

**BETWEEN ART AND PHOTOJOURNALISM:
AN EXAMINATION OF HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON'S *THE PEOPLE OF
MOSCOW***

by

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Minneapolis, 2003

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University and George Eastman House,

International Museum of Photography and Film

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada and

Rochester, New York, USA, 2011

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ABSTRACT

Between Art and Photojournalism: An Examination of Henri Cartier-Bresson's *The People of Moscow*

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Photographic Preservation and Collections Management
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Henri Cartier-Bresson's (French, 1908-2004) career spanned more than fifty years during which he was involved with the surrealist movement, produced work for various picture magazines, helped found Magnum Photos Agency and published numerous photobooks. While his body of work is often discussed in terms of either fine art photography or photojournalism, prior to 1950s these elements tended to be isolated to separate venues. This thesis is concerned with Henri Cartier-Bresson's 1955 book *The People of Moscow*, a photographic survey of the Soviet people. It considers the significance of this book as a venue that combined the two aspects of Cartier-Bresson's photography, the formal aesthetics and the documentary content and thereby marked a turning point in his career. The essay describes and analyzes the elements of the book's design, such as the layout, sequencing and use of text by comparing them to the earlier Cartier-Bresson monographs, as well as to the use of the photographs from the book in *Life* and *Paris Match*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Robert Burley, for his sound advice, thorough feedback and guidance throughout the process of completing this thesis. My appreciation also goes to Alison Nordström, who was invaluable in the early stages of the thesis planning process.

Additionally, I would like to thank Aude Raimbault at the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation in Paris for her generous assistance in providing me with valuable resources for my research. Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to John Morris, for sharing his wonderful recollections of working with Cartier-Bresson as the photo editor of the Magnum Photos Agency.

DEDICATION

To my parents, for their unconditional love and support, and to my husband, for always believing in me.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an interview with the broadcast journalist Charlie Rose, on July 6, 2000, Henri Cartier-Bresson was asked whether his intentions and his style of photographing were different before the World War II and after it. In typical Cartier-Bresson fashion, he answered succinctly, “only the labels.”¹ Many labels have been associated with Cartier-Bresson’s name; he has been called the “decisive moment” photographer, the father of modern photojournalism, as well as one of the most important photographers of the twentieth century. Although he avoided identifying with such labels, calling himself simply an artisan, he has often been classified as either an artist or a photojournalist. Most often, the distinction between these two labels has been associated with a specific time in the photographer’s career; the pre-war years have been retrospectively examined in terms of his artistic inclinations, attributed to the influences of the surrealists on his development as a photographer, while the post-war years are most often discussed in terms of his connection to Magnum Photos cooperative, the renowned photo agency he helped found, and his career as a photojournalist.

Keeping in mind the dual nature of Cartier-Bresson’s work, this thesis examines Cartier-Bresson’s 1955 book *The People of Moscow* as a turning point in his career, marked by the greater integration of the fine art and documentary aspects of his photography. A comparative visual analysis of *The People of Moscow* to *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans*, as well as of *The People of Moscow* to the treatment of the same photographs in the *Life* and *Paris Match*, highlights the design elements that draw from both art photography monographs and

¹ Henri Cartier-Bresson, interview by Charlie Rose, The Charlie Rose Show, PBS, July 6, 2000.

picture magazine photo-essays. In addition, this examination situates the book in the context of the political climate of the era, as well as in the evolution of the field of photographic books.

In an article that appeared in *The New York Times* on March 29, 1970, A.D. Coleman, photography critic and author, writes about the turn in the critical attitudes emerging in the sixties towards Cartier-Bresson's work:

“...this last decade has seen a growing wave of dissatisfaction on the part of critics and other photographers, who find a decline in quality in the photographer's work since *The Decisive Moment*. Indeed, there seem to be two Cartier-Bressons in photography: the one whom the public created (the myth) and the one in whom the public is losing faith (the reality).”²

Coleman goes on to describe “the myth” of Cartier-Bresson as an image created by *The Decisive Moment* book that characterized him as an artist, and “the reality” as that of a photographer who produced a large body of photojournalistic work, some of which happened to be shown and published in the context of fine art photography. This perception of a supposed decline in Cartier-Bresson's work could be seen as a result of a new approach to the presentation of his work that combined the aesthetics with the content, instead of isolating those elements from each other.

Prior to the 1950s, Cartier-Bresson's photographs had been seen almost exclusively in the context of either magazines or exhibitions.³ These two venues presented Cartier-Bresson's work

² A.D Coleman “More than the Decisive Moment.” *New York Times*, March 29, 1970.

³ The two exceptions were an exhibition catalogue produced to accompany the 1947 MoMA exhibition and a small promotional pamphlet produced in 1948 by the information bureau of the state of

in diametrically opposed ways, the magazines emphasizing the content of the photograph and the exhibitions championing the aesthetics of the image. For both kinds of venues, the choice of which images were shown was in the hands of the magazine editors and curators, greatly affecting how the work was perceived. In addition, both exhibitions and magazines were characterized by their fleeting nature. An alternative venue, that of the photographic monograph, offered a space that many photographers of the twentieth century, such as Walker Evans and Edward Weston came to exploit; Cartier-Bresson took this path as well.

The proliferation of photographic books in the 1950s, as a result of technological advances in the field of photomechanical reproduction during the first half of the twentieth century, provided photographers with several benefits; photographic books preserved the work of photographers, enabled them to gain a wider audience, provided them with better control of their work and a more permanent venue for the display of their photographs. In addition to the technological developments in the field of photographic printing, the demand for photobooks and picture magazines was also aided by the fact that before television sets became a staple in every home, photography served as the window on the world satisfying the Western public's curiosity about the exotic.⁴ As Badger and Parr note, in the first few decades of the twentieth century "the photobook became an essential tool of the documentary movements in the United States, Western Europe and the Soviet Union, to be used for the purposes of information and

Jaipur. Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 355.

⁴ Gene Thornton, "At Last, a Photography Museum," in *The Arts*, eds. Richard B.K. McLanathan and Gene Brown (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 110.

propaganda;”⁵ however, it also soon became a venue for personal expression with such books as Walker Evans’ *American Photographs*.

Of the five Cartier-Bresson books published during this decade, *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans*, designed and published by Tériade, exemplified and further built upon the image that had been shaped by New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in the 1947 retrospective exhibition. These two books were modeled on an earlier form of the art book, essentially a bound portfolio, in which artist’s works were offered as independent statements. The cultural and social content of these photographs of people taken in the United States, Europe and the East is neutralized by using a format that focuses on isolating singular moments imbued with formalism, instead of emphasizing the narrative behind the formal aspect of the photographs. On the other hand, *The People of Moscow*, as well another Cartier-Bresson book created around the same time, *D’une Chine à l’autre*, were published by a young medical student turned publisher, Robert Delpire, and presented Cartier-Bresson’s work in a context that combined the formalist aesthetic of his work with its documentary content.

The body of work that was published in *The People of Moscow* book came about as a result of an event that had caused a shift in Cold War politics: the death of Josef Stalin. This event made it possible for Henri Cartier-Bresson to obtain a visa to the Soviet Union and be granted permission to photograph its people. He became the first Western photographer in seven years to be allowed such access to this country.⁶ The result of this trip was a photographic survey of the Soviet

⁵ Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *Photobook: a History, Volume I and II* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2004), 10.

⁶ Before Cartier-Bresson, Margaret Bourke-White in 1930 and Robert Capa in 1947 were the only other photographers of note who photographed in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era.

people's life as recorded by Cartier-Bresson on the streets of Moscow. This extended picture-story was published in 1955 in the form of a book *The People of Moscow*. While the book contains examples of spreads reminiscent of the pages of *The Decisive Moment* it also utilizes such design elements as image/text combinations and sequencing, that were regularly used in the pages of picture magazines. Although *The People of Moscow* was not the first of Cartier-Bresson's books to use such a design, it was the first of his publications in English to do so. This made *The People of Moscow* the first major publication of Cartier-Bresson's work to reach wider Western audiences in which design effectively combined art and social concern, two components that are inseparable in Cartier-Bresson's work.

While the aforementioned body of work can be examined from the perspective of its humanist approach to the subject matter, as an alternative representation of the Soviet people, more importantly, this book can be regarded as an example of the major changes in the presentation of Cartier-Bresson photographs that contributed to a more complete understanding of the nature of his work. Although this essay leaves room for further exploration of this topic, I trust that my research poses compelling ideas about the significance of Cartier-Bresson's *The People of Moscow*. I believe that *The People of Moscow* book fused the two aspects of Cartier-Bresson's work that were frequently isolated from one another and can be considered as a more complete representation of Cartier-Bresson's work containing both the fine art photography and photojournalistic elements. It helped transform the myth of the decisive moment photographer. In addition to the book's significance as a manifestation of a turning point in Cartier-Bresson's career, I believe it is also a publication that reflects a significant time in the history of twentieth-

century photography, marked by the confluence of the expressive and documentary aspects of the photographic image “characterized by Cartier-Bresson as ‘the poetry of life’s reality’.”⁷

⁷ Brett Abbott, *Engaged Observers: Documentary Photography Since the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 18.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Analyzing a body of work by someone such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose photographs have often been compartmentalized into separate categories of either art or photojournalism, requires a thorough understanding of the influences that have marked his development as a photographer. Pierre Assouline's *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography*⁸ provides a comprehensive overview of the significant stages in Cartier-Bresson's life, drawing attention to the events that had shaped his career as a photographer. Another biography, Clement Chéroux's *Henri Cartier-Bresson*,⁹ while much less extensive in its scope, is valuable for its numerous reproductions of magazine spreads featuring Cartier-Bresson's photographs and for providing the context in which they were originally presented. In addition, a section at the end of the book includes several short interviews with the photographer and writings by other photographers on Cartier-Bresson.

For an insight into the photographer's way of working and his thoughts about his own work, *The Mind's Eye*¹⁰ was useful as it contains many of the original pieces of writing by Cartier-Bresson. His much reproduced essay, first published in *The Decisive Moment*,¹¹ was helpful in understanding his ideas about photographic reportage, the selection process that happens both in the camera and after the film has been developed, along with his feelings about magazine editing and editors. The rare interviews with Cartier-Bresson are an important source of unfiltered information coming directly from the photographer, and include his approach towards working

⁸ Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

⁹ Clément Chéroux, *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 2008).

¹⁰ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers*, ed. Michael Sand (New York: Aperture, 1999).

