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Fort Peck Dam & Dancing Cowgirls; photos by Margaret Bourke-White & Kurt Hutton
A Comparative Study of *Picture Post* and *Life* Magazines:


Author’s Note: Punctuations and spellings are in British style, wherever possible. Notes and Bibliography are included at close in an adapted variation on Vancouver style, outlined at: http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/LIBReferenceStyles#Style –

1-Dissertation Purpose and Methods

We now look back at the early days of reportage as the Golden Age, a time untainted by Postmodern cynicism, when photojournalism was a mass medium seen by millions in weekly magazines such as *Picture Post* and *Life.* – *British Journal of Photography*, 16 March 2005.

The above is introduction in a March 2005 *British Journal of Photography* to an obituary for Humphrey Spender – a *Picture Post* and Mass Observation photojournalist effective working in the 1930s. Two key magazines began publication in the 1930s – an era of economic hardships and socio-politico-artistic experimentation begun in the 1920s which continued right up to World War II – America’s *Life* in 1936 and Britain’s *Picture Post* in 1938. Both were groundbreaking photo-essay magazines, arguably the best weekly magazines ever produced of that type in their countries. It was a Golden Age for picture magazines. This thesis compares and contrasts the two magazines in a documented historical analysis, using words and pictures to address issues of their ownerships and startups, staffs, readerships, styles and contents, especially from 1936-57, 1957 being *Picture Post*’s final year. From 1938-57, the two magazines were published ‘simultaneously,’ weekly. In fact, *Life* continued until 1972, but this paper will not deal extensively with *Life*’s later years or its two latter-day reincarnations. It will deal somewhat with the historical backgrounds of both magazines, though, along with the main topics listed above. In the end, crucial strengths and weaknesses will be analysed, plus original insights offered, regarding each magazine’s degrees of accomplishment. (1)

2-Ownership and Startup of *Life* Magazine

In 1936 – during the Great Depression, which would spawn much other great documentary photography, including the Farm Security Administration team’s, led by Roy Stryker and including, before it was done, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Russell Lee, John Vachon, and Gordon Parks — Henry R. Luce, head of Time Inc., who had already begun the weekly news magazine *Time*, the business monthly *Fortune*, and the radio program and newsreel *The March of Time*, penned ideas for a new picture magazine:

To see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things – machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man’s work – his paintings, towers, and discoveries; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms, things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and to take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed.

Thus to see, and to be shown, is now the will and new expectancy of half mankind.

To see, and to show, is the mission now undertaken by a new kind of publication, The Show-Book of the World, hereinafter described. (Doss)

Estimated startup cost was about $3 million. Luce promised to 'edit pictures into a coherent story – to make an effective mosaic out of the fragmentary documents which pictures, past and present, are.' As for its projected legacy, he wrote, 'A hundred years from now the historian should be able to rely largely on our Picture Magazine instead of having to fumble through dozens of newspapers and magazines.' (Doss)

A number of titles for the new magazine were rejected, but Luce ended up paying $92,000 for the rights to a failed humour magazine called *Life*. Thirty-six years later, for 1,864 consecutive issues, *Lue’s Life* had crafted a 'coherent story' and a vision that entertained, informed, and influenced millions. The first cover (Margaret Bourke-White’s view of the dam under construction at Fort Peck, Montana) was dramatic, and ever after, readers looked to those covers for openings they needed to enter picture-and-word worlds,
which may have been carefully packaged for their consumption, but which had all the earmarks of news and features people wanted to take a look at, often even a second and third good look.

The initial issue of Life (23 November 1936), which cost only 10 cents a copy, also contained an editorial accompanied by a photo of a newborn child, and was an immediate hit. Since advertising rates had been set for a circulation of 250,000, and that first printing was actually 466,000 copies, the financial discrepancy nearly killed the magazine at startup. It lost $3 million its first year, but Luce was very wealthy and held on. By 1939, with weekly circulation of two million copies and ad rates raised substantially, Life had become a popular success and Luce began to see his first profits trickle in. In a US market already including National Geographic, Vanity Fair, and Mid-Week Pictorial, and a world market that soon to also include (British) Picture Post, (American) Ebony, (German) Stern, and (French) Paris Match – Life was the most influential proponent of the photo-essay form. (2)

3-Ownership and Startup of Picture Post Magazine

Also in the midst of significant economic downturn, plus the socio-politico-artistic experimentation that attended it, Britain was itself going through a difficult period in the 1930s. In addition, few Britons seemed to know what to do about Germany’s Adolf Hitler very threatening noises during the latter half of the decade. In this setting, Luce’s parallel number at Picture Post was (Sir) Edward Hulton, also head of a publishing empire, with an inheritance from his father which included the Sporting Chronicle, Daily Dispatch, Daily Sketch, Farmer’s Weekly, Nursing Mirror, and Evening Standard. Also, the younger Hulton had launched New Scientist and New Society. Hulton depended more on his first editor for the spark that started Picture Post, as opposed to more of a fusion of creativity in Luce’s case with Life’s first editor John Shaw Billings. Stefan Lorant, a Hungarian Jewish emigré, had written a million-selling book, I Was Hitler’s Prisoner, about his six months in a Nazi jail, and soon after editing Weekly Illustrated in London, as well as Lilliput, a picture magazine dedicated to artistic political juxtappositions, Lorant and Hulton began doing business together. (Sir) Tom Hopkinson had assisted Lorant earlier, and continued with him after Hulton, who wanted picture juxtappositions in his magazines, bought Lilliput from Lorant and then offered the Hungarian total editorial control of the soon-to-be Picture Post. Lorant would direct the picture side and do layouts, and Hopkinson, a noted wordsmith, would be his assistant, directing text and caption work.

In a nation with far less population than America’s, the first print-run for Picture Post – 750,000 copies – was a huge gamble, yet sold out the first day. (Lorant later wrote that Luce was awed by Picture Post’s financial success, because Life was in the red for several years, while Picture Post recouped all its investment by 1940.) Its opening cover on 1 October 1938 was a Kurt Hutton view of two dancing cowgirls in mid-air. Its title also helped, appropriate for a nation that depended on the Post then, round the country and world, as well as the photographic Picture materials that British pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot helped invent, and whose multifaceted offspring was so popular in the twentieth century. The working title had been Lo! (‘Buy Lo! See and know!’), but Lorant hadn’t liked that. Instead, he made two columns and somehow the word ‘Picture’ was drawn from one and ‘Post’ from the other.

Picture Post’s initial newsstand price was 2d (two pennies, with 240 pennies per British pound then). Two months after startup, the print-run was one million and after six months 1.6 million copies weekly and climbing. Not only was Lorant brilliant with pictures (his memory for them was perfect), but he also had a great gift for timing and a good concept of what readers wanted – straightforward, logical layouts with appealing pictures. Though there would be a consistent anti-Nazi theme running through the magazine, here was also a fair amount of other clear, informed thought, plus not-too-graphic, yet appealing sexiness and good fun. Picture Post won the hearts and minds of Britons immediately, just as Life had done with Americans. The British magazine’s overall genius – prepared for by Lilliput, Weekly Illustrated, and the Illustrated London News (the latter of which Lorant didn’t edit), not to mention Lorant’s pioneering editing from Berlin of the Münchner Illustrierte Presse in the 1920s – was ready to face Hitler in World War II with other Britons, and the future beyond.

Owner Hulton wrote in the first issue of Picture Post about its mission: ‘Man must build up from the love of self, to love of family, city, province, country. From this he must learn to understand and love all his fellow men throughout the world.’ (Kee) The Golden Rule was to apply, whenever and wherever possible, and pictures-joined-with-words were to be the medium of communicative exchange. (3)

4-Staff of Picture Post

The first thing Stefan Lorant had done at Picture Post was to hire two German Jewish photographers from his continental days – Felix Man (originally Hans Bauman) and Kurt Hutton (originally Kurt
Hubschmann). Directed by Lorant, who’d come of age when the 35mm camera (Leica’s) came into vogue, Picture Post’s photographers, like Life’s, were learning ‘that the world itself is an artist of incomparable inventiveness,’ in John Szarkowski’s phrase. In Lorant’s tiny staff, he also included Tom Hopkinson as assistant editor, and Lionel Birch, Richard Darwell, Honor Balfour, and HF Bewick, as writers. The original editorial work-staff of Picture Post was but seven people, who produced a large-format magazine of about 80 pages every week. Lorant would later say, “I was a one-man band,” and it probably seemed like that to him. Professor Michael Halliatt notes that Life had a staff of over 300 persons for relatively the same page-length and publication-frequency; but former Life staffer John Loengard says the 300 figure was accurate for the American magazine in 1959, not 1938.

While Lorant was the principal designer of the early Picture Post and Hopkinson the principal word-editor, both men worked together to make the issues sell. The rest of staff did things relatively smoothly, a big task for only a few people. Soon after World War II had begun, Lorant prepared to move to America, fearing that if the Nazis caught him again, he wouldn’t get away this time. Realising Britain needed America fighting on its side, he put out a special book-issue of the magazine devoted to that country, The United States. Picture Post Special, 1940, containing photo-essays made in America, to be seen and read by Britons and Americans.

