31–49.

32. Ralph STEINER, 'What Mexico is Depends on Who Sees It,' *PM* January 11, 1942, p. 44. For an overview of Steiner's criticism in *PM,* see Carol PAYNE, 'Interactions of Photography and the Mass Media, 1920–1941: The Early Career of Ralph Steiner' (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1999), 217–69.

33. Although Sally PEPPER's caption indicates that the mannequin was 'saved' from an adjacent building, WEEGEE's fellow *PM* photographer Arthur LEIPZIG confirms that the mannequin was among the props that Weegee kept in his trunk to enliven otherwise colorless subjects. Interview with the author, April 29, 2009. For a penetrating discussion of Weegee's 'human interest' photography for *PM*, see Anthony W. LEE, 'Human Interest Stories,' in *Weegee and Naked City*, ed. Anthony W. LEE and Richard MEYER, 62–108 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

34. *PM*, April 2, 1944, p. 11.

35. We might say, finally, that *PM* identified in the Eastern Front image, within its own precise historical coordinates, something akin to the heuristic potential located in the artifice of Eugène Appert's Commune photographs, which, as Jeannene Przyblyski has argued, 'are most precious not for unmasking the untruth of the composite photograph but for reminding us that all photographs demand this unmasking and that it is only by this unmasking that we might begin to apprehend not so much the 'meaning' of the photograph … but instead what orders of meaning, as photography intersects with the social formation, are at stake.' See Jeannene PRZYBLYSKI, 'Moving Pictures: Photography, Narrative, and the Paris Commune of 1871,' in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Vanessa R. SCHWARTZ and Leo CHARNEY, 274 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

ABSTRACTS

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In June 1940, the progressive New York City tabloid *PM* published an image from the Soviet/German front that had just been transmitted by radio from Moscow to New York. The wartime exigencies of communications across Europe and the primitive state of the radiophoto technology at the time of transmission combined to produce in this image a striking hybridity, manifest in its status as both photographic and, because visibly retouched, handmade. Activating the very inability to identify its medium, *PM* deployed this image as a component within its larger project of challenging the prevailing, and often dubious, journalistic discourse of photographic objectivity. In *PM*'s pages, this radiophoto was shown to function not as objective reportage, but rather as merely another gambit in the wartime photojournalistic contest of credibility.