¹¹ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster; Paris: Éditions Verve, 1952).

for magazines, his ideas about photography, editing of photographic books and captioning. An interview in *Dialogue with Photography*¹² specifically addresses the question of Cartier-Bresson's attitude towards book design. *Contacts*,¹³ the documentary series on contemporary photographers, contains a section on Cartier-Bresson in which he walks the viewer through his method of working; by revealing his contact sheets containing some of his famous photographs, the photographer explains his editing process. Although full of obvious questions, Charlie Rose's interview with Cartier-Bresson is at times illuminating in terms of how the photographer saw himself in relation to how he has been interpreted by others.

A significant resource for the examination of the photographer's early work has been *Henri-Cartier-Bresson: Scrapbook*,¹⁴ a reproduction of the original album assembled by the photographer for the MoMA exhibition in 1947 that launched his photographic career. The book is revealing of Cartier-Bresson's formative years; the inclusion of the successive shots of the same scene speaks of his hesitation regarding the final choice of the frame to be printed. The back of the book includes a list of all the photographs with a bullet point next to the ones that were chosen for the exhibition. Another book touching on Cartier-Bresson's early influences, Ian Walker's *City Gorged with Dreams*,¹⁵ addresses the relationship between surrealism and documentary photography, the exchange of ideas between them and the work that was produced as a result. In the chapter "Henri Cartier-Bresson: *The Decisive Moment*,"¹⁶ he discusses the

¹² Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. "Henri Cartier-Bresson" in *Dialogue with Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979).

¹³ *Contacts*, Volume 1: Henri Cartier-Bresson. France: Arte Video, 2000.

¹⁴ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Henri Cartier-Bresson Scrapbook: Photographs 1932-1946* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).

¹⁵ Ian Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ *ibid.*

placement of Cartier-Bresson's work in the surrealist context.

Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century,¹⁷ an exhibition catalogue with an essay by Peter Galassi, beautifully reproduces over 300 photographs that appeared in the 2010 MoMA exhibition of the same name. The book includes a substantial chronological overview of Cartier-Bresson's work on the printed page, while it also reproduces several magazine spreads featuring picture stories by Cartier-Bresson that provide context for his work. While Galassi's essay aims to acknowledge the influence of photojournalism on the photographer's work, he nonetheless makes a sharp distinction between his pre-war and post-war style and writes about Cartier-Bresson primarily as an artist whose photojournalistic work enriched his art. The treatment of the photographs in the book, reproduced with minimal captions, reinforces the art historical perspective.

For considering Cartier-Bresson's work in the context of photojournalism, several books proved useful. *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front Line of History*¹⁸ delves into the history, motivations behind and the inner dynamics of the agency Cartier-Bresson co-founded and was an active member of for almost twenty years. *Get the Picture: A Personal History of Photojournalism*,¹⁹ John Morris' vivid personal account of his life as an editor at *Life*, *Ladies Home Journal*, as well as the executive editor at Magnum Photos, paints an idiosyncratic insider's portrait of the world of photojournalism. In addition, the book contains a chapter describing Cartier-Bresson's trip to

¹⁷ Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010).

¹⁸ Russell Miller, *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front of History* (New York: Grove Press, 1997).

¹⁹ John G. Morris, *Get the Picture: A Personal Story of Photojournalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

the Soviet Union and the subsequent appearance of the photographs from the trip in an exclusive cover story published on the pages of *Life* magazine.

As the main focus of this thesis is a photographic book, the literature review would not be complete without an examination of the history of such publications, as well as the books that consider their design and editing. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's publication *The Photobook: A History, Volume I and II*²⁰ establish a historical account of the use of the photobook from the invention of photography to the present day. Especially valuable was the chapter "Memory and Reconstruction: The Postwar European Photobook"²¹ from Volume I that discusses French humanist photography in the post World War II era; the chapter also discusses Cartier-Bresson photobooks, as well as the publishers of his books in the 1950s, Robert Delpire and Tériade.

*Visual Impact in Print*²² provided insight into the sequencing of images for maximum impact by making the pictures relate. The book reads as a guide to integrating text and images into a coherent picture story, and differentiates between a picture group, a picture essay and a picture story. It is rich in reproducing magazine spreads and comparing how the same story can produce a different effect by using different arrangements of pictures. Another source of information on book design, Keith Smith's *Structure of a Visual Book*,²³ examines the concepts of structure, composition and picture relationships; it elaborates on the elements of a visual book, such as the

²⁰ Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *Photobook: a History, Volume I and II* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2004).

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Gerald Hurley and Angus McDougall, *Visual Impact in Print: How to Make Pictures Communicate: a Guide for the Photographer, the Editor, the Designer* (Chicago: Visual Impact Inc., 1971).

²³ Keith A. Smith, *Structure of the Visual Book* (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1984).

graphic layout, evolving a series or a sequence, creating transitions and establishing patterns and rhythms with juxtaposition of images. These sources were useful in helping me understand the concepts of print design and provided me with a foundation for the analysis and description of *The People of Moscow*.

For general information on the context in which the book was produced, I examined the literature describing the political climate in the 1940s and 1950s in relation to photography and other media. Lili Bezner's *Photography and Politics in America*²⁴ was helpful as an insight into the early Cold War censorship of photography in America and the effects of McCarthyism on the freedom of expression. *Beyond the Cold War: Soviet and American Media Images*²⁵ provides a look into the Cold War propaganda wars. The book discusses Soviet and American use of media in constructing a biased image of both their own and the opposite side's nation. In addition, a look at the various issues of photographic magazines of the 1940s and 1950s, such as *Amerika* from the USA perspective and *USSR in Construction* from the Soviet point of view, offers an insight into two polarized representations of Soviet people.

Specific issues of *Life*²⁶ and *Paris Match*²⁷ from 1955 provided an opportunity to examine the treatment of the first published photographs from Cartier-Bresson's trip to the Soviet Union. Comparing the layout and the choice of images in the magazines to those used on the pages of *The People of Moscow* book offered an insight into the differences and similarities between the

²⁴ Lili Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

²⁵ Everette Dennis, George Gerbner and Yassen Zassoursky, eds. *Beyond the Cold War: Soviet and American Media Images* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1991).

²⁶ "The People Of Russia: Part One: Moscow." *Life*, January 17, 1955, 15-30.

²⁷ "Le Peuple Russe: Première Partie: La Vie à Moscou." *Paris Match*, January 29, 1955, 44-67.

two. The comparison of captioning in *Life* and *Paris Match* was also helpful in forming a general idea of the American and French media approach to the story, as well as in understanding the political sentiment of the two countries towards the Soviet Union.

Although Cartier-Bresson has been acclaimed as the first photographer to provide a peek behind the Iron Curtain after Stalin's death, he certainly was not the only one. Two other accounts of similar journeys, a book by Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia*,²⁸ and a collaboration between John Steinbeck and Robert Capa titled *A Russian Journal*,²⁹ provide examples of how this subject had been treated prior to Cartier-Bresson's examination. Using these two books as a point of comparison helped me distinguish the elements that made Cartier-Bresson's book stand out from the other two.

In terms of the book's reception, I found it useful to examine the reviews in the photography or art themed journals, such as *Aperture*³⁰ and *Image*³¹ magazines, compared to those in the more mainstream press, such as *The New York Times*³² in the United States and *Le Monde*³³ and *L'oeil*³⁴ in France, as well as to consider the general public's response by examining letters to the editor. These sources were central in considering the audience's response to *The People of Moscow* book.

²⁸ Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931).

²⁹ John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, *A Russian Journal* (New York: Viking Press, 1948).

³⁰ Minor White, Review of *The People of Moscow* and *The Europeans*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson. *Aperture* 4, no.1 (1956): 39-40.

³¹ Minor White, Review of *The People of Moscow* and *The Europeans*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson. *Image Magazine* 5, no. 4 (April 1956): 94.

³² Harry Schwartz, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *New York Times*, December 25, 1955.

³³ Robert Coiplet, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Le Monde* (Paris), October 15, 1955.

³⁴ Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *L'oeil* (Paris).

III. CARTIER-BRESSON BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Henri Cartier-Bresson was born on August 22, 1908 in Chanteloup-en-Brie, a small town on the outskirts of Paris, the eldest of five children of a wealthy family that had made its fortune in thread manufacturing.³⁵ From a young age, Cartier-Bresson expressed artistic inclinations and distaste for the family business, as well as for his haute-bourgeoisie upbringing. His mother encouraged his love of music, painting and drawing by exposing him to the chamber orchestra and taking him on frequent visits to the Louvre. Although he attended a Catholic high school, young Cartier-Bresson searched outside the confines of the conservative education the school provided. Finding inspiration in the writings of Rimbaud, Proust, Dostoyevsky, Joyce and Freud, the authors who were to influence the surrealists and the existentialists, he became an avid reader devouring literature that fueled his rebellious spirit.

Another enduring influence in Cartier-Bresson's life was his interest in drawing and painting. First developed through spending time in his painter uncle's studio, this passion was later nurtured under André Lhote, a cubist painter with whom he studied at Lhote's academy in Paris. It was from Lhote that Cartier-Bresson learned the sense of order, structure and geometry, the stylistic elements that were to have an enduring mark on his photographic style and composition. After spending two years at the Lhote academy, Cartier-Bresson left for England where he studied at Magdalene College in Cambridge taking courses in English literature. Several months later, his restless spirit took him back to France where he formed a friendship with René Crevel,

³⁵ The biographical information in this section can be found in various publications and interviews. Especially useful for the purposes of this thesis were: Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), Clément Chéroux, *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 2008) and Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010).

a French writer involved with the surrealist movement. Cartier-Bresson had followed the surrealists through reading their manifestos and journals for several years prior to meeting Crevel. This friendship had a profound influence on Cartier-Bresson as it brought him into André Breton's circle allowing him to attend the meetings of the surrealists. While not directly participating in the meetings, Cartier-Bresson was absorbed in the exchange of ideas that took place during the gatherings at Café Cyrano. Although the surrealist ideas affected him, "his allegiance was to the ethics of surrealism, not its aesthetics."³⁶ Cartier-Bresson notes, "Very, very young, around 1926-1927, I was marked not by surrealist painting, but by the ideas of Breton...Breton's conception of surrealism delighted me, the role of spontaneity and of intuition, and, above all, attitude of revolt."³⁷ It was not until after his introduction to the surrealists that Cartier-Bresson took his first photographs on the streets of Paris in the late 1920s using a view camera. He continued photographing during time spent living in Africa in the early 1930s, although most of the work from this time was destroyed by moisture entering the camera and damaging the film.

Two crucial events occurred around this time that would mark the rest of Cartier-Bresson's photographic career. In 1931, a photograph by Martin Munkácsi, a young Hungarian photographer, was published in the magazine *Photographies*. Capturing three naked boys running towards a large body of water, the elements of this image encapsulated the essence of photography in Cartier-Bresson's eyes:

³⁶ Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 38.