Lorant immigrated to America in mid-1940, and his successor, Tom Hopkinson, began bringing in new talent. He states in Of This Our Time, his memoir about the period from his birth in 1905 until his ouster from the magazine in 1950 over an editorial dispute (involving Korean War atrocities coverage) with Edward Hulton. Taking over, Hopkinson was cautious at first, asking Max Raison, Hulton’s general manager, for a trial period, during which his name was not to be printed on the title page. Then,

With difficulty I managed to persuade my old friend Charles Fenby to leave the Oxford Mail, of which he was now editor, and take my place as assistant editor in charge of the writing side.

...Honor Balfour, who later stood for Parliament as a Liberal, had been recruited already.

Macdonald Hastings — full of knowledge on everything connected with country life and sport — had written several articles for us and now joined the staff. Before long we added Maurice Edelman, a young writer who would become a Labour MP in the 1945 election, and AL Lloyd, the expert on folk music, whom the BBC regarded as too left-wing to be allowed to handle programmes during a war for democracy. Our first woman editor was Anne Scott-James, who came to us from Vogue and would later become equally renowned for her work in newspapers, magazines and television.

In addition, to my great excitement, we found a remarkable new photographer. Bert Hardy was a young Cockney, the eldest of seven children, who had left school at fourteen. He left on a Friday afternoon and started work on Saturday morning in a printing and developing works at ten shillings a week with sixpence an hour overtime...

When Bert Hardy came in to see me he was in his twenties and already an experienced cameraman. (Hopkinson, Of This Our Time)

Eventually, other staffers were also added — excellent young writers like Robert Kee, Ken Allsop, Jenny Nicholson, Brian Dowling, Trevor Philpot and Gordon Watkins, to be joined by Robert Muller, Cynthia Judah and Gavin Lyall. Hilde Marchant contributed, too. Also recruited were James Cameron, Fyfe Robertson, Denzil Bachelor, and Sylvain Mangeot. By the 1950s, nearly all the photographers who had given the magazine its great name continued to work for it, writes Robert Kee — Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, Haywood Magee, who had come with Hopkinson from Illustrated at the start, Grace Robertson (daughter of Fyfe), Charles ‘Slim’ Hewitt, Godfrey Thurston Hopkins, Carl Sutton, and younger photographers John Chillingworth and Frank Pocklington. Leonard McCombe, a British photographer who would do some wonderful work for the magazine during World War II, would go on to America, where he was hired by Life. Humphrey Spencer, the poet Stephen Spender’s brother and a talented contributor in Picture Post’s early years, gave up professional photography during the war and generally thereafter. The high quality of the magazine’s layout after Lorant’s departure had been maintained under art directors Edgar Ainsworth, Harry Deverson, Michael Middleton and Henry Fuller, and as Kee says, ‘also long seemed to survive the departure of Hopkinson.’ (Kee suggests the magazine’s quality slipped only subtly in the early 1950s.)

However, during its best days, for at least a decade and a half, great materials were also obtained from some of the most famous freelances of the day — writers like J.B. Priestley, AL Rowe, Philip Hope-Wallace, George Bernard Shaw, Evelyn Waugh, Julian Huxley, Stephen Leacock, HG Wells, and historic Jane Austen, plus Americans William Saroyan and Dorothy Parker, and photographers like Robert Capa and George Rodger, two of Magnum Picture Agency’s founders, plus the inimitable Bill Brandt. Both born
in Hungary and Jewish, Lorant and Capa got along well. On 3 December 1938, Lorant published Capa's photo-essay on the Spanish Civil War Battle of the Ebro, 'This Is War!' — wherein Picture Post called Capa, 'The World's Greatest War Photographer.' During his war-abbreviated lifetime, Capa did little to dispel that notion from people's minds. Picture Post's reputation was made globally with that early photo-essay, if it hadn't been made already with tremendous circulation figures at startup.

Staff pay was low. Bert Hardy thought it a boon to make five pounds a week early on. As an agency photographer before Hopkinson hired him, Hardy had many pictures published in the magazine from fourth issue on, but didn't see big money until after he'd earned the magazine's first photographer credit with his 1 February 1941 'Fire-Fighters!' photo-essay -- proving not only the fire-fighters' courage, resourcefulness, and luck, but Hardy's, too -- or even more, until he returned from his service as an Army photographer in 1946. He still was able to get pictures to the magazine during the war, and did some of the best coverages any British photographer did then. Lorant hadn't given Hutton and Man name-credits in Britain; though they'd changed their surnames, Lorant feared repercussions against their relatives in Germany if credited publicly.(4)

5-Staff of Life

When Henry Luce prepared to begin his best-ever picture magazine, Life, he hired former Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung editor Kurt Korff as special consultant to work with first editor John Shaw Billings and design-related staff, guiding toward a 'straight' photography style both 'compelling and controlling' (Doss). Korff had been a rival of Lorant's in Germany. Picture Post's creator told your author that he too had been consulted by Luce about related matters then. In any case, Korff recommended three of the first four photographers Life would hire: the German legend Alfred Eisenstaedt, and Americans Margaret Bourke-White and Peter Stackpole; Thomas D McAvoy was the fourth. From 1936-72, Life's staff also included other great photographic names, including W Eugene Smith, John Loengard, Carl Mydans, David Douglas Duncan, Andreas Feininger, and Gordon Parks (who also wrote essays accompanying his pictures). Freelance/agency photo-contributors included Bob Capa, George Rodger, Henri Cartier-Bresson -- all three of Magnum -- Harry Benson, Gjon Mili, Lennart Nilsson, Burk Uzzle, Lisa Larsen, Nina Leen, and many others published in American magazines then. Although he was never officially on-staff, portrait photographer Philippe Halsman did 101 covers for the magazine.

John Loengard told your author that, of the 90 staff photographers for Life over time, WE Smith was the best, for he was 'the most technically competent'; he not only photographed more compellingly than any other Life photographer, but 'If he wanted to find a picture, he would find a way to take the picture, and you never knew how he did it.' Loengard delineated the difference between Smith and Cartier-Bresson:

If you sent Cartier-Bresson out to Coney Island, he'd come back with dozens of wonderful pictures. What was new at Coney Island was the parachute jump, and Cartier-Bresson would have been lucky to come back with one good picture of that. But if you asked Gene Smith to do the parachute jump, he'd have a dozen wonderful pictures showing the jumpers, what it was like to make the jump, etc. (Phone Interview)

Former Picture Post staffer, then Life staffer, Leonard McCombe was included in the same class as Smith, Capa, Cartier-Bresson, and Robert Frank, in the 1950s and '60s; but Loengard adds, 'Leonard's peculiar because... his photos don't reproduce well out of their original settings, and that's why he's virtually unremembered today.' (Phone Interview)

What else made Smith the best Life photographer, in many people's opinion? Loengard says, 'He did extraordinary work at Life because extraordinary people helped him.' The man who himself photographed Shakers and others brilliantly and became Life's picture editor from 1978 through 1987, points out, 'Smith' wasn't great at layout or writing, but he knew pictures. (Phone Interview) Yet, Kenneth Kobre interviewed Smith for Photojournalism: The Professionals' Approach, and Smith said, 'Laying out pictures is like writing music,' and he did that well-enough, too. The music analogy ties in with Stefan Lorant's comment later in this paper. Loengard notes that when Smith disagreed for the final time (of many) with how his pictures were used by Life, '1c left of his own choosing.' Loengard says Smith was consumed by 'his own demons.' (Phone Interview)

Alfred Eisenstaedt, the German Jewish émigré who once had the most Life covers, probably worked with Lorant in Germany. Loengard says: 'Eisie and Lorant saw each other again in my office, and they greeted each other like old schoolmates, like colleagues who hadn't seen each other in 50 years.' (Phone Interview) It was well-known in the early 1950s that 'Eisie' was Life's best-paid photographer, at $30,000 a year, hundreds of thousands dollars in today's terms; if he were working today, he might make millions.
Occasional writers included many who’d already made names for themselves, including: Ernest Hemingway, Erskine Caldwell, Archibald MacLeish, and Henry Luce’s trend-setting wife, the talented and beautiful Clare Boothe Luce. Mrs Luce was a Life correspondent. The magazine usually, though, employed reporters to do field-research, and a staff of writers in New York to write up reporter-notes, do further research, and revise and fit final copy. Loengard says the latter group’s work was ‘an art form, like writing haikus’ (Phone Interview). The writers consistently employed text-blocks of ten lines, he says, and captions in three equal-length lines. All pictures had captions.