³⁷ Ian Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 170.

“I saw a photograph of three black children running into the sea, and I must say that it is that very photograph which was for me the spark that set fire to the fireworks. It is only that one photograph which influenced me. There is in that image such intensity, spontaneity, such a joy of life, such a prodigy, that I am still dazzled by it even today.”³⁸



Figure 1. Martin Munkácsi, Three Boys at Lake Tanganyika, 1931. Gelatin silver print.

It was this photograph that made him realize that the camera could be the tool he has been searching for to express his inner vision. It made him recognize what can be achieved with photography.

A year later, a second epiphany arrived with the purchase of a Leica, a newly invented 35mm camera that provided Cartier-Bresson with a tool for capturing life around him in an instant; its size allowed for the freedom of inconspicuous movement and the roll film it utilized made possible a rapid succession of shots. For the next two years, Cartier-Bresson traveled extensively in Europe visiting Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia among other countries;

³⁸ Clément Chéroux, *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2008), 30.

subsequently, his travels took him to Mexico as a part of a French geographical expedition organized by the Trocadéro Museum of Ethnography.³⁹

Some of Cartier-Bresson's first published photographs appeared in 1932 in *Vu*, a French, left-leaning magazine that emphasized the use of photography to tell a story. Over the next several years, before the start of World War II, his work continued to appear in several other photojournalistic magazines, such as *Ce Soir*, a Communist newspaper,⁴⁰ and *Regards*, which was concerned with sociopolitical issues and advocated for workers' rights,⁴¹ as well as in an avant-garde publication, *Verve*. Tériade, the creator of *Verve*, a magazine that was eventually to become a publishing house by the name Editions Verve, was also an art critic and Cartier-Bresson's mentor. It was Tériade who later published two of Cartier-Bresson's books: *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans*.

In 1933, Cartier-Bresson's first exhibition of photographs, organized by Julian Levy, opened in Levy's New York gallery. The two men had met some years earlier through mutual acquaintances, Harry and Caresse Crosby, a wealthy American couple living in Paris. The Crosbys hosted gatherings where the social elite came together with the artistic avant-garde. It was at these gatherings that Cartier-Bresson also met Monroe Wheeler, director of exhibitions at the MoMA from 1941-1968, and Lincoln Kirstein, Beaumont Newhall's assistant at the MoMA; both men were later involved in Cartier-Bresson's 1947 MoMA exhibition. The 1933 exhibition

³⁹ Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 78.

⁴⁰ He even held a regular salaried job at *Ce Soir* from 1937-1939. Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 38.

⁴¹ Russell Miller, *Magnum: Fifty Years at the Front of History* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 22.

travelled to Madrid during the same year, and was followed by two exhibitions in 1935, one at the Palacio de Belles Artes in Mexico City and another one at the Levy Gallery. Cartier-Bresson's work was new and fresh compared to the photographs being shown in New York galleries at the time. The works of American modernists, such as Walker Evans, Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz were clean, pure and carefully crafted. In contrast, Cartier-Bresson's seemingly haphazardly shot photographs, at times blurry, were seen as happy accidents. The exposure received through several high-profile exhibitions concentrated within a short period of two years, combined with the positive response to these exhibitions, introduced Cartier-Bresson's name to the world of photography.

In the years immediately preceding World War II, Cartier-Bresson, not certain that he wanted to continue his career as a photographer, was still in search of the ideal medium for his creative expression. This search led him to pursue filmmaking as Jean Renoir's assistant between 1936 and 1939. While he had an affinity for filmmaking, Cartier-Bresson found that he did not have the skill, imagination or desire to create fictional scenarios. Instead, after this brief period working under Renoir, he decided to focus on the documentary side of film. His political beliefs took him to Spain where he directed three documentaries on the Spanish Civil War. At the outset of World War II, Cartier-Bresson, who was in the army reserves, was chosen to be a part of the Film and Photo division of the French Army. While a part of this unit, he was captured by the German Army and placed into a prisoner of war labor camp. Although his first two attempts to escape were unsuccessful, he finally managed to get away the third time; he spent the rest of the war working with the French resistance and continuing to photograph.

In the meantime, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, under the impression that Cartier-Bresson had died in the war, had begun organizing a posthumous exhibition. Nancy and Beaumont Newhall, who were directing MoMA's photography department during this time, would have been familiar with Cartier-Bresson's work through Wheeler and Kirstein, as well as through the exhibitions of his work at the Levy gallery that had drawn such attention in photography circles. Upon the realization that he had survived the war, the Newhalls invited Cartier-Bresson to participate in the organization of the exhibition. It was for this occasion that he assembled *The Scrapbook*, a selection of prints he chose to present as possibilities for the exhibition. The selection shows his uncertainty regarding the final choices for the exhibition as it includes multiple frames with slightly different views of the same scene taken moments apart. *The Scrapbook* acted as a catalog from which Beaumont Newhall was to make the final choice of photographs for the exhibition.⁴²

The MoMA photography department was still relatively young and since its founding in 1940 up until 1947 it had organized close to thirty exhibitions. As Christopher Phillips notes, the context of an art museum exhibition meant that:

“The photographs were presented in the same manner as other prints and drawings – carefully matted, framed, and placed behind glass, and hung at eye level; they were given precisely the same status: that of objects of authorized admiration and delectation.”⁴³

The exhibition opened to the public on February 4, 1947 presenting Cartier-Bresson's photographs in exactly such fashion. The catalogue accompanying the exhibition contained text

⁴² Michael Frizot, “Unpredictable Glances,” in *Henri Cartier-Bresson Scrapbook: Photographs 1932-1946* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 63.

⁴³ Christopher Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 23.

written by Lincoln Kirstein, Beaumont Newhall's assistant at the time. In it, he describes Cartier-Bresson's photographs as "works of art within their own radical aesthetic."⁴⁴ Kirstein offered the same point of view in an article written for *The New York Times*, highlighting the unquestionable value of Cartier-Bresson's photographs as art and describing him as "a responsible artist, trained as a painter, who happens to be present at crucial historical events."⁴⁵ In this article, entitled *Artist with a Camera*, Kirstein downplayed Cartier-Bresson's involvement in photojournalism and emphasized the formal elements of his photographic composition.

The same year that his photographs were presented in the context of art by a major institution, Cartier-Bresson, together with Robert Capa, David Seymour "Chim", George Rodger and William Vandivert, co-founded Magnum Photos, an international cooperative agency of photojournalists concerned with protecting the rights of its members. Cartier-Bresson described Magnum as, "a community of thought, a shared human quality, a curiosity about what is going on in the world, a respect for what is going on, and a desire to transcribe it visually."⁴⁶

Magnum's objectives incorporated the idea that the agency would provide its photographers with the freedom to pursue their own interests instead of being directed by the magazines and forced to follow scripts supplied by editors. Rather, the agency would sell the photographs to the magazines, ensuring that the photographers retained the copyright of their own work and control over how their images were presented. The most repeated anecdote about Cartier-Bresson's joining the Magnum Photos agency has to be the advice given to Cartier-Bresson by Robert Capa; he warned him to be wary of labels that would back him into a corner, such as the one of a

⁴⁴ Lincoln Kirstein, "Henri Cartier-Bresson Documentary Humanist," in *The Photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947), 7

⁴⁶ Gerry Badger, "Mission Impossible? 60 Years of Magnum," *Aperture* no. 187 (Summer 2007): 70.

surrealist photographer.⁴⁷ Instead, Capa counseled him to continue his work, shooting what he wanted, but to do it under the umbrella of photojournalism.

From 1947 to 1952, Cartier-Bresson's work appeared almost exclusively in the illustrated periodical press, including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Life*, *Paris Match*, *Point de Vue*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. While socially concerned, his photography during this period continued to follow the same recipe of form and aesthetics that he had subscribed to in his early years. During these years, his reputation as a photojournalist was solidified by strong reports on the independence of India, Gandhi's death, the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir and the Chinese Gold Rush. At the same time, MoMA's granting of a one-man show in 1947 had a profound influence on his reputation as a photographic artist. The two parallel careers, the one of a photographic artist and the other of a photojournalist, seemed to develop simultaneously.

What stands out from this quick overview of Cartier-Bresson's development as a photographer is the way in which his work moves fluidly between the categories of art and photojournalism depending on the context in which it is presented. This is evident in the books and exhibitions of Cartier-Bresson's work, usually highlighting one of the aspects of his work while minimizing the other, or creating sharp chronological divisions between his pre-war and post-war work defining it as either surrealist art photography or socially concerned photojournalism. The insistence on classifying and analyzing his work by numerous curators, critics and historians is even more curious considering Cartier-Bresson's own feelings about the subject. In response to a question, "What do you consider more important, the subject or the photograph? Is it purely the formal

⁴⁷ Alex Kershaw, *Blood and Champagne: the Life and Times of Robert Capa* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo/Perseus, 2004), 181.

aspect, or what it can say about humanity and society?” Cartier-Bresson answered, “It’s a well known fact that form and content ought to be inseparable.”⁴⁸

It was the combination of his surrealist, anarchist and humanist ethics, and his style of shooting marked by his sense of composition and the freedom provided by a compact and fast camera, that gave Cartier-Bresson’s work its unmistakable signature. It’s important to understand that the references in his photography come from painting and literature, but also that he simply wanted to capture life and he used the camera as a tool. The aesthetics of his photographs cannot be divorced from their subject, which is for Cartier-Bresson, first and foremost, humankind. In Cartier-Bresson’s words, “Photography is nothing-it’s life that interests me.”

⁴⁸ Henri Cartier-Bresson, interview in *Manchete* (Brazil), March 6, 1969.

IV. *THE PEOPLE OF MOSCOW*: THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK'S DEVELOPMENT

a) The Cold War: Representations of Soviet People

The decade of the 1950s, during which the body of work that appeared in *The People of Moscow* was produced and the book published, marked the first ten years of the Cold War. The Cold War can be described as the state of political conflict and economic competition between the Communist world, led by the Soviet Union, and the Western powers, with the United States at the helm. After Germany's defeat in World War II, the alliance between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, formed during the war, came to an end. As a result of the heightened tensions ensuing from the power struggle for the control of Europe, the raising of the "iron curtain" signaled the division of Europe between the East and the West.

Both sides of the Cold War conflict had a vital interest in how they were perceived. With television still being relatively new, the print media were the main source of information about world events. The decade immediately following World War II was marked by the rise of the picture magazines causing photojournalism to flourish. Before the advent of television, people satisfied their craving for knowledge about the world through picture magazines,⁴⁹ thereby assuring that photography would play an important role in shaping the image of each side of the Cold War conflict. Both the East and the West used propaganda with the goal of influencing public opinion within their own nation and promoting their image and values to the opposing

⁴⁹ Gretchen Garner, "Photography and Society in the 20th Century" in *Focal Encyclopedia of Photography: Digital Imaging, Theory and Applications, History, and Science*, ed. Michael R. Peres (New York: Elsevier/Focal Press, 2007), 192.

side. The picture magazines became vehicles through which the public experienced the world, and photography was an ideal tool for disseminating ideologies to mass audiences.

The printed material that circulated between the Soviet Union and the United States presented government sanctioned depictions of life in the respective nations. On one hand there was *Amerika*, a Russian language magazine published by the US Department of State and distributed in the Soviet Union between 1944 and 1952 and later from 1956 to 1994. This glossy publication, replete with images of American life and culture, was one of the few sources of information about life outside of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Soviet *USSR in Construction* magazine published between 1931 and 1941, as well as again in 1949, abounded in idealized and politicized representations of the Soviets.

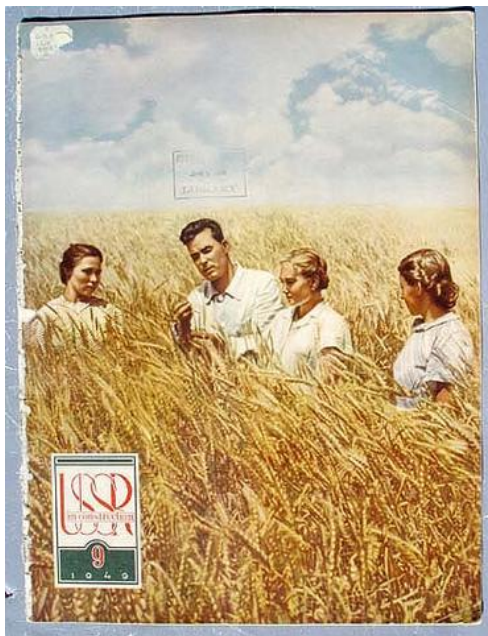


Figure 2. *USSR in Construction* cover, July 1949.



Figure 3. *USSR in Construction*, idealized representation of the Soviet people. September

Such publications employed constructivist photomontage and socialist realism images created by artists who instead of recording life created more idealized versions of it.⁵⁰ This exchange of controlled visual representations of the Soviet and American people assured the construction of a particular image controlled by the official vision of the respective nations. Since the East and the West were, for the most part, closed off to each other, confirming the accuracy of these representations by first hand experience was not a viable option.

In addition to the Soviet illustrated magazines, there were the news agencies such as TASS (Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza) whose role was gathering and dissemination of information. The agency fed the filtered, government-approved information about the Soviet Union to the rest of the world.⁵¹ In many cases the photographs taken by the TASS photographers are the only visual records of the events portrayed, as a special license was required to take photographs of public events. It is this official version of life in the Soviet Union filtered through the TASS agency that was presented abroad. The effect on the Western world was that it had formed a perception of the Soviet people based on an image manufactured by their government. The film and photographic industry was nationalized in 1919 and placed under the control of the Soviet government becoming an ideological tool.⁵² The photographers working for the Soviet state agencies were constrained by the notions that the Soviet government

⁵⁰ Ankisha refers to these artists as photographer-directors who staged their pictures. Konstantin Akinsha, "Painting Versus Photography: A Battle of Mediums in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture," in *Beyond Memory: Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-related Works of Art*, ed. Diane Neumaier (New Brunswick, N.J.: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 36.

⁵¹ TASS had offices in 126 countries. Steve Phillips, *The Cold War: Conflict in Europe and Asia* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2001), 167.

⁵² Elena Barkhatova, "Soviet Policy on Photography," in *Beyond Memory: Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-related Works of Art*, ed. Diane Neumaier (New Brunswick, N.J.: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 47.

impressed upon them, such as that the photojournalists' allegiance must be to the Communist cause and that their work should be produced in the service of the Soviet government.⁵³ In contrast, photographers who were free agents, like Cartier-Bresson, were unencumbered by such constraints and responded spontaneously to the events around them. However, while Cartier-Bresson was not working for any government agency, this does not imply that he did not have an agenda of his own influenced by his personal and political beliefs.

In rare instances, Western photographers were granted visas to travel to the Soviet Union and given permission to photograph the country. Between Stalin's rise to power and his death in 1953, two major examinations of life in the Soviet Union were published in a book form: Margaret Bourke-White's *Eyes on Russia* in 1931 and a collaboration between John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, *A Russian Journal*, in 1948. However, both books were realized before the beginning of the Cold War, which might have had an effect on the subject matter contained in the images, as well as how they were presented on the pages of these books and the ways text and images worked together.

Margaret Bourke-White's *Eyes on Russia* was focused not so much on the Soviet people as it was on the rapid industrial development of the Soviet Union. In addition, the photographs merely supplemented Bourke-White's written account in the form of a travelogue. Illustrating 135 pages of writing, there were only sixteen photographs.

⁵³ Elena Barkhatova, "Soviet Policy on Photography," in *Beyond Memory: Soviet Nonconformist Photography and Photo-related Works of Art*, ed. Diane Neumaier (New Brunswick, N.J.: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 51.

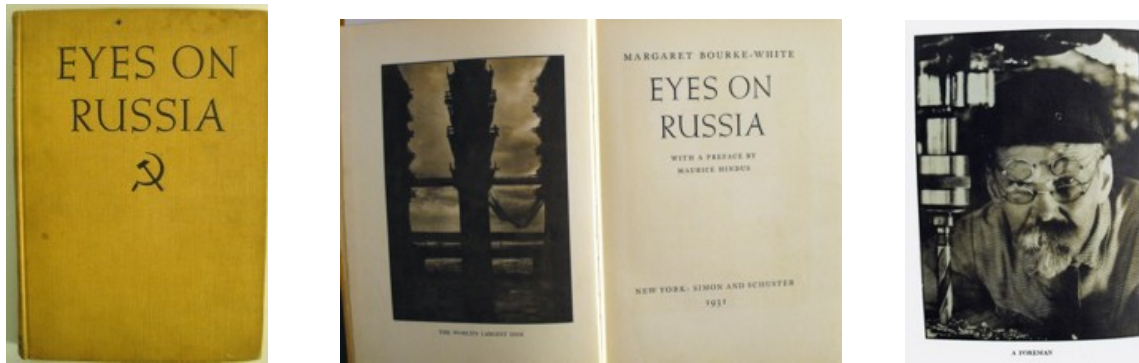


Figure 4. Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia* cover (left), frontispiece (middle) and a pasted-in photograph (right). Simon & Schuster. New York. 1931

The photographs were reproduced in beautiful black and white gravure and printed on separated pages that were then pasted into the book. Due to Bourke-White's use of a large format camera, the photographs were posed and static. The choices made in printing and presentation of the photographs gave the subject a stylized and romanticized feel.

A Russian Journal also elevated the writing over the photographs, especially since the writer was as prominent a personality as John Steinbeck. The title page emphasizes the writer's name, positioned on top of the page in a large font, while Capa's name was printed smaller, placed under the title and given a supplementary feel by using the words "with photographs by."

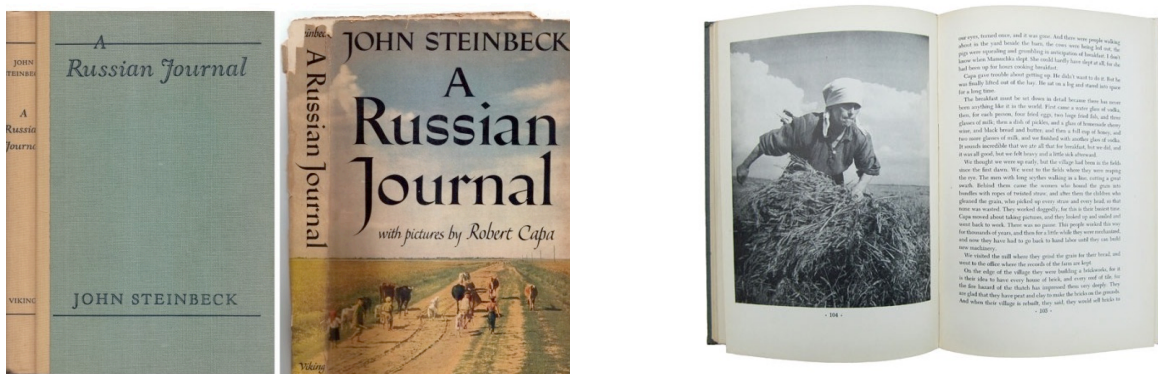


Figure 5. John Steinbeck/ Robert Capa, *A Russian Journal* cover (left) and an example of a photograph used to illustrate text (right). Viking Press, 1948.

The first photograph in the book appears on page twenty-three in chapter three without any caption. This is the case with the rest of the photographs in the book, although, out of seventy photographs reproduced in it, most were placed next to the text they illustrate. In contrast to these two examples, in *The People of Moscow* the photographs are central to the book and while the book communicates through the combination of photographs and text, the use of narrative is subtler, giving the text a supplementary feel. The picture story is more easily absorbed by the reader, making a bigger impact on the audience.

b) Cartier-Bresson in the Soviet Union

In 1953, Stalin's death would cause the calming of international tensions and a brief thaw in the Cold War. Sensing that this event might make previously closed-off Soviet borders more receptive to foreign visitors, Cartier-Bresson immediately applied for a visa. After an approximately eight month long wait, in July of 1954, his visa was finally approved. In the foreword to *The People of Moscow*, Cartier-Bresson explains that the decision might have been influenced by *The Decisive Moment* book that had found its way to the Soviet government officials and had been favorably received. He became the first Western photographer in seven years to be granted entrance to the Soviet Union and given permission to photograph its people.

Around the same time, Magnum Photos was struggling to stay afloat. At their five-year anniversary in 1952, Capa announced that the agency was barely making ends meet.⁵⁴ Shortly after this, the agency hired John Morris, the former photo editor of *Life* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, to manage the agency under the title of the executive editor. The Magnum crisis was

⁵⁴ Alex Kershaw, *Blood and Champagne: the Life and Times of Robert Capa* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo/Perseus, 2004), 233.

deepened two years later as a result of the deaths of two of its leading photographers in May of 1954; Robert Capa was killed when he stepped on a landmine while on an assignment for *Life* magazine in Indochina, and Werner Bischof died in an accident in Peru. Cartier-Bresson's trip to the Soviet Union came at a perfect time as several major picture magazines were pursuing Magnum in hopes of gaining the exclusive rights to the story; it had the potential to make a large amount of money for the agency, assuring its survival.