The layout and other editorial staff had also been brought up well in the Time Inc. system. Daniel Longwell, a gifted staffer had begun his career as a book publishing salesman fascinated with European picture magazines; he had a hand in early design consultation about Life, and would become its picture editor. Finding qualified personnel never seemed to be a big problem there. Talented people have always wanted to work for Life. (5)

6-Readership of Life

In ‘Who Read Life?’, in Looking at Life Magazine, James L. Baughman states that Life had very high circulation from 1936 through the 1950s, and one of the highest pass-along rates of any US magazine. However, Baughman adds that the people most influenced by the magazine were middle and upper class. To say that it was the American mass medium that most influenced opinion-leaders, though, is to partway miss the point. Yes, Life had found its niche, but American opinion-leaders read the ever-influential Time, too, and just as importantly, many newspapers; ‘more parochial citizenry’ were also satisfied by Life.

It’s well-known among older Britons that Picture Post was said to have faded due, in large part, to the onslaught of television; but Baughman says Life didn’t suffer at first from television:

Although it is tempting to assume that television’s arrival adversely affected periodical readership, the immediate, short-terms effects should not be overstated. TV-set ownership did not initially hurt most mass-circulation (American) magazines… One of Life’s older rivals, Collier’s, ceased publication in 1957 [like Picture Post], yet between 1946 and 1954 the total circulation of ‘the Big Four’ mass magazines, which included Collier’s, Life, Look, and Saturday Evening Post, had risen 33 percent. (Baughman, Doss)

Mass consumption of commercial television in America began around 1950 and was well-established by 1954, unlike in Britain, which had depended solely on BBC-TV until 1955, when commercial television was finally introduced there.

Men who’d gone off to war in the early 1940s found dreams they could identify with if not always realize in Life – like cars, homes, liquor, cigarettes, women of many types, and movies. And some men even thought more strongly about other men via Life. As John Ilson writes in ‘Masculinity Under Fire,’ some American men indulged a Walter-Mitty-like fantasy of escape from domestic convention during World War II. He quotes from Douglas Allanbrook’s memoir, regarding a war-time leave in a Tuscan spa: ‘Sporting in the warm waters were naked soldiers… both black and white. There were no officers present; they were segregated in their own establishment… Fifty years later the army is worried once again, concerned about men naked together in barracks, showers, and baths.’ (Ilson, Doss) Difficult stereotypes to live out left some, maybe more, men out of the mix of ‘parochial good sense’ that characterized Life.

As for women and minorities, they didn’t always come in for universal good treatment early in Life. Rickie Solinger notes in ‘The Smutty Side of Life’:

Robert Coughlan, writing for Life in 1956, described the pervasive fallacy behind the growing postwar tragedy of gender relations. The idea that women were as good as men became transposed, he wrote, into the idea that women are really ‘the same as men, saving only for a few anatomical details.’ This was a claim supporting the unfortunate view that ‘what is good for one sex is equally good for the other.’ (Solinger, Doss)

Life’s stereotyping included ‘babes’ and ‘broadss’. Females found much to read there, but little to emulate, if they dreamed of careers outside home. Hollywood starlets and campus etiquette proposals were routine picture essay subjects meant to appeal to young women.

Blacks and other minorities fell under cruder gaze from Life, especially early when Stepmant-Fetchit captions and other negative stereotypes emerged. With WE Smith’s later, sensitive portraits of blacks, Life took a step up, but African-American photographer-writer Gordon Parks took the latter’s measure even more fully, representing blacks and other minorities, consistently, as they saw themselves. (6)
7-Readership of Picture Post

A strongly communal sentiment toward the relationship between women and men characterized Picture Post. It displayed two dancing cowgirls on its first and final front covers, vis-à-vis Life’s first cover view, of Fort Peck Dam. As Juliet Gardiner writes in her Introduction for Picture Post Women, the first and final covers were appropriate, ‘for in the nineteen years of its existence Picture Post held up a mirror to British society and, in the reflections in its pages, it was often women who held centre-stage.’ What Tennyson wrote in the 19th century applied to Picture Post: ‘The woman’s cause is man’s; / They rise or sink together.’ (Gardiner) Women who courageously manned home-front factories during World War II, after the war helped fashion new arrangements and worked with their returning men. They read about and saw themselves often, and felt at home with the magazine. Men serving found Picture Post worthy reading, though censorship during World War II prevented some of the harshest criticisms of their government by the magazine to be seen by troops. (Many American men and women during the war were also often depicted as courageous in Life.)

Gardiner states Picture Post did an excellent job of not only campaigning for women in their ‘separate sphere,’ it also celebrated them, ‘recognizing the diversity and richness of women’s achievements and, in portraying their daily lives, it legitimized their right to recognition.’ From fishwives and showgirls to more intellectual women, Picture Post not only photographed and wrote about all women, it also employed some of them, who often were or became famous in Britain. Honor Balfour, Hilde Marchant, Venetia Murray, and Katharine Whitehorn became famous there, while others already famous wrote occasionally for Picture Post – including Rebecca West, Vita Sackville-West, and Antonia White. Women photographers like Merlyn Severn, Gerti Deutsch, Grace Robertson, and Edith Tudor Craig, garnered attention, too, much like Bert Hardy, Kurt Hutton, Felix Man, Thurston Hopkins, and John Chillingworth did among male staffers.

In a mid-1950s attempt to boost readership, the magazine included a series of 3-D spreads. To aid readers in bringing those pictures into focus, a pair of cardboard and celluloid glasses was stapled to the centre spread. If the reader peeled through, the two disparate images merged – momentarily – making a perfect whole. ‘In this fractured and out-of-focus image, Picture Post provided a metaphor for understanding women’s place and women’s wants at particular moments in the twentieth century – though the magazine ceased publication a few years before the decade in which women’s demands for liberation began to be widely articulated.’ (Gardiner) Blacks and other minorities also found news and pictures they identified with in Picture Post. From poor tenement blacks to African independence delegates as subjects, the magazine helped readers understand others. Letters often poured in by hagsful, and readers could expect to see their interests addressed.

Things changed, and by 1 October 1956, six years after Tom Hopkinson’s firing and the revolving door of subsequent editors had begun, and eight months before ‘their’ magazine would close, Picture Post’s management boasted in a by-then, largely groundless way: ‘Forgive us for boasting but the magazine you are now reading is the most up-to-date picture paper in this country. Forgive the further boast – we think it good….‘ (Kee) Whether the magazine’s imminent demise was also good didn’t seem to concern management then, but would. Where the magazine’s artists (its photographers, writers, editors, and designers) often could ‘hide their hand,’ in John Szarkowski’s phrase, its management couldn’t. The readers and staff had made Picture Post great in its heyday; management couldn’t win readers back when it did not have confidence in its own practices, which showed more as time passed (7).

8-Style and Content of Picture Post

Stefan Lorant realised early on, as he’d write, “to recognize photography as a journalistic weapon in its own right, so that if... you are determined to promote causes and affect conditions, photographs can be a potent means for doing so.” (Kee) For many years, Picture Post could be counted on to help lead many political and social welfare campaigns, from rationing during the war to national health care afterward.

Lorant, an avowed anti-Nazi, also knew how to entertain people and make them laugh. A photo-essay as basic as Tim Gidal’s ‘Billingsgate’ suggests how a term referring to the salty language of seamen derives from a centuries-old London fish market, which today is closed but was open in 1939 when Gidal photographed it for Lorant. In Lorant’s Picture Post generally, one finds that sports and entertainment for readers’ interest, as much as Parliament; many of the photo-essays could even have been photographed and written after the war, with a little adjustment for context, and would have been just as appealing and useful as many published in Picture Post from 1938-40.

The British sense of whimsey and satire found a willing collaborator in Lorant’s sprightly picture juxtapositions and clever thematic comparisons/contrasts. His ‘Back to the Middle Ages,’ where he...
contrasted Nazi leaders with Jewish intellectuals and artists, was a classic of stylish resentment and potent criticism, and yet Lorant’s, and the magazine’s, heart was as passionate as a worldly saint’s. Seeing the portraits of Hermann Goering, Julius Streicher, Adolf Hitler, and Paul Goebbels above photos of the damage done on ‘Kristallnacht,’ and opposite two rows of portraits of Jewish geniuses, including Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Luise Rainer, and Elisabeth Bergner, set the horrors of Nazi menace in honest, intellectual perspective. The words below the portraits tell the rest of the story in objective-enough style; the message is: Nazism will not survive; the legacies of leading lights like those Jewish stars pictured, will.

But even the suggested horrors of war to come couldn’t suppress the life’s comedy, at times, which still could be broadly expressed, or intimately. John Heartfield’s ‘The Happy Elephants’ -- a famous photographic cartoon used by the magazine in 1938 to puncture optimism over Neville Chamberlain’s Munich Agreement with Hitler -- was a masterpiece. The happy elephants had wings, and were flying. Elephants would be figures of fun, of various types, throughout Picture Post’s life. (It’s no coincidence the magazine’s most famous photographer, Bert Hardy, was born and raised in London’s neo-Dickensian Elephant and Castle district, which he photographed well for an 8 January 1949 picture-story, ‘Life in the Elephant,’ written by AL. ‘Bert’ Lloyd.)

What the British-German dichotomy would mean to Britons wouldn’t become fully clear until Britain waged war against Germany in 1939. After America entered and Allied troops went in at Normandy, the value of fighting even harder for freedom was essential. Picture Post’s 9 September 1944 photo-essay ‘The Road to Victory,’ photographed by Leonard McCombe and written by Macdonald Hastings, resonates with the horrors of war and also the drama of potential victory. Hastings continually states that the terrible nature of war is nothing to glorify, but that it was still good to see British troops moving forward. The layout is basic, yet compelling. The first photo sums up what’s to come. A British trooper, riding some sort of vehicle in smoky dust, looks to be giving the order to advance, with old branches, German helmet, and cross-marker in the foreground. The caption reads: ‘On to the Kill: The British Second Army Starts the Pursuit. After ten grim weeks of fighting in Normandy, the German Seventh Army collapses. Along roads littered with German dead, in a choking cloud of dust, the British columns ride forward to victory.’ On a subsequent page, an RC padre carries out last rites for a dying trooper, a real sacrifice to achieve victory.

Bert Hardy’s widow, Sheila, a former picture researcher for the magazine, says, on Picture Post, ‘The photographers and the journalists went out in the field together and worked very closely together.’ Tom Hopkinson long said his magazine was picture-led, with photographers as thoroughbreds, and that without pictures there wouldn’t be much use to writing in a magazine called Picture Post. John Loengard suggests that Life was different from Picture Post here – Life’s picture-packages used to be laid out in Chicago, then sent back to New York where copy was written in strict ways by specialists. But Mrs Hardy says it worked somewhat similarly on Picture Post, though there was more creative consistency, with accompanying journalists writing texts and captions. There were also photo-essays with images from agencies, and copy written later, but Picture Post’s staff prided itself on being able to work together, in field and office.

Gary MacDonald summarizes the Loengard-assessed difference: ‘You could say that in the Picture Post, they used the photographs to illustrate the stories, and in Life Magazine, they used the words to round out the pictures.’ He says Loengard means that Life was a picture magazine while Picture Post was an illustrated magazine. This distinction may be only partly valid, for pictures in Picture Post were not mere illustrations but could tell the story themselves, if necessary. Look at Bert Hardy’s favourite image, two street urchins in impoverished Glasgow Gorbals off on a lark, or David Steen’s rollicking young dancers -- these photos tell true stories in their decisive moments (Kee).

The close proximity of photographers and journalists in many Picture Post reports, partly due to the smaller physical size of its headquarters-country, led to unity of thought and feeling more immediate in its effects than with Life. During the war, this creative immediacy, and intimacy, was heightened by the physical proximity of Britain to the war. Life’s creative staff was a bit more detached during World War II, because Americans on the home-front were physically farther from combat, if not always emotionally so.

Picture Post’s style, exemplified by Lorant’s early, logical, straightforward layouts, followed in decent shape until the mid-1950s. One scholar suggests why staffer photographs were so useful in those layouts:

The decisive impact of a Picture Post page lies in its ability to look hard and record. But there are many varieties of photographic rapportage: something more needs to be added. This extra dimension is the disinterested, non-aesthetic urgency to get what is photographed straight on to a page: there is a sort of passion behind the objectivity of the camera eye here, a passion to present….. The camera only requires that they [people] be themselves caught up in whatever it is they are doing. (Hall)
The magazine's layouts were influenced by Hopkinson's socialist pragmatism, too, after Lorant left, and not as much by the political flip-flops of Edward Hulton. Like Hopkinson, Lorant had a fondness for workers' issues. Lorant's tenets were printed in the 1938 Modern Photography annual:

'The photograph should not be posed, rather the camera should be as the notebook of a trained reporter, recording contemporary events as they happen, without trying to stop them to make a picture; people should be photographed as they really are and not as they would like to appear; photo reportage should concern itself with men and women of every kind and not simply with a small social clique, everyday life should be portrayed in a realistic, unselfconscious way.' (Hallett)

Keith Waterhouse is quoted relevantly on mid-twentieth century England and Picture Post:

'What Picture Post did (brilliantly) was to explore the fascinating range of small social foothills - commercial travellers’ dinner dances, anglers’ outings, amateur dramatic nights, street parties, mystery coach tours, mock parliaments, flower shows, market days, jumble sales, pigeon races, whippet races, brass band contests, darts matches, tennis matches and all the rest of it - that more than the Pennine chain itself, form the backbone of England.' (Hallett)

Shop girls after the war, fairs, the disabled, geniuses, and, basically, the rangy world of children and adults, often found play in the magazine's photo-essays, and were read with interest, as were stories about the poor and troubled.

But the real power of Picture Post was displayed during World War II, when the persistence and pluck of the British on the home-front rose up as Churchill had predicted, to attract the Americans in and defeat the Axis. Churchill's government was not without error, though, and the magazine criticized key aspects of the war-effort, like tremendous secrecy by government. One story was published showing a sign warning people to stay out, plus blacked-out rectangles where pictures ordinarily would have been published.

Picture Post had ideological tensions. It pitted left versus right, especially by 1950, when Tom Hopkinson went to bat for Bert Hardy and James Cameron. Their courageous coverage of the Battle of Inchon, the Korean War's turning point, was matched by their coverage of UN atrocities in Pusan, days before. Hardy and Cameron had come upon a dreadful scene in Pusan's town square. A large group of males, very young to very old, were roped together and forced to squat in puddles of rain, wearing nearly nothing. The British pair took some notes and pictures then went to Red Cross and UN Headquarters to correct this abuse of 'political prisoners.' Neither organization said they could help, though the British correspondents said the prisoners were being trucked off to be shot without trial. The photo-essay was brilliant; it might also have proved deadly to the UN cause, at least in Britain. In October 1950, Edward Hulton stopped the presses on that coverage and sacked Hopkinson for the editor's temerity in trying to publish the photo-essay despite owner-objections. Hulton felt the searing nature of the atrocities report would have given 'aid and comfort to the enemy.' What became of those prisoners seems unknown.

'Inchon,' published in Picture Post on 7 October 1950, is war reportage at its best. The first UN-fought war, Korea's began on 25 June 1950 when North Korean troops and armor invaded South Korea. After three months' fighting and UN troops' only retaining the southeastern port of Pusan, UN Commanding General Douglas MacArthur, against Joint Chiefs' wishes, ordered a surprise land-air-sea assault on the western port of Seoul, Inchon.

A little before dusk on the evening of September 14 [the main battle was fought on 15], the most formidable Allied landing force ever assembled since the invasion of Normandy, fought its way ashore at Inchon. Inchon was the port of Seoul, and Seoul was not only the South Korean capital, but the key communications centre for all North Korean armies attacking in the south. The United States 1st Marine Division were the first to go in at Inchon. With them went James Cameron and Bert Hardy, the only British journalist-cameraman team to get themselves on to the scene at this tremendous climax of the war. (Introduction, Picture Post, 7 October 1950)

Hardy's photos are on the first five pages show the UN armada and troops landing. Nowhere else in the early post-1945 world had a mainstream weekly picture magazine shown an invasion so dramatically. On the sixth through the ninth (closing) pages, the dirty business of taking the town is shown. The citizenry have to prove their identity; suspects are grilled; shops busted into; buildings burned; the wounded tended to; more suspects stripped; and young and old 'innocents' shown as victims. Cameron concludes:

'Why the North Koreans did not resist more forcefully I do not know, unless the obvious reason be true: they had too few troops there and could not disengage forces quickly enough from the
south... They lost their beachhead, they lost their town, they lost their lives, in numbers, and with them the lives of many simple people who shared the common misfortune of many before them, who had the ill-luck to live in places which people in War Rooms decided to smash. It seems clear they could have hurt us more than they did, but the [UN] hammer was too hard.

But there it is. Sitting here, one is glad to be alive — a bit ashamed, maybe, but glad. (Picture Post, 7 October 1950)

Long a pacifist, Cameron covered many wars, wanting to be where the action was. After he’d lost his first wife to childbirth, he’d been exempted during World War II for heart disease, and had to work for a newspaper in the close confines of London then. He was ready ever-after to go tough places, though never relishing the dangers either.

Tom Hopkinson later wrote:

As I turned over Hardy’s prints when they first came out of the darkroom, I knew that I had never had a better story picture in my hands, and decided that no one but myself should select the photographs to be used and lay them out. I made nine pages of them, doing the work quite rapidly though I had been prepared to spend all day on it, and feeling as I did so that they would surely win the most important honour then open to a magazine cameraman — the [Missouri-]Encyclopaedia Britannica Award for the finest picture series of the year; which indeed a month or so later they did. Looking at the photographs and reading Cameron’s article, I also acquired at least some idea of what they had been through as a result of knocking on my office door a few weeks earlier [volunteering to cover Korea after Picture Post journalist Stefan Schimanski died in an air explosion covering that war], and felt profoundly grateful to them. (Hopkinson, Of This Our Time)

That editor’s layout was creative enough, following Lorant’s formula. There was a two-page panoramic view of the assault by sea, atop the second-and-third-page spread. One of Hardy’s photos even graced Life’s story of 5 March 1951 about the Missouri-Encyclopaedia Britannica winners. That photo went on to be used in the book Life, the Second Decade, 1946-1955 — filling two pages. War is hell, and the layout of ‘Inchon’ grabbed readers’ attention instantly, showing how terrifying US President Truman’s ‘police action’ was. Among 17 UN nations fighting there, US dead numbered 35,000, while British dead 1,000.