Cartier-Bresson and his wife Elie (Ratna Mohini) left for the Soviet Union on July 8, 1954, two days after their visas came through. Upon their arrival, they were assigned an interpreter and given restrictions on what they could photograph; among the forbidden zones were locations that were considered transportation and military targets.⁵⁵ As Cartier-Bresson explains in the book's foreword, since he was interested in capturing ordinary people immersed in their daily activities, this limitation did not present a problem. Cartier-Bresson spent over two months photographing in the Soviet Union. This was his way of working, as he describes in an interview from 1958 "You can't rush in and out. It takes time to understand, to have a feeling of a place. You have a general idea of a country, but when you get there, you realize that your preconceived idea was right or wrong, but you mustn't push the preconceived idea you had."⁵⁶ This pursuit to gain a deeper understanding of the Soviet people resulted in Cartier-Bresson returning home with almost 10,000 photographs.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Henri Cartier-Bresson, foreword to *The People of Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), unpaginated.

⁵⁶ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Famous Photographers Tell How Interview*, American Suburb X, 1958.

⁵⁷ Clément Chéroux, *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 2008), 72.

It must be noted that this approach to portraying the Soviet people in a kinder light, partly owed to the humanist approach to photography that Cartier-Bresson favored, also reflected his political leanings. While the discussion of Cartier-Bresson's politics deserves more attention, it is a topic that, due to the limitations of the scope of this thesis, will not be explored in depth within this essay. With that said, a brief mention of Cartier-Bresson's ties to Communism is needed in order to better understand his motivations behind *The People of Moscow*. Although it is not clear whether he was ever a card-carrying member of the Communist party, he was certainly a sympathizer. Cartier-Bresson's connection to communism goes back to the 1920s and his friendships with René Crevel and André Breton, both actively engaged within the Communist party, with whom he attended their meetings. Furthermore, Cartier-Bresson was involved with the surrealist circle and became an avid reader of their magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste* that often referenced communism.⁵⁸ These ties, combined with his rebellion against his family's bourgeois background, could have influenced the choices he made in portraying the Soviet people in his reportage.

Upon his return to Paris, Cartier-Bresson carefully edited his contact sheets, choosing around 150 photographs to be printed in two sets of prints for Magnum to distribute in the United States and Europe. In late November of the same year, John Morris flew from Paris to New York in order to bring the prints back to New York as the decision had been made to sell the story to an American magazine first; the idea was that the American magazines would influence the European market sales. As Magnum was in a financial crisis, the maximization of profit from the sales was highly desirable. John Morris started negotiating the sale of the photographs with three

⁵⁸ Pierre Assouline, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: A Biography* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 33.

interested parties: *Holiday*, *Life* and *Look*. At *Holiday*, there was talk about devoting an entire issue to the story; however, both *Holiday* and *Look* were outbid. Ed Thompson, *Life*'s managing editor, wrote a letter directly to Cartier-Bresson about the treatment of the story, emphasizing his willingness to reproduce Cartier-Bresson's captions faithfully.⁵⁹ It is uncertain whether this influenced the decision in any way, or if it was the sum of \$40,000 paid for the story, but *Life* had won the bidding war in the United States.

With the *Life* deal finalized, Morris flew back to Paris in order to start negotiating the sale of the story on the European market. Roger Therond of the *Paris Match*, determined to design a spread superior to the one in *Life*, was the first of the European editors to get a look at the photographs and make a deal with Magnum Paris. Subsequently, Morris made trips to several other countries selling the story to The German *Der Stern*, the Italian *Epoca* and the British *Picture Post*. Other minor European picture magazines in Scandinavian countries picked up the story, with Magnum representatives handling the sale.

In the United States, the photographs were first published in two issues of *Life* on January 17 and 31, 1955. The first part, a cover story published under the title *The People of Russia: Moscow*, featured thirty-one photographs. Out of those chosen for the article, only fourteen photographs eventually appeared in the book. The photograph chosen for the cover was that of two uniformed military men looking at two girls waiting for a trolley with the caption reading "military appraisal at a Moscow trolley stop."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ John G. Morris, *Get the Picture: A Personal Story of Photojournalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 168.

⁶⁰ Cover of *Life* January 17, 1955.



Figure 6. *Life* magazine cover, The People of Russia, part 1. January 17, 1955.

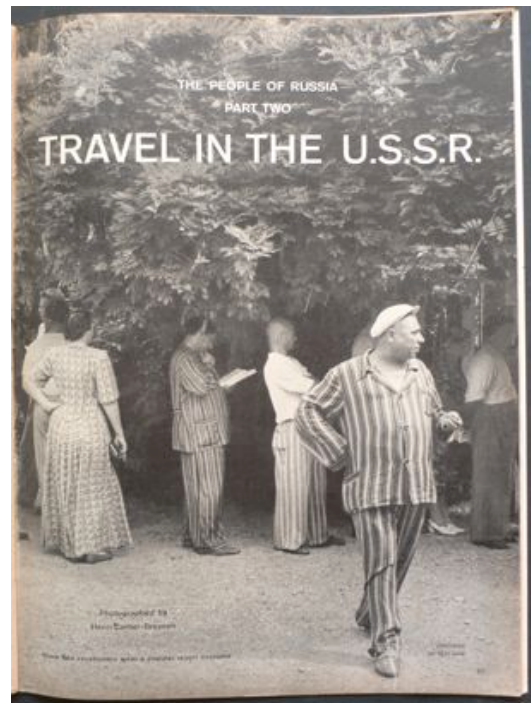


Figure 7. *Life* magazine, The People of Russia, part 2. January 31, 1955.

The same photograph was later to appear on the cover of the American edition of *The People of Moscow*, and was also reproduced in the book; the caption was straightforward and it had simply read, “waiting for the trolley.”⁶¹ The second part of the story was published two weeks later as *The People of Russia: Travel in the USSR*. Similarly to the first part of the story, out of twenty-four photographs published in the second part, only one appears in the book.⁶² *Life*’s approach to the story took on a critical tone, and the treatment of the photographs attested that the American attitudes toward the Soviet Union were far from objective. Some of the captions had clearly been changed to emphasize the negative aspects of the life in the USSR, such as the shortage of goods and the lack of fashions. It would seem that Ed Thompson did not fully honor his promise

⁶¹ Henri and Ellie Cartier-Bresson, caption for the image number twenty-six in *The People of Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), unpaginated.

⁶² The differences between the photographs chosen for the book and those selected for the magazines provide another interesting area of comparison that merits further research; however, it is a topic that is beyond this essay’s discussion.

to reproduce Cartier-Bresson's captions faithfully. Additionally, the introductory text ends on a political note with a deliberation over the current state of politics in the Soviet Union, and the future of the Soviet-American relations.

Paris Match explored the story in thirty-two photographs on January 29, 1955 and, similarly to *Life* magazine, only about half of the photographs used were also included in the book.

However, the story was presented with a decidedly different point of view.



Figure 8. *Paris Match*, Le Peuple Russe, cover. January 29, 1955.

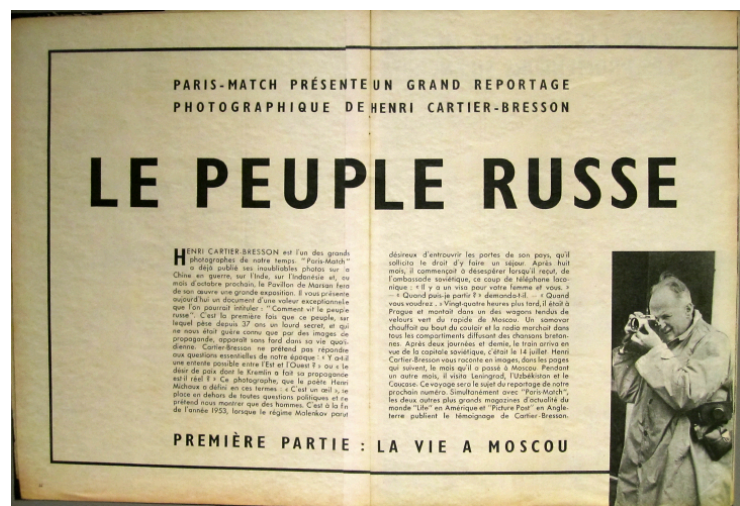


Figure 9. *Paris Match*, Le Peuple Russe, page 44 January 29, 1955.

The text accompanying the photographs in *Paris Match* had the same tone as the captions Cartier-Bresson used in the book; the overall voice was more descriptive than critical and presumptuous. Furthermore, in *Paris Match* the photographer's significance was accentuated by giving more prominence to his point of view. The complete first page of the story was devoted to Cartier-Bresson's experience in the Soviet Union, his name was featured more prominently in relation to the headline and it even included a photograph of him with a camera.

By the time John Morris returned from New York after negotiating the sale of the photographs to *Life* magazine, the interest in the story was growing. Robert Delpire, who had collaborated with Cartier-Bresson on a couple of earlier projects, approached Morris with an interest in putting together a book on Moscow.

V. THE PEOPLE OF MOSCOW: AN ANALYSIS

a) The Book's Conception

On June 15, 1955, the master printers Draeger Frères of Montrouge printed the French edition of *The People of Moscow* book under its original title *Moscou Vu Par: Henri Cartier-Bresson*. The photographs were reproduced in heliogravure from the original prints made by Pierre Gassmann, the founder of Pictorial Service, a professional printing lab based in Paris. The same printers produced the American edition of the book, published by Simon and Schuster in New York in September of the same year.

The book's editor and publisher, Robert Delpire, a pioneer in the publishing of photographic books in France, envisioned the initial design of the book using the photographs selected by Cartier-

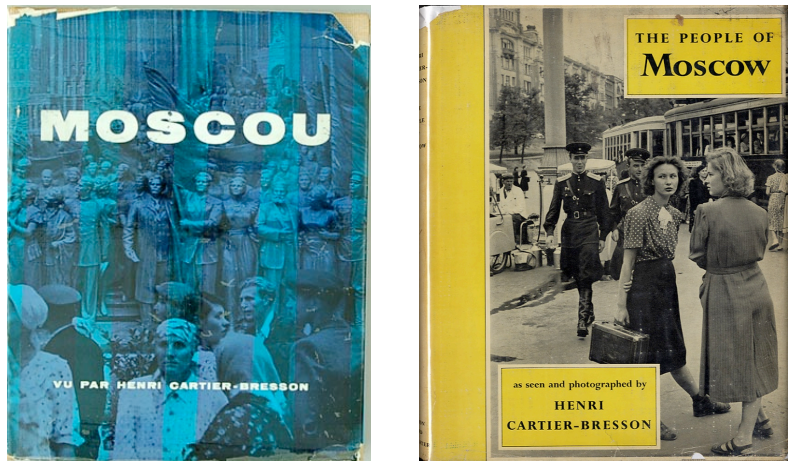


Figure 10. Cartier-Bresson *Moscou* (the French edition, Delpire) and *The People of Moscow* (American edition, Simon and Schuster), 1955

Bresson, John Morris and Delpire himself.⁶³ As Morris recalls, “One evening at Henri’s studio on Rue Daniel Casanova we spread the prints on the floor. I think the book took shape simply by using the pictures the three of us [Cartier-Bresson, Delpire and Morris] agreed upon. All further layout and editorial work was done by Delpire and his people.”⁶⁴ This willingness to relinquish control over the book’s design might seem surprising, as Cartier-Bresson is known for being very concerned with retaining control over the use of his images. However, as Cartier-Bresson

⁶³ John Morris, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2011.