If World War II had been a glorious victory for Britain and its allies, Korea seemed an ‘inglorious,’ bloody stalemate; it would take several decades before it would become clear that South Korea had won the peace-by-ceasefire. Its people and economy now have a respected seat among leading nations, while North Korea still resembles its ‘former’ hermit-like, dangerous self.

Picture Post, like Life, went where the action was in wartime. Bob Capa took the best action shots at Normandy on D-Day for Life, and Bert Hardy did the same at Inchon. The two men shared many things in common, including brilliant World War II coverages. Capa would be killed by a landmine in the French-Indochinese War, while Hardy would retire to his farmstead in Surrey, also operating advertising photography and photo-printing businesses after Picture Post closed. (8)

9-Style and Content of Life

Life Executive Editor Wilson Hicks wrote in Words and Pictures, “In journalistic print, the firsthand account which comes closest to reproducing the actuality of an event is the picture story: good headlines plus good photographs plus good captions.” Text may have been left out, because text, though not a poor stepchild of photos at Life, was still a stepchild of lesser importance. Life was not even going to add text-blocks to its picture packages originally. John Loengard says, sometime in 1938 a long text-piece was consistently added to pictures, captions, and headlines.

In ‘Hitler Listen to Reason’ in the 10 October 1938 issue of Life (whose cover displays two drum majorettes, reminiscent of the two cowgirls on Picture Post’s first cover 10 days before), about the infamous Munich Conference, the first image shows Hitler, peacefully seated, seen from behind, hand over ear to back of head, in an audience-empty concert hall; one wonders what Neville Chamberlain has been up to. We see the good Chamberlain, next spread, left, as he boards a plane for his conference with Hitler, looking dashing, even semi-courageous. Unfortunately, page right of same spread shows protesters in two or three images plus two views of the conference; things don’t look good for the then-British Prime Minister. The headline says: ‘Chamberlain Gets Cheered & Jeered for Buying Peace at Czechs’ Expense.’

Next, the opening photo in Life’s 1944 photo-essay ‘Invasion,’ about D-Day, shows the map room of Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, SHAEF, with commanders seated round, and Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower at head of table. The men seem posed, but not looking
into the camera. Below, in very large type, is the word ‘Invasion,’ followed by the subtitle: ‘Allies Set Out on Their Long Hardy Road.’ Life’s historic account begins:

The first boats scraped on the French beaches east of Cherbourg at 6 a.m. Tuesday, June 6, just four years plus two days after last boats had pushed off the beach of Dunkirk. A lively wind had kicked up the Channel during the night but a daybreak shower calmed it, as the huge armada of 4,000 ships and thousands of smaller craft loomed out of the dawn. The great attack, advancing behind mine sweepers and smokescreens laid by planes, miraculously and mercifully won surprise. (Life, 12 June 1944)

The following pages show the troops and equipment that would win the day, and then a text-only page titled, ‘The Enemy.’ The famous subtitle is: ‘You are about to embark upon a great crusade’—Eisenhower to the Allied Forces, June 6. The general’s words end with this injunction: ‘There will be neither peace, nor freedom, nor good feeling in the world until these people are at our mercy. There can be no room for mercy until then.’ (Life, 12 June 1944)

The Allied war effort demanded great sacrifices—from the troops, but also from people on the home-front, via rationing, hard work, and at least temporary loss of loved ones. Earlier, in ‘Women at War: Edna Reindel Paints Them at Work in U.S. Shipyard and Plane Plant,’ Life brings the the sacrifices of people on the home-front into full play. Life had commissioned Ms. Reindel to paint the workers in the Lockheed Aircraft plant near Los Angeles in 1943. The painter had done some work there in 1941, when the plant was manned by men, in 1943 it was manned mainly by women. She then went to the California Shipbuilding yards, and there found gangs of women getting Liberty ships underway. She made her notes, then retired to her studio, where she spent the next six months painting. The first page of the 5 June 1944 Life layout shows Ms Reindel at work in four photographs, followed by her paintings, in full colour. Reproduced paintings show women drilling, inputting electrical wiring, and welding, among many activities. These painted images give distance, yet heroic stature, to the women-workers and the Allied effort. It’s clear this war is a communal activity, requiring maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

‘Letters to the Editors’ at Life could also be compelling, for instance, attacking or promoting moral values. After a negative note by a Mr Jones on black ensigns in the Navy, WW Ritter Jr, USNR, writes:

Shame on Mr. Jones (Letters to the Editors, May 15) for his thoughtless in condemning Negro ensigns. His ideas are of the kind which start race riots and prevent closer collaboration between the races. (Life, 5 June 1944)

I am a Southerner, but more than that, I am an American—and white.

The letter below it is even more pro-equal-opportunity, signed by eight retired Navy men from Princeton, NJ. It concludes, ‘If any man, regardless of his race, color or creed, can hasten our victory by his efforts he should be given that opportunity.’ (Life, 5 June 1944)

Post-war comes a Life photo-essay of 23 January 1950, ‘A Sunday in Missouri,’ with subtitle, ‘The people of an earnest town use the day to serve God.’ On first page are two photos: at top is a horizontal view of downtown Mexico, Missouri, on a Sunday morning, street empty and dog asleep. Used smaller at bottom right is a photo of a preacher and church members with the caption, ‘A Sunday Goodbye is given to one of his young parishioners by the Rev. P.B. Carlisle after the morning services at the First Christian Church of Mexico.’ At left is the text-block/extended-caption, beginning:

This is the corner of South Jefferson and Liberty in Mexico, Mo. On the afternoon of Sunday, Jan. 8 it is normally crowded with traffic—Mexico (pop. 11,000) is a bustling firebrick and agricultural center which claims to be the capital of “Little Dixie,” a part of Missouri largely populated by descendants of the Kentuckians and Virginians who settled the section. To bring together at one time the independent and often simultaneous happenings of a single Sunday, LIFE sent a team of 10 photographers and nine reporters to Mexico. On the following eight pages is their record of its songs, sermons, people and all of its churches. (Life, 23 January 1950)

What follows are four two-page spreads with subtitles: ‘A Devout Farmer and His Family,’ ‘The 19 Churches Large and Small,’ ‘Songs and the Word,’ ‘And the Children Too,’ followed by a full-page, single-photo-closer plus caption, ‘On Sunday afternoon a proud trainer puts his horses through their paces.’ There are 41 photos in this photo-essay in straightforward-enough, logical layout. A story is told, about how a small town worships God. The sermons are not topical; the Soviet Union is not mentioned; and the congregations’ spiritual needs are ministered to. But there is time before and after services for socializing, for having a bit of fun. Some people go rabbit hunting; others sit in the café or go bowling; mothers cook meals and clean; and children are children, as they often are, though these latter activities are suggested in
the text, not pictures. The style and content is down-home, yet intelligent. On many of the pages, rows of pictures, vertical or horizontal, suggest a town thought-out fairly well, in uncomplicated, yet literate ways—suggesting moral rectitude, too. The bottom picture on the lead-page, showing the good reverend reaching down to shake a little girl’s hand as her little brother and other family lock on, is reminiscent of a Norman Rockwell painting. (His paintings were used from time to time as ads, etc., by Life, but not as often as the Saturday Evening Post used his work.)

Small-town America, to Life’s editors and staff, was a place values could most easily be inculcated, from which America took root and thrived. In the lead-photo, a BF Goodrich tire store sits idle, probably the only day of the week it does; a church bell-tower rises up a little farther down. The dog asleep looks as content as can be. Missouri was and is ‘Middle America’ to Life. It represents the heart of the American Dream, and is the middle of the Heartland geographically.

The son of a missionary, Henry Luce had been born in China, and Life covered the world beyond America. In the photo-essay immediately following ‘A Sunday in Missouri,’ Life continued its interest in the oldest Asian country. ‘The Conqueror from the Caves’ is the story of China’s revolution, with emphasis on new ruler Mao Tse-Tung. It was the year right after Mao had taken over. The caption under his portrait reads: ‘Red China’s Mao Tse-Tung looks benign as a Buddhist monk in picture taken at Chungking late in 1945 during “peace talks.” He wears the high-collared Chinese suit popularized by Sun Yat-sen, father of Nationalist China. Pith helmet also was bought especially for his trip to Chungking. Since 1945 Mao has avoided U.S. photographers.’ Luce abhorred communism; but that publisher was realist-enough to know Mao ruled China then and might for decades. In any case, Mao’s final quotation echoes opposing views, ‘A revolution is no invitation to a banquet.’ (Life, 23 January 1950)

The atomic age, Cold War, racial dilemmas, the plight of the poor, addictions, women’s issues, and scientific breakthroughs, were covered extensively by the magazine after 1945, as were stars like Marilyn Monroe and other entertainers, artists, and athletes. In the context of its values system, to make America not only better but the world’s leader, Life took chances; from nude art models to drug-users and dealers, it set the American standard in styles and contents for weekly picture magazines. And going back and forth between the controlled format and style of many layouts to the more impulsive layouts of other essays suggests that Life resembled real life. Real life can’t be controlled always, but if one is disciplined, lucky, and blessed, one may be able to decently control one’s responses to what real life throws at them. Life was disciplined, lucky, and blessed enough to outlast most other picture magazines of its type.(9)

10-Comparative Strengths and Weaknesses of Picture Post and Life Magazines

Comparing the ownership and startups of Picture Post and Life Magazines, it’s clear Sir Edward Hulton and Henry R. Luce were different talents, though both capable. Luce was more owner-writer-editor than Hulton, the latter being more content to make money, write occasionally and affect editing when crises seemed imminent. However, both men took political positions and in the latter case, Hulton sacked Sir Tom Hopkinson for his editor’s leftist stances and insubordination in the Pusan atrocities coverage; Hopkinson had pressed to print the Hardy-Cameron photo-essay, even after Hulton had stopped the presses. The owner was not as much brilliant creator of his magazine as Stefan Lorant was. Lorant had genius, and with Hulton’s capital, provided political juxtapositions and much more.

Luce was dominant capital-wise and editorial-wise. He and his managing editors hired personnel who could work with their team; the team took pride in membership. Hulton hired people he thought could work for him, and found satisfaction often. However, from the start he allowed more editorial and artistic independence by Picture Post’s staff than Luce did his; the former staff was faithful enough to their first two editors and some later ones, but not always to Hulton. Picture Post did not consistently have a difficult photographer like WE Smith, and when it had difficult journalists, like strong socialists James Cameron and AL Lloyd, it worked them properly or were rid of them. Picture Post’s staff comprised many pragmatic artistic temperaments, generally communally-oriented like Life’s.

Both magazines had extraordinary talent, though Picture Post liked to employ not only stellar photographers but also writers who came in with or earned fame for themselves and their magazine. Its writers created fascinating copy to accompany great pictures. The specialist writers of Life could do things well, as a good artisan does; but Picture Post’s writers could do them artistically, entertainingly, and educationally, causing readers to not only look back to the pictures, but think about their meanings, the words that accompanied them, and the staff’s role in the world. A reasonable amount of this also occurred with Life readers. Life’s words accompanied pictures to round them out, but words there were highly scripted and not often as beautiful, humourous, or poetic as some of the magazine’s pictures. Important
information was included, but the writing style was drier than Picture Post's, whose writers used a whimsical and/or satirical style as often as Life's sometimes broader humour, as in the latter's Miscellany Page, for many years every issue's final page.

Picture Post's circulation started out stronger and Life soon excelled, numbers-wise. Picture Post profited Hulton better than Life did Luce. The former had fewer expenses due to smaller staff, etc; the latter sometimes sent more than a dozen photographers and writers to cover key features; Picture Post did that only for very rare special issues. During World War II, Picture Post's staff covered the war more readily, because Britain was part of Europe, while Life's staff had to travel great distances, at great expense, to get to the action. Picture Post's headquarters-country was close-in, and bombed often, its staff and readers probably felt an even closer bond than Life's did then. Though Picture Post covered issues important for the peace, like employment, the welfare state, and universal healthcare, it had more stories about the war itself than Life, having been at war longer than America (1939-45 versus 1941-45). Still, the physical and psychological size of Life's subjects could be momentous.

After Stefan Lorant left Picture Post, his design formula continued, a critical weakness in his view, for the world was changing and the format should have changed, too. But straightforward, logical layouts still appealed to British readers, subsiding slightly later. Still, quality of pictures and words did not flag until the end. On Life, Kurt Korff assisted with design formula, but Korff -- good with straightforward, logical layouts -- was not as gifted with flair as Lorant. Although WE Smith's 'Nurse Midwife' essay in Life was a classic of intimate, appealing, logical layout, that type of essay wasn't always as well put together by Life.

'Nurse Midwife,' Smith's favourite, along with other essays by him, arguably, topped the best of Picture Post, one-to-one, with the warm glow of life-just-emerged in Maude Callen's gentle handling of a newborn baby being one of the nicest moments in journalism history. Its simply beautiful composition and moment combined with effective layout, text, and captions overall, was great art. John Loengard says readers weren't sure how Smith lighted the cabin, or when Maude stroked the head of an infirm old man, whether it was for the first or fifteenth time. Picture Post contained many stories of a nearly well-expressed nature and the nod goes to it in terms of intimate qualities overall, including the bawdy.

As to war coverage, from the 'Invasion' masterpiece in Life to Hardy-Cameron's 'Inchon' for Picture Post, the professionals did well. (David Douglas Duncan's 1990 note to your author, 'Bert Hardy and others at Picture Post earned everybody's respect, and not just for [their] Inchon shots,' says a lot about British photojournalism after World War II.) That the case for war was more popular in the first instance illuminates what democracies fought for then, and on the skills of Life's staffers. 'Inchon' is equally well-thought-out (Hopkinson had learned well from Lorant). With it, Picture Post put the case for peace during war as well as any picture magazine before Vietnam. That the photo-essay begins with men in dramatic combat, though, also suggests how war itself can be appealing to men; in addition, it suggests, whether stated in the text or not, that US Marines were fighting for a good cause – Korean freedom. End photos and text argue that war is wicked; yet even oft-cynical Cameron states, 'God was on the side of the Big Battalions; they were even that big.' (10)

11-Conclusion

The American ethos springs from a work ethic and pioneering spirit; because the physical dimensions of America are so large, and for so long its people were mainly out of touch with the rest of the world, its people first met the challenges of the North American panorama, turning outward after World War I. With Britain, though, its pioneering (adventuring) spirit has long been in touch with the world, due to early sea explorations. A democratic system is fundamental to both nations. America, as today's world-exemplar, does have ethical flaws. Still, the British have aided the expansion of American influence since 1917, even as America has supported the British in the latter's endeavours. This sort of inter-cultural twinning applied, to a degree, to Life and Picture Post. The latter was the mid-twentieth-century journalistic exemplar for Britain. It was so good that Life even offered Britain's best photographer, Bert Hardy, a fortune to jump ship in 1952; Hardy declined because his work, like all Life staffers', wouldn't have been published as often as in Picture Post, and publication wouldn't have been guaranteed, either.

It took a while before Picture Post faded, following the Hopkinson's sack. Contrary to prevailing opinion, Picture Post didn't go straight downhill after its quintessential communication 'crisis', Hardy-Cameron's Korea War coverage especially in Pusan; instead, it was boosted in the public's eyes, for many readers respected the staff's integrity more then. Picture Post's circulation demise was due to its management's finally not being able to live with journalistic success, and/or what caused that success:
journalistic talent and independence. Still, one new editor brought back Hopkinson's old Mass Observation colleague, photographer Humphrey Spender, for some work.

Robert Kee writes that possibly in the last years of *Picture Post* there were a few more girls, though girls had always been there, a little more frivolity, but that had been there, too. And the old seriousness remained, as well. Most key non-editor personnel were retained, and layouts kept up high marks. Yet, the publisher no longer seemed to respect that the real talent was his staff, and that they, mainly, answered to the readership. Hulton did offer Lorant his old job back in the early 1950s, but Lorant declined it. Hulton was more in control, but could write overbearingly about British culture. And the editorial comment, 'Forgive us for boasting....', cited above, rang hollow in readers' ears, though the editorial talent of the magazine still did its job.

Britain had a new monarch in 1953, and *Picture Post* covered the Royals well throughout its life. The Queen was treated decently in it; a special issue was dedicated to her on 20 April 1957, after she had first visited France. Bert Hardy's 15-picture-jump of the Queen's entering the Paris Opera was pioneering. But a few weeks more and the magazine was no more. Why had *Picture Post* failed? Was its Korean coverage treacherous? Was editing that bad? Did television take over the hearts and minds of Britons? Had Hulton lost his grip? Or had *Picture Post* been a great cultural vehicle that the British, as they sometimes do, give up for a while, only to return to them or something similar when cycles align again? All the above entered into *Picture Post* 's demise, but mainly, the magazine's management did not know how to live with success.

For its part, *Life* 's staff depended on the skills of its photographers firstly, its staff writers secondarily, good as the latter, no-name group, was. There were always items of great interest in the old *Life* -- from W.E. Smith's 'Country Doctor', 'Nurse Midwife,' and 'Spanish Village,' or the staff's 'Sunday in Missouri,' or Leonard McCombe's essay about Gwyned Filling, a young woman come to the big city to make good, to a dramatic tribute to the 242 fallen American troops in one week in 1969 Vietnam. *Life* covered the globe with determination, technical skills, and vision. The world was big, though, and took a lot of money and talent, which *Life* once seemed to have plenty of. Money can disappear and problems become unsolvable, even un-presentable, for all magazines. Real life isn't as easy to look at, record, present, sell, and change, as some people might think.