⁶⁴ John Morris, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2011.

clarifies in an answer to an interview question, while he put his trust into the capabilities of his designer friends, he always discussed the design with them:

“My intuitive approach to photography and my constant preoccupation with the single image makes me a poor designer. I find it difficult to create harmony among different photos. I leave this to my publisher friends, to art directors and curators, with whom I always discuss the layout.”⁶⁵

He expresses a similar attitude towards editing in an interview with Beaumont Newhall by stating that, “the editor should create from these pictures [those chosen by the photographer], by appropriate presentation and by necessary captions, the unified whole.”⁶⁶ Both of these statements imply that while he gave the book editors the final word on the design, he had the freedom of deciding which photographs were to be included in the books; with picture magazines the selection of photographs was in the hands of the magazine editors.

In conceiving *The People of Moscow* book, Cartier-Bresson, Robert Delpire and John Morris all played important roles; the photographer, the book publisher and designer, and the magazine editor brought their own backgrounds, training and personal design aesthetics to the table. This is evident in the combination of composition, perspective and harmony with the story-telling qualities of a picture magazine photo-essay. Cartier-Bresson’s images embody strong formal elements, but they also always illuminate cultural and social contexts. These elements cannot be separated, but one or the other can be emphasized, something that had been done in the previous books, magazine spreads and exhibitions. By highlighting one of the elements and de-

⁶⁵ Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper. “Henri Cartier-Bresson” in *Dialogue with Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), 78.

⁶⁶ Beaumont Newhall, “Vision Plus the Camera; Henri Cartier-Bresson.” In *Photography: Essays and Images*, edited by Beaumont Newhall (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 287.

emphasizing the other, the images have the ability to function as either art or document. In *The People of Moscow*, both qualities of Cartier-Bresson's work are present, blending almost seamlessly.

The choice of a publisher for *The People of Moscow* book was not arbitrary. Both publishers of Cartier-Bresson's 1950s books, Delpire and Tériade, were friends with whom he had already worked and who became long-term collaborators. Delpire was a young man who at twenty-three started a magazine *Neuf*, a luxury, glossy, art magazine for doctors. As Badger and Parr note, he also had a "keen interest in anthropology and his basic agenda was to publish work that was broadly in the documentary vein."⁶⁷ He elevated the photographic image from the pages of the picture magazines, by publishing photobooks and giving the photographer's names more prominence while treating the photograph as more than just an illustration of the texts. He had just published two other Cartier-Bresson books: *Danses à Bali* (1954) and *D'une Chine à l'autre* (1954).

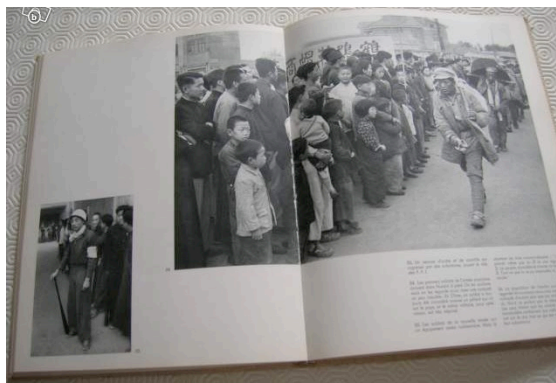
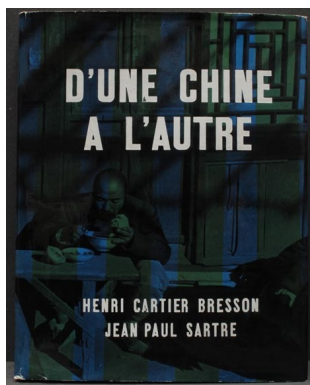


Figure 11. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *D'une Chine à l'autre* cover (left) and example of a layout (right). Delpire, 1954.

⁶⁷ "Memory and Reconstruction: The Postwar European Photobook," in *Photobook: a History, Volume I*, eds. Martin Parr and Gerry Badger (London; New York: Phaidon, 2004), 189.

While both books included texts by prominent writers, the use of photographs in the two publications was different. In *Danses à Bali*, the first Cartier-Bresson book published by Delpire, the photographs were used to illustrate a text that had already been written several years earlier. *D'une Chine à l'autre* took the format of an extended picture story; the photographs were extensively captioned and accompanied by an essay written by Jean-Paul Sartre. *The People of Moscow* clearly follows the same structure used by Delpire in the design of *D'une Chine à l'autre*, with the exception that Cartier-Bresson wrote all the text included in the book.⁶⁸

b) The Book's Description

The book is cloth bound, 28x22cm in size and it was originally accompanied by a dust jacket. While the copy examined and analyzed for the purpose of this thesis is the American edition, it must be noted that, aside from the image featured on the dust jacket, the two editions are identical in their design, layout and the choice of images. Upon opening the book, the first page features the title printed in small type in the upper right corner. On the second page, the title is placed more prominently in the middle of the page in large capital letters. Underneath, in much smaller type, the extended title reads: *seen by Henri Cartier-Bresson*. Cartier-Bresson's personal account of the trip to the USSR is offered in the foreword on the following two pages. With its 163 black-and-white photographs accompanied by extensive captions, the book offers a sketch of life in the Soviet Union through a careful combination of words and images. The photographs captured the Soviet people going about their daily business; they stand in sharp contrast to the images the Western audiences were used to seeing, such as idealized propaganda images

⁶⁸ Cartier-Bresson's wife co-wrote the captions. This is noted in the back of the French edition of *The People of Moscow*, "Les legends des photographies ont été rédigées par Ratna et Henri Cartier-Bresson." Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Moscou, vu par Henri Cartier-Bresson* (Paris: Delpire Editeur, 1955), back page.

produced by the Soviet Press agencies and romanticized accounts of the Soviets, as those reproduced in Margaret Bourke-White's 1931 book *Eyes on Russia*.⁶⁹

What was so unexpected about the photographs in *The People of Moscow*, was that the people pictured were so ordinary that the photographs could have been taken in any large European city. This was so striking that it was addressed in several reviews of the book. Such was the veil of mystery enveloping the Soviet Union that the Western public must not have expected to see ordinary people going about their daily business. In the foreword Cartier-Bresson notes, "...I was able to photograph a great many people, living and behaving just the way they would have if I had not been there. Before my trip to Moscow, I had already seen a large number of photographs of Soviet Russia. Yet my first reaction was one of surprise and discovery."⁷⁰

c) The People of Moscow and Earlier Cartier-Bresson Books

Compared to two of the earlier Cartier-Bresson books, *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans*, *The People of Moscow* book provides a stark contrast while it also retains some elements of their design. Both *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* were first published by Tériade, who gained his success as the artistic director of the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* and editor of an avant-garde publication *Verve*. He eventually founded the publishing house Éditions Verve that produced mostly artists' books by such venerable names as Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Giacometti and Chagall. These so called Le Grande Livres were masterpieces, combining existing texts of well-known authors with original illustrations by an artist, as well as presenting the artworks accompanied by the texts written by the featured artists. These original works of art

⁶⁹ Margaret Bourke-White, *Eyes on Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931).

⁷⁰ Henri and Ellie Cartier-Bresson, foreword to *The People of Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), unpaginated.

were produced in very limited editions. These artists' books were almost exclusively dedicated to painters, draftsmen and printmakers; Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* were the only photographic books in this series produced by Tériade. However, the images were reproductions of photographs and not original prints as was the case in other Éditions Verve books. In *The Decisive Moment*, an original piece of writing by Cartier-Bresson accompanied the photographs; this text, conceived at Tériade's insistence, would come to define Cartier-Bresson's style and approach to photography.⁷¹

Both *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* reproduced the photographs in a much larger format than *The People of Moscow* and their size demands attention.



Figure 12. Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* cover (left) and example of a page layout (right). Tériade, 1952. Cover by Henri Matisse.

⁷¹ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Untitled* in *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster; Paris: Éditions Verve, 1952).

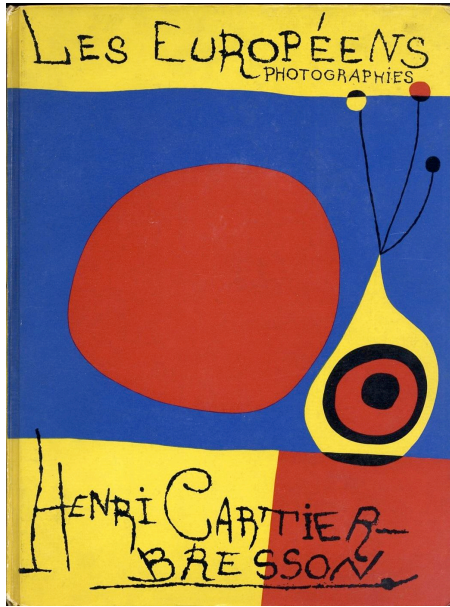


Figure 13. Cartier-Bresson, *The Europeans* cover (left) and example of a page layout (right). Tériade, 1955. Cover by Joan Miró

The book covers bore striking works of famous painters. *The Decisive Moment* featured a drawing by Matisse, *The Europeans*' cover was designed by Miró, while *The People of Moscow* featured one of the photographs from the book on the dust jacket. The information supplied in the back of both of the books notes that the design and layout were conceived and composed by Tériade with collaboration of Marguerite Lang with the printing executed from engravings by Draeger Frères in heliogravure. Similarly, the photographs in *The People of Moscow* book were beautifully reproduced in heliogravure, the quality of printing matching that of *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans*. Although the context was prioritized in conceiving *The People of Moscow*, importance was still placed on the quality of the prints reproduced in the book.