Many of America's flaws have been *Life* 's, too. Pictured mainly as white, heterosexual daughters, students, wives, mothers, homemakers, volunteers, and/or widows, women in the old *Life* were most often rendered as influenced more by men than other way round, or, in extreme cases, as irresponsibly not caring what men think. The stereotypes of women played out in conflicts of daily life, where women struggled with various relationships and roles as the 1950s and '60s passed. Women could write letters to the editors of *Life*, but except for Margaret Bourke-White and Clare Boothe Luce, the lack of big reputations for steady women contributors reflected the middling self-esteem non-elite women may have been influenced by in the magazine. Yet, after *Life* had run an art class nude in 1940, and continued to include entertainment that was more casual-flirty than serious, Baughman asks, 'How many readers actually read [Henry] Luce's plea for American globalism...?'. Even Baughman, though, says that *Life* is more fun to research than old television and radio shows, because 'the Lucean formula continues to work its magic.'

(Baughman, Doss)

Both magazines interpreted atomic energy, Cold War, liberation of various forms, culture, sports, and entertainment in good measure. From the startups of both through the early 1950s, they'd built up cultures of consensus (community) that began to break down in the 1950s. And yet, the 'little fictions' some critics define photo-essays as consisting of, contained more literal truth than those critics usually will admit. Not all was doomed for either country or magazine in 1950. Many good years remained for *Life*, and several for *Picture Post*, aided by further enlightenment of attitudes toward minorities and women. Both magazines had made enough money to expand coverages early on. And their newsstand prices weren't outrageous. Quality photo-led magazines cost from $5-$15 now, while at startup, *Life* and *Picture Post* cost only pennies, but, circulations were tremendous. Great photographers, writers, editors, and designers were paid enough to continue to work for both. Their biggest contributions to society, though, were the often simple, yet beautiful pages, with quality pictures-joined-with-words as the medium of cultural exchange so readers could understand the world better and find acceptable solutions to problems.

Alfred Eisenstaedt said, "We were all individualists" -- but there was still a strong sense of community to *Life* 's staff and contents, like *Picture Post* 's. Eisenstaedt said: 'Life magazine for me was like the American flag... We felt a great responsibility photographing for *Life*. We educated the world. We had a responsibility to be honest.' (Loengard, *Life Photographers*) Stefan Lorant felt similarly in the educational function of his magazines:
I always tried to appeal to the common man, to the workers, and also to the intelligentsia. Early in my career I jotted in my notebook what I intended to do, and this is what I wrote: to tell the truth, to enlighten the readers of subjects on which they have little knowledge; not to underestimate them or disregard their intelligence; but share with them a common knowledge, to learn together. (Hallett)

*Picture Post* was more left-leaning than *Life*, especially under Hopkinson. The anti-Nazi Lorant had been close to Churchill, and both also recognised the dangers of communism. *Life*, both anti-communist and anti-Nazi, was somewhat more capitalistic, in ads, editorial content, etc.

Lorant said, “I tried to use pictures as a composer uses notes; I tried to compose a story in photographs.” That seems in keeping with *Life*’s mission, too. *Life* even featured Lorant in its fall 1988 special issue for photography’s 150th anniversary, as one of three living pioneers (picture essay creator), with Harold Edgerton (strobe inventor) and Edwin Land (Land Camera inventor).

Humphrey Spender, the last photographer of Britain’s Old Left, said it best about why both staffs worked hard. ‘We thought we could make a difference.’ The newest reincarnation of *Life*, a trimmed-down insert in premium US newspapers, Fridays, may not be what Henry Luce envisioned when he began his *Life*, but even *Picture Post’s* staff might have preferred being part of a magazine-insert over circulation-death. Some might say that the old *Life* was too powerful for its own good; but the same could be said for America at times. That doesn’t make either any less profound in their positive impacts on the world. And some might say that *Picture Post* didn’t know a good thing when they had it; they had it in Korea, as well as in World War II, but owner Hulton and even editor Hopkinson didn’t fully appreciate, when all was said and done. Britain today does, and understands the value of alliances and good-pictures-joined-with-words.

As to which magazine was better, that’s like asking a man which beautiful woman he’d like to marry – both women having everything it takes for a long-lasting relationship. It might end up being the one who sings his favourite tune better. *Picture Post* and *Life* were/are best of the best.

Finally, the greatest legacy of both magazines is, they’ve made a positive difference. Tom Hopkinson used to say, if you have to stir people and ideas, then stir. Pope John Paul II (Carol Wojtyla) wrote, ‘There is a stir in the air – something uplifting.’ The latter also wrote about the media’s responsibility to preserve the dignity of the person and primacy of the family. We need recall that several of both magazines’ photographers contributed to the great 1955 photo-exhibition, *The Family of Man* – tribute to the human spirit and even to the spirit of God in humans. Select books, photo-essays, articles, poems, reviews, exhibitions, programs, films, and discussions relate to *Picture Post* and *Life* today. And many members of the two staffs have learned to live with their success. Good work should always be one of its own best rewards. Your author hopes his work fits into that assessment well-enough here.

(Notes, Etc, Follow.)
RPS Associateship Thesis Notes, by David J. Marcou


9-Words and Pictures, 3; Phone interviews by your author with John Loengard in March 2005; Hitler listens to reason,’ Life, 10 October 1938, 11-23; Invasion, Life, 12 June 1944, 27-40; Women at war, Life, 5 June 1944, 74+; Letters to the editors, Life, 5 June 1944, 2; A sunday in missouri, Life, 23 January 1950, 71-79; The conqueror from the caves, Life, 23 January 1950, 80+; Imagining the atomic age, by Peter Bacon Hales, Looking at Life Magazine, 102-119, and other essays by others in same book.

10-All sources already cited, plus phone interviews by your author with Professors Roger Grant and Gary MacDonald, March 2005; Nurse midwife, Life, 3 December 1951; and letter by David Douglas Duncan to your author, 3 July 1990.

Selected RPS Associateship Thesis Bibliography, by David J Marcou.

Books


Life Special Fall 1988 Issue: 150th Anniversary of Photography.


Lorant, Stefan, Editor, The United States: Picture Post Special, 1940.


Periodicals

Back to the middle ages, Picture Post, 26 November 1938.

Billingsgate, Picture Post, 22 April 1939.

The conqueror of the caves, Life, 23 January 1950.

Fire-fighters! Picture Post, 1 February 1941.

Hitler listens to reason, Life, 10 October 1938.


Inchon, Picture Post, 7 October 1950.

Invasion, Life, 12 June 1944.
Last photographer of the left signs off, British Journal of Photography, 16 March 2005.

Nurse midwife, Life, 3 December 1951.


A sunday in Missouri, Life, 23 January 1950.


Miscellaneous

Apostolic letter: to those responsible for communication, by Pope John Paul II, 24 January 2005


Relevant Published and Unpublished Materials by David J Marcou (Unpublished Materials Are Indicated as Such)

An Aesthetic to Remember, a book-length biography of Bert Hardy (unpublished).

Critical Collaboration, a book-length double biography of Bert Hardy and James Cameron (unpublished).

David J Marcou’s photo-portrait of Bert Hardy and his pet dogs, Surrey, 1981, printed by Charles Keeble of the Bert Hardy Darkroom Ltd (in the Photographs Collection of Britain’s National Portrait Gallery, NPGx126230); plus one additional photo-portrait of Bert Hardy seated at home in Surrey, also taken by David J Marcou.


E-mail Interviews: John Loengard (March 2005); George Pitts (January-March 2005).

Fall 1991 double review of Robert Kee’s The Picture Post Album and William Manchester’s In Our Time, in Journalism Quarterly.

I met two men, a poem about its author’s knowing Bert Hardy and James Cameron, in Celebrate II: A Collection of Stories, Reminiscence, Poetry, and Photography, by the WWTC Adult Writing and Photography Classes Taught by David J Marcou.

Letters: From various people, including the Hardys, John Whale, Sir Tom Hopkinson, David Douglas Duncan, Robert Kee, Getty Images, and Britain’s National Portrait Gallery.

Personal Interviews: With Bert and Sheila Hardy (1981); James Cameron (1981); Angus McDougall (1981).

Phone Interviews: With various people, including the Hardys, mainly Sheila, 1984-2005; Stefan Lorant (1982-1996); Angus McDougall (2004); Veita Jo Hampton (2004); Professor Roger Grant (March 2005); Professor Gary MacDonald (March 2005) John Loengard (March 2005); John Szarkowski (March 2005).

Personal collection of about 35 Bert Hardy original photo-prints, given to your author by the Hardys.


Spring 1984 picture-story on the life and times of Bert Hardy, in Weekly Missourian.