The Decisive Moment contains 126 images arranged in chronological order, reproduced in a large format. They are essentially without context as Cartier-Bresson's particular aesthetic, personified by harmony, composition and proportion of the image, and emphasized by the

book's design, suppressed the social and cultural context of the images. As the Finnish philosopher, Arto Haapala, explains in his writing on aesthetics, "In the context of art the everyday loses its every-dayness; it becomes something extraordinary. When taken out of the context of day-to-day living and put into an artistic context, [Cartier-Bresson's photograph] becomes an object of wonder."⁷² This transformation is helped by isolating the images through surrounding them with clean white margins and using no text next to the images. While each photograph is captioned, the information included provides minimal context and the text is confined to separate pages in the back of the book. There are three different types of layouts, an image taking up a single page; two images per page; and a double page spread. Single page photographs significantly outnumber the other two layout styles.

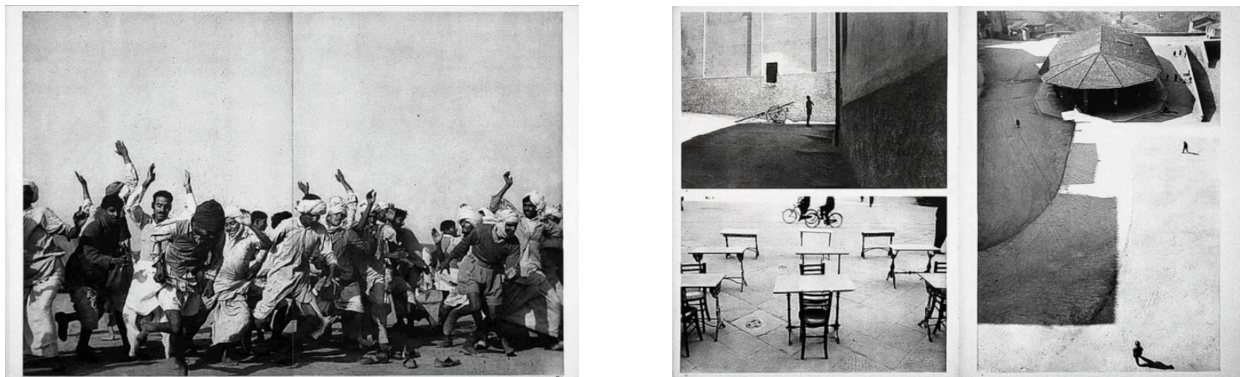


Figure 14. *The Decisive Moment*. Two examples of the types of the page layouts. A double page spread (left), two photographs on the same page and one photograph per page (right).

The Europeans is in many ways a follow up book to *The Decisive Moment*. It shares the same three layout variations with the majority of photographs reproduced as single page images. The

⁷² Arto Haapala, "On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness and the Meaning of Place." In *The Aesthetics of the Everyday*, edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (Columbia University Press, 2005), 51.

114 photographs are arranged by country, as well as chronologically within each geographical section. In these two books, the prevalence of single photographs existing as autonomous visual statements directs the viewer's attention towards the importance of each photograph as an independent piece. What is emphasized by the books' layout are the formal visual qualities of the images that guide the reading of the photographs as art.

While *The People of Moscow* contains strong elements of the layout and sequencing often used in picture magazines, what becomes evident from studying the book is the continuing presence of the design elements used in the books published by Tériade.



Figure 15. *The People of Moscow*: spread showing a layout influenced by Cartier-Bresson monographs. Image 146.

For example, while many spreads of *The People of Moscow* use several juxtaposed photographs to create parts of the story, a comparable number of spreads use single images printed across two pages, as well as single page images. In such cases, the treatment of the photographs moves away from the picture magazine presentation and favors a layout that is minimal by using clean white margins devoid of any text. The images singled out in such a way usually fall in the category of the formally stronger images in terms of their composition.

Another important element that is encountered in the monographs published by Tériade, and also recurs in *The People of Moscow*, is the arrangement of adjacent pictures juxtaposed in such a way as to visually complement and extend them almost to the point of creating a collage. For example, some spreads in *The People of Moscow* book consist of two images placed side by side in such a way that they create an illusion of a single image. The two images numbered 21 and 22 are placed next to each other in such an arrangement that the facades of the two buildings in the upper part of the photographs create a perspective that unifies them. Had the photographs been reversed the effect would have been lost. This recurs in several other spreads, such as the one of the crowd of spectators watching a sports event in the images numbered 87 and 88.



Figure 16. *The People of Moscow*: juxtaposition of two images creates a collage unifying the building's façades. Images 21 and 22.

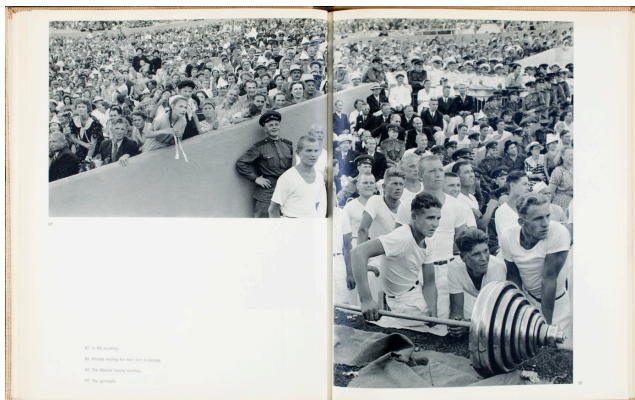


Figure 17. *The People of Moscow* spread: The photographs are lined up in such a way to create an illusion of one single uninterrupted wall. Images 87 and 88.

The photographs are positioned on the spread in such a way that the walls that divide the audience from the field are perfectly lined up. They seemingly appear as the same wall in both photographs, even though the photographs were taken from different angles and distances. In *The Decisive Moment*, a similar interplay of images on the page is intensified by the layout design of the spreads. Through the echoed gestures, returned glances from across the page, lined up facades and repeated patterns, the images communicate with each other.



Figure 18. *The Decisive Moment*: three spreads showing visual relationships between photographs on opposing pages

The harmony created by such a layout is evident in a number of spreads; as shown in figure 18, there are the two photographs of men with their faces hidden behind a similar gesture, the two photographs of women, their eyes meeting across the gutter of the spread, and the two photographs in which the extended arms of the two crowds of people seem to cross over the edge of one frame and enter the adjacent photograph.

d) *The People of Moscow* and the Picture Magazine Influences

While *The People of Moscow* retained some of the important elements of Cartier-Bresson's monographs, the book draws its basic structure from picture magazine photo-essays. It presents various aspects of quotidian life of the Soviets organized in twelve thematic chapters: The Kremlin, The Street, The Stores, Industry and Construction Work, The Subway, The Museums, Religion, Sports Day, The Agricultural Exhibition, Entertainment, The Shows and Youth. Each chapter consists of anywhere between eight and nineteen images of various sizes.



Figure 19. *Life* magazine, The People of Russia spread example



Figure 20. *Paris Match*, Le Peuple Russe spread example

Life magazine's treatment of the story follows a similar layout. The story deals with a single setting, focused on people and their daily experiences and divided in thematic sections dealing

with subjects such as sightseeing, shopping, leisure, entertainment, youth, etc. The *Paris Match* story is similarly divided in several themes depicting various activities of the Soviet people.

Besides the use of a title page to indicate the beginning of each new chapter of *The People of Moscow* book, each section's beginning and end are signaled by a full-page image metaphorically acting as an opening and a closing sentence of the chapter, thereby enclosing the rest of the images within it.



Figure 21. *The People of Moscow*, examples of an opening and closing spread of a chapter

The closing image of each chapter also acts as a transition between different thematic sections; printed on the left side of the spread, the last image of each section faces the title page of the next one. These images seem to have been carefully chosen for their composition that produces the effect of directing the eye to the right and leading the viewer towards each new chapter. This technique creates a connection between the chapters, unifying them into one extended picture story. Similarly to the photo-essays in *Life* and *Paris Match*, where each new section contains an extended text in addition to the captions, each chapter of *The People of Moscow* begins with an introductory text presenting the main theme of that section.



Figure 22. *Life* magazine spread (left) and *The People of Moscow* (right) spreads, Introductory texts at the beginning of each section.

While the captions in both the book and the *Life* and *Paris Match* stories are extensive, text and image seem to be more integrated on the pages of the picture magazines. The book's captions are interspersed with images, although, unlike the captions in *Life* and *Paris Match*, they are not always placed on the same page as the image they describe; this is mostly the case with the single images taking up the whole spread or with the pages that feature a single image. The size and lightness of the text also give it a supplementary feel although the captions included are substantial and the information they provide is significant. The picture magazine captions, on the other hand, relate to each photograph by starting each caption with a phrase literally describing a prominent detail in the photograph, thus creating a stronger connection between text and image.

While in many spreads of *The People of Moscow*, photographs dominate the page, emphasizing what Cartier-Bresson saw over the textual narrative, in other spreads text can guide the reading of the images, as the language is not always merely descriptive. This type of image/text relationship is characteristic of picture magazine photo-essays.

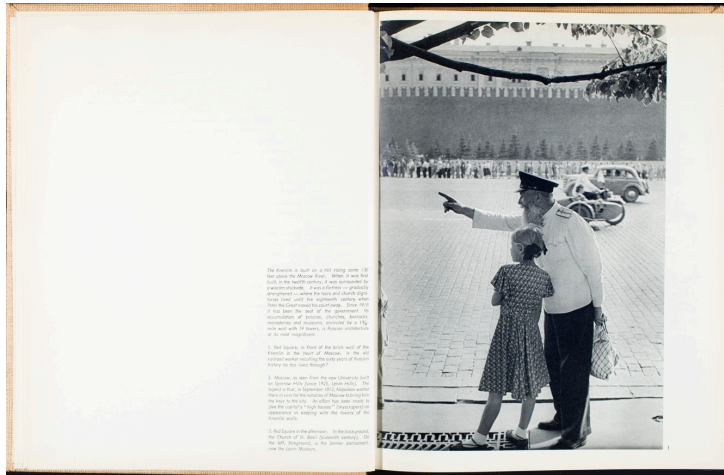


Figure 23. *The People of Moscow*. Opening image of the first chapter “The Kremlin” showing the image/ text relationship.

The opening image of the first thematic chapter entitled “Kremlin” depicts an older man in uniform standing on the street with a young girl. Both are facing away from the camera, while the man, with his arm extended, is pointing at a spot in the distance outside of the frame of the photograph. In the foreground, just above the man’s head, a tree branch extends in the same direction as his arm, paralleling its contour. The caption for the image reads, “Red Square, in front of the brick wall of the Kremlin in the heart of Moscow. Is the old railroad worker recalling the sixty years of Russian history he has lived through?”⁷³ The caption has a double effect; it provides the reader with an immediate literal description of the image, and it offers a fragment of Russian history while emphasizing that those days have passed. Looking back at the image after reading the caption, instead of reflecting on the formal composition of the tree branch and the man’s arm, the viewer is guided to consider the symbolism of the outstretched arm as pointing towards the past and the long history of the Soviet people. We see this same image/text behavior in one of the spreads of the Cartier-Bresson story featured in *Life* magazine.

⁷³ Henri and Ellie Cartier-Bresson, caption for the image number 1 in *The People of Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), unpaginated.



BEWILDERED. roughly dressed peasants in the Tretyakov Gallery stare at an exhibition of cartoons sharply attacking American capitalists and “imperialists.”

Figure 24. *Life* magazine. A selection from The People of Russia story showing how captions can influence the reading of the image.

The caption for a photograph of a group of people visiting a museum reads, “**BEWILDERED,** roughly dressed peasants in the Tretyakov Gallery stare at an exhibition of cartoons sharply attacking American capitalists and ‘imperialists.’”⁷⁴ While the object of their attention is outside of the frame of the photograph, and there is no sure way of knowing what exactly they are looking at, the reader cannot help but be affected by the combination of the words and the image. Various examples of this interplay of images and text are evident in other thematic chapters in the book. The second section, titled “The Street,” is introduced with an image of a well-dressed woman with a flower-decorated hat. Caught in typical Cartier-Bresson fashion, in the split second as she turns to the photographer, she stands out from her background of street vendors selling flowers and a street laden with heavy traffic framed by a row of tall buildings.

⁷⁴ “The People Of Russia: Part One: Moscow,” *Life*, January 17, 1955, 19.



Figure 25. *The People of Moscow*: an example of a layout in which the caption has not been placed next to the image. Image 20.

While the woman seems to be the focal point of the photograph, the caption text emphasizes the background action, "...On the right, a large hotel in process of construction. In front of a taxi stand, women are selling flowers from their gardens. Small private businesses, however, are almost nonexistent; stores belong to cooperatives or to other state organizations."⁷⁵ Once again, the reading of the image is affected by the information provided in the caption that places the emphasis on the less obvious parts of the photograph; however, the impact is lessened by the placement of the caption. Removing the text from the image page and placing it on a page directly preceding the image creates a different effect. Should the viewer read the caption and then look at the image, the context would leave an impact on the viewer and affect the reading of the image. The decisive moment of the photograph takes second place to the background action. However, the reader, in this case, is also given an option to absorb the image unaffected by the context should s/he chose to skip reading the caption on the previous page. When absorbed in this way, the form trumps the content.

⁷⁵ Henri and Ellie Cartier-Bresson, caption for the image number twenty in *The People of Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), unpaginated.

The layout of the images in the book is designed around the double-page spread and it can be broken down into eight different types of spreads and fourteen variations. While some spreads feature a single photograph or a pair of photographs, a larger number of spreads use various combinations of several photographs in different sizes. Akin to the *Life* and *Paris Match* spreads, *The People of Moscow* employs a type of layout design where combinations of images were used to illustrate different parts of the picture story; smaller images were at times used to emphasize a detail of a larger image, two or more images were juxtaposed in such a way as to create a dialogue between the images, and weaker images were placed alongside others to give them purpose.



Figure 26. *The People of Moscow*. Examples of picture magazine-style layouts

Presenting images by using such a dynamic picture magazine-style layout emphasized the sequences of images. Placing the photographs in particular sequences, using captions and moving away from the one-image-per-page presentation guides the interpretation of the book as a unified whole rather than emphasizing the importance of each photograph as an autonomous object.

In addition, the arrangement of the chapters further guides the reading of the book as a photo-essay with a beginning and an end. Sequencing the chapters by beginning with the distant past

epitomized by the Kremlin, continuing with the section depicting progress in the areas of industry and culture and finally culminating with the chapter on youth, the book's message clearly speaks of the changes that are underway. One of the last images in the book, within the Youth section, depicts a group of young children dancing in a circle while the seated adults pictured in the background observe the dance; perhaps this image can be interpreted as a comment on the role of the new generation in the future of the country.

e) The Book's Reception

At the time of its publishing, *The People of Moscow* book met with mixed reviews. Taking into consideration the political climate of the Cold War, it is not of great surprise that the reviews in the American newspapers tended to be more critical than those by their European counterparts. While all praised the quality of Cartier-Bresson's photography, what the American reviews found disappointing was the absence of images more critical of the Soviet regime. One of the early reviews from *The New Herald Tribune*, published on October 25, 1955, begins with positive remarks by commenting on the lack of posed photographs and the presence of movement, as well as admiring Cartier-Bresson's ability to capture life in a natural manner from an insider's point of view.⁷⁶ However, after the initial accolades, the review shifts the tone and it equates the book with propaganda, noting that it left something to be desired.⁷⁷ That "something" as the review points out was not the dressed-up face of Moscow, but the behind the scenes look into family lives.

⁷⁶ Robert Sage, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The New Herald Tribune*, October 25, 1955.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

A similar tone is offered in two *New York Times* reviews published in late 1955 and early 1956. In “The Facade in Focus,” the reviewer notes, “there are many pictures here of which any man might be proud. Unfortunately, however, the camera was trained almost entirely on the facade and rarely saw behind it.”⁷⁸ He concludes by stating that the quality of the photographs is not the issue. Instead, the reviewer’s concern focuses on the content that, in his opinion, is as laden with propaganda as the official photography of the Soviet government.⁷⁹ Another review from January 8, 1956, is not quite as specific in its list of grievances nor does it equate the book with propaganda. However, while it finds some of the individual photographs remarkable, the review ends on a negative note, simply stating that, as an overall body of work, they do not succeed.⁸⁰ What was expected of Cartier-Bresson was another *Decisive Moment*.

In contrast, the French reviews are full of regard, admiration and praise for the work published in *The People of Moscow*. An advertisement for the book in *L’oeil*, as if in response to the American newspapers’ accusations of propaganda on part of Cartier-Bresson, asserts that the photographs in the book are a document that is not meant to impart ideas about communism, to create conclusions, or draw comparisons, but, instead, it is a body of work that represents Cartier-Bresson’s visual discovery of Moscow.⁸¹ In a *Le Monde* review from October 15, 1955, the credit is given to the quality of the book’s design and the reproductions of photographs, as well as the flawless composition and framing of Cartier-Bresson’s images. The review ends by

⁷⁸ Harry Schwartz, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, New York Times, December 25, 1955.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Camera Notes: Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, New York Times, January 8, 1956.

⁸¹ *The People of Moscow* book advertisement, *L’oeil* (Paris), n.d.

calling it “a gift from a master.”⁸² Another review in *L’education Nationale* expresses admiration for the photographs’ visual appeal, while also acknowledging both the documentary and artistic value of this collection of photographs.⁸³

Especially telling are those reviews published in photography related journals and magazines focused on reviewing both *The People of Moscow* and *The Europeans*, as both books were published around the same time. Even the simple difference in price, fifteen dollars for *The Europeans* in contrast to ten dollars for *The People of Moscow*, elevates the value of one book over the other. While *The People of Moscow* was not dismissed as a disappointment, it was labeled as a less significant work compared to *The Europeans*. Although not as favorably received as *The Decisive Moment*, *The Europeans* was viewed as the follow up to this book that confirmed Cartier-Bresson as the photographer of the decisive moment. The review in *Aperture* comments on *The People of Moscow*’s lack of “characteristic moments by which the Cartier-Bresson personality ordinarily shows itself.”⁸⁴ In contrast, the same review also describes the images in *The Europeans* as closer to the earlier, surrealist work.⁸⁵ The two books are viewed in terms of a crossroads in Cartier-Bresson’s work, and speculations are made in the review about the future of his career, favoring the prospect of Cartier-Bresson’s return to taking the kind of surreal photographs that appeared in *The Decisive Moment*.⁸⁶

⁸² C’est un don. D’un maitre. Robert Coiplet, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Le Monde* (Paris), October 15, 1955.

⁸³ R. Portal, Review of *The People of Moscow* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, *L’education Nationale* (Paris), January 26, 1956.

⁸⁴ Minor White, Review of *The People of Moscow* and *The Europeans*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson. *Aperture* 4, no.1 (1956): 39-40.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

This type of response to *The People of Moscow* book can be seen as a reflection of the changes in the design of the book as compared to the Cartier-Bresson monographs of the 1950s. By integrating photographs and text, as well as using the layout design that focused on telling a story, the photographs were no longer functioning only as isolated visual statements; instead, the contextual information contained in the photographs became the integral part of the work. The emphasis on the informational aspect of the photographs, at the time in the history of photography when the discipline was still fighting for recognition as an art form, might have been interpreted as a step backwards, thereby establishing *The People of Moscow* as an inferior body of work compared to the earlier monographs. Even today, fifty-five years later, theorists such as Peter Galassi describe *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* as the books that “gave full voice to the artistic dimension of Cartier-Bresson’s work, free from the compromises and disappointments of group journalism and the picture story format.”⁸⁷ Galassi goes on to dismiss the books published after *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* by stating that “not one is remotely comparable to those two in quality, either as a book itself or as a vehicle for the work as a whole.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 57.

⁸⁸ Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 58.

VI. CONCLUSION

Robert Delpire once noted, “Any juxtaposition of images, even if it is unintentional, creates meaning.”⁸⁹ In terms of Cartier-Bresson’s body of work, this creation of meaning is made apparent in the design of his books, and the split between the art historical and photojournalistic approach is at its most evident in the decade of the 1950s. *The Decisive Moment* and *The Europeans* presented a carefully curated selection of works that highlighted surrealist elements. On the other hand, *The People of Moscow* and *D’une Chine à l’autre* also stressed the social context contained in the photographs and emphasized by the use of text to supplement and clarify the content.

These books have provided an arena for further discussion about the intentions and motivations behind Cartier-Bresson’s work. Since the 1950s there has been a surge of scholarship examining Cartier-Bresson’s work. On one hand, there are those who conclude that the art in his work has been a side effect of his photojournalistic career, and that most of his photographs, even those presented in the context of fine art, were products of reportage.⁹⁰ Conversely, the work has also been claimed as an artistic pursuit helped and enriched by his photojournalistic career.⁹¹ In both cases, the studies of Cartier-Bresson’s work rely on the examination of his publications, as the book was the primary venue in which his work was available to the public. *The People of Moscow* book can be viewed as the first of the publications starting this debate because it brings side by side both aspects of Cartier-Bresson’s photography, art and photojournalism.

⁸⁹ Rober Delpire, ed, Special Photo, no.4 (New York: New York Review of Books, 1978)

⁹⁰ Claude Cookman, “Henri Cartier-Bresson: Master of Photographic Reportage,” in *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Man, the Image and the World: a Retrospective*, edited by Henri Cartier Bresson, Philippe Arbaïzar and Jean Clair (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 7.

⁹¹ Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 66.

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