When picture post met bert hardy, in Writing Down the River, Edited by Charlotte Fox and Barbara J. Herzog. La Crosse, Wisconsin: Coulee Region Scribes, 1993.


1A: First front cover, Picture Post, 1 October 1938.

1B: First front cover, Life, 23 November 1936.

3: Stefan Lorant with Churchill at Chartwell, February 1939, The Real Story of Picture Post.

4A: First Picture Post staff, Tom Hopkinson is facing camera, first on right, The Real Story of Picture Post.

4B: Stefan Lorant shows special US Picture Post issue to US Ambassador to Britain Joseph Kennedy, summer 1940. The Real Story of Picture Post.


8A2: Second page of initial two-page spread, Back to the middle ages, Picture Post, 26 November 1938, The Real Story of Picture Post.

8B: Early Picture Post covers, The Real Story of Picture Post.

8C: Missouri-Encyclopaedia Britannica Photo Awards with Bert Hardy’s Inchon shot included, Life, 5 March 1951, 19.

9A: Hitler listens to reason, Britain holds the sea, Life, 10 October 1938, 16, 11-23.


10: Maude Callen holding up baby she just delivered, Nurse midwife, Life, 3 December 1951, 126, 124-145.

11: Bert Hardy and his pet dogs, Surrey, England, photo taken by David J Marcou (British National Portrait Gallery, NPGx126230).
With Winston Churchill at Chartwell in February 1939 discussing Hitler and the German problem. Soon after his visit Lorant published a 16-page long story on Churchill in PICTURE POST, with an article written by the great political writer Wickham Steed.
Bunch, Richard Darwell, Homer Buskirk, H. E. Bewick and John Hopkins. They, with their editor, 37-year-old Stevan Lorant, all between 80 to
With U.S. Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy
In the ambassador's office, Lorant shows him the dummy of the 160-page Special issue of PICTURE POST about THE UNITED STATES which came out in June 1940. Kennedy was American Ambassador to the Court of St. James when Churchill took over the government.
The Four Guardians of German Culture Today: They shield its purity from the "contaminated race."

BACK TO THE MIDDLE AGES
These are some of the world-famous Jews to whom there is no room in Nazi Germany to-day.

Picture manufactures I have since read and studied. This means for me the most powerful example of photography used for political effect.

The chief Jew of the house—were convinced with the faces of extortionists, writers, and artists, were passionate. One of all the thousands of photographs for political effect.

In the present case, before the middle ages, more from inspiration in the American press. —Hieronymus Bosch's Jupiter Shelter.

The chief of the house—were convinced with the faces of extortionists, writers, and artists, were passionate. One of all the thousands of photographs for political effect.
This week Alfred Eisenstaedt, who has been on Life’s staff since its first issue in 1936, was named "Photographer of the Year" by the University of Missouri Encyclopedia Britannica’s annual photography competition. This was the second consecutive year a Life man has won the contest, Leonard McCombe having won last year. Fifty-two-year-old Eisenstaedt won out over 627 other North American and European photographers. Examples of his award-winning 27-picture portfolio are on the opposite page. Here and on the next page are other winners. In the contest’s remaining eight prize divisions, Life photographers won two firsts, one second, (Mark Kauffman), three honorable mentions (McCombe, Kauffman, Wallace Kirkland) and a special citation for war photography (David Douglas Duncan).

**BEST SEQUENCE AWARD** went to Illustrated’s Erich Auerbach for his 23-picture story on contrasts between London’s East End and the elegant West End.

**BEST PROJECT AWARD** went to St. Louis Post-Dispatch staff for pictures illustrating newspaper’s crusade for better housing, traffic and school conditions.

**BEST FEATURE AWARD** went to W. Eugene Smith’s photo of Welsh miners (Life, Feb. 20, 1950).

**BEST WAR COVERAGE AWARD** went to Bert Hardy of Picture Post for photographs of Inchon invasion in September.
When Britain's Home Fleet took position in the North Sea ready for a wartime blockade of Germany, Adolf Hitler knew that England meant business. When he made his peace with Chamberlain, Sept. 30, he confirmed the Anglo-German naval agreement which leaves the dominion of the seas to Britain so far as Germany is concerned. For this Germany presumably gets permission to stretch herself on the continent of Europe. Shown are five of the leading battleships of the Home Fleet: Nelson (front), Rodney, Revenge, Nelson (rear), Resolution.
INVASION

ALLIES SET OUT ON THEIR LONG HARD ROAD

The first boats scraped on the French beaches east of Cherbourg at 6 a.m. Tuesday, June 6, just four years plus two days after last boats had pushed off the beach of Dunkirk. A lively wind had kicked up the Channel during the night but a daybreak shower calmed it, as the huge armada of 4,000 ships and thousands of smaller craft loomed out of the dawn. The great attack, advancing behind mine sweepers and smoke screens laid by planes, miraculously and mercifully won surprise. The Germans announced it half an hour later. Three hours later Commander in Chief Eisenhower confirmed it in Communiqué Number One. He had already given an eloquent order of the day to his field commander, General Bernard Montgomery and his men: "Soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force: The eyes of the world are upon you. The free men of the world are marching together to victory. Good luck."

The first powerful contact hit at the excellent beach between Cherbourg and Le Havre, centering on Caen. There was fierce fighting around the mouths of the rivers Orne and Vire. The Germans claimed that the U.S. 6th and 101st Airborne Divisions, the U.S. 29th and 100th Airborne Divisions and the British Eighth and Sixth Airborne Divisions had landed around Caen and Basseville. However, LIFE photographer Frank Scherschel, flying over the beachhead in a Marauder, reported seeing very few gun flashes on shore and generally a scene of great peacefulness.

"Everywhere you looked," he said, "you could see Forts, Liberators and fighters. If there'd been any enemy fighters they wouldn't have been shot down, they'd have run over." Some 1,300 bombers and 648 naval guns blasted the German positions.

And before the sun of June 6 began to sink, Churchill announced, "The invasion goes according to plan, and what a plan! There already are hopes that actual tactical surprise has been attained."

As America bowed its head for its men, President Roosevelt wrote an invasion prayer:

"...Lead them straight and true, give strength to their arms, courage to their hearts, steadfastness to their faith. They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. The enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again, and we know that by Thy grace and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph. ..."
A Sunday in Missouri

The people of an earnest town use the day to serve God

THIS is the corner of South Jefferson and Liberty in Mexico, Mo. on the afternoon of Sunday, Jan. 8. It is normally crowded with traffic—Mexico (pop. 11,000) is a bustling firebrick and agricultural center which claims to be the capital of "Little Dixie," a part of Missouri largely populated by descendants of the Kentuckians and Virginians who settled the section. But because it is Sunday, the town's only stop light blinks vacuously and an old dog dozes in a spot of winter sunshine outside Dean's Drug Store. Four doors down the street from Nelson's Service Station, Assistant Fire Chief Bob Balzer is chewing his pipe and reading the furnace. A block in the other direction Railroad Telegrapher O. R. Romjus, 58, has just plumped his heavy coat in a depot chair and taken over the ticker from Prince Jewell Null, 67, now on his way home for Sunday dinner.

Peaceful scenes like this are part of Sunday in every Missouri town where people take their God seriously and devote at least part of this day to His worship. Fanned out in all directions from this street corner are Mexico's 19 churches—some of them rich and prosperous, some small and almost slummy—and Mexico's people—the farmers, factory workers and businessmen who make up their separate congregations. On this Sunday each congregation has plans of its own. Fifty church and Sunday school services are scheduled in turn, as well as 10 meetings of youth and study groups, 19 baptisms and two funerals. To each of the congregations its own part in this program is the most important religious event of the week. To bring together at one time the independent and often simultaneous happenings of a single Sunday, LIFE sent a team of 10 photographers and nine reporters to Mexico. On the following eight pages is their record of its songs, sermons, people and all of its churches.

A SUNDAY GOODBYE is given to one of his young parishioners by the Rev. P. B. Carlisle after the morning service at the First Christian Church of Mexico.
RED CHINA'S MAO TSE-TUNG looks benign as a Buddhist monk in picture taken at Chungking late in 1945 during "peace talks." He wears the high-collared Chinese suit popularized by Sun Yat-sen, father of Nationalist China. Pith helmet also was bought especially for his trip to Chungking. Since 1945 Mao has avoided U.S. photographers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE  81
4 A.M. As hard labor begins, the face of Alice Cooper seems to sum up all the suffering of every woman who has ever borne a child.

6:30 A.M. A few seconds after the normal delivery, Maudie Colten holds the healthy child as he fills his lungs and begins to cry.

6:45 A.M. The mother's pain, Catherine Pihacs tries to soothe her so that she will go to sleep and begin to forget her misery.
For God, my family & friends, & the staffs, subjects, readers, & archivists of Picture Post & Life magazines.

SA59 is David Joseph Marcou’s 144th book; he is Wisconsin’s most prolific living author.

SA59 researcher-author David Joseph Marcou, La Crosse, WI, 2005 (Photo by Matt A. Marcou).