The Visible and the Unseen.
On the Iconography of War Photography

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In the exhibit *Mexico City* in the summer of 2002 in New York, there was a devastating work of the video artist Ivan Edeza to be seen: an amateur film from the 70´s dealing with wealthy Whites hunting Brazilian Indians. A still photograph captures the moment of the deadly shot: from the open cargo-hatch of a flying helicopter, a man aims his shotgun at a person running for his life in a field below. (ill. 1) The photograph of the illegal hunt illustrates the murder as a perverse form of leisure activity.[1]

Scene-change: Vietnam War, 1968. (ill. 2) The take of the newspaper-photographer Philip Jones Griffiths shows an American sharpshooter in Saigon. Aiming his shotgun, the soldier is sitting on an antique chair, his legs stretched out to rest on the window sill, the barrel of the shotgun on a windowpane. With his finger on the trigger, the GI aims towards the outside. Below him on the floor-boards is a doll in between tools and other objects. The relaxed cowboy-like pose of the uniformed person strikes the eye, leaving the impression that the war has completely taken over the civilian world of a private apartment. The baroque easy-chair and the naked doll — things associated with personal use — seem displaced, and bring on the notion of plunderage.

Griffiths does not present us with American heroes. As in the still photograph from the amateur video, we believe to recognize a sniper who does his deadly trade under concealment, with no mercy, and furthermore, in a pose showing no respect for private places. In contrary to the still-shot, the victims of this marksman are invisible, their fate remains uncertain. The requisitioned furniture and the strewn objects on the floor serve as their representatives. For the observer there are questions left unanswered: Who is being targeted here? Where are the inhabitants and what happened to the child to whom the doll belongs? Griffiths´ picture is ambivalent and can therefore be understood as an anti-war photograph. On one hand it visualizes Rambo-like behavior and a lack of dignity. On the other hand, Griffiths´ explanation relativizes the GI´s supposed ambush: "Even if it doesn´t seem so, these soldiers

are currently being fired upon. Only seconds later the house was destroyed by a rocket." This photograph, too, does not speak for itself; rather, it is understandable only with knowledge of its context. Still, it is easy to imagine its use as propaganda when given an appropriate subtitle ignoring what actually happened.

Griffiths´ photograph originated at a time in which more and more US-Americans were pleading against continuing the war in Vietnam. A significant part in this growing weariness of the war was played by the photographs of Ronald Haeberle, who, on March 16th, 1968, in My Lai, captured on slide-film the massacre of over one-hundred civilians through the 11th Division of the American Infantry. (ill. 3) Before publication of the pictures on November 20th, 1969, in the "Cleveland Plain Dealer", more than one and a half years should pass. The editorial departments exercised censorship on themselves — by reasons of patriotism and economics.

Brazil, Saigon and My Lai: pictures of killed people always have negative connotations. But only in war is death seen and shown ambivalently. The still photograph from the video shows no war, but rather the illegal and yet visible murder of a perverted culprit. Griffiths´ photography in Saigon, in contrast, takes as its theme the legitimized killing in war which remains unseen. In his report from My Lai, Ronald Haeberle shows his fellow countrymen the atrocities of his own troops in up until then unknown harshness. His photos most probably influenced the collective perception of the war, causing the United States to finally pull out of Vietnam. With its results, Haeberles´ report has remained an exception in the history of war photography. It caused military strategists to take nearly total control of the media in later military conflicts, benefiting staged photo reporting. My hypothesis is that here an iconographic memory in the observer is being wagered, which is highly susceptible to stereotypes, myths and illusions. Starting with the war in Afghanistan, I will draw out the iconographic history of war-reporting for you, focussing on five leitmotifs: dynamism, victims, maltreated bodies, the flag symbol and the dead enemy. My sources are the German daily press and three English-language daily newspapers (*The Times*, *The New York Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*) from October to December 2001. I will be examining the following questions: Are certain representations of violence left out or ignored? Did an "invisible war" follow the flood of footage pertaining to 9/11? Which iconographic references are identifiable in the pictures printed in the daily press in October and November 2001? Is an effect of recognition detectable, which could possibly be based upon a collective memory of images?

Dynamism

Let´s begin with dynamism. Most wars have a beginning and an end. That is still true today. The military offensive of the allied forces against the Taliban regime started on October 7, 2001, on a Sunday as a reaction of the United States and her allies against the attacks of September 11th. The first pictures of the war were published in the Tuesday-edition of the daily newspapers. On many front pages and amongst many editorials there was an Associated Press photograph to be seen (illust. 4): a US soldier wearing a helmet pushes a dolly laden with a huge bomb across the deck of the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* towards a fighter plane ready for takeoff. The photographer moved his camera during exposure, following the Marine Corps member, so that the background is blurred. This technique gives the picture dynamics, suggesting hectic rush and resolution.

To visualize the beginning of a war or a new military offensive is always, in the sense of dramatic excessiveness, a challenge for the illustrated press. In August of 1914 the magazines were still printing heroic "lone wolves" on their covers — pictures which were to reflect the predominant flag-waving patriotism of the time. (illust. 5) Dynamic elements of composition like blurriness and crooked framing come from modern photo-journalism, which was influenced in the 1920s and early 30s by Dadaism, Russian Constructivism and the Bauhaus movement. Here is an example:

Looking back, the landing of the Allied Forces in Normandy marks the beginning of the end of World War II. With the GIs, hundreds of photographers and camera men landed on Omaha Beach on June 6th, 1944, amongst them Robert Capa. He took one of the most reproduced war photographs of the 20th century. (illust. 6) We see a fully uniformed soldier crawling in the surf. The take creates the impression that the photographer was making a snapshot, pulling his camera just in time. To quote Capa: "The bullets were hitting the shallow water around me, and I sought shelter behind the first iron obstacle I could find."

The viewer´s gaze goes nearly automatically to the face of the soldier, who is evidently drowning. The iron, anti-tank obstacles in the background are just visible, like dark brush-strokes running in water. The swelling waves, the horizon and the sky melt to an almost homogeneous shade of gray. The soldier is completely alone. A loner whose situation seems, in the inhuman surroundings of the battlefield, to be hopeless — alone amongst thousands of others, who, under enemy fire, are thrown on land. The home far away blurs behind an indefinable horizon to nothingness. We see a very personal picture which pulls an individual out of the masses, giving him a face and, therefore, an identity. Mask-like smooth features let us recognize a young person, yet still, dark eye sockets, the strangely opened mouth, light and

shadows on his face — the association with a skull suggests itself. The photo transports not strength, but vulnerability. We detect nothing heroic, but rather fear and the fight for survival. And it transports skepticism. Perhaps even the skepticism of the Allied Forces on the whole, who had delayed their invasion and could not yet on the day of landing be certain of victory. For the observer today, the motif can to a certain extent bear hope, because it is known that the German Armed Forces finally had to surrender; even the soldier from the 116th Infantry Regiment survived. Edward K. Regan in a later interview: "Only about 25 meters of beach had been captured. There was a lot of chaos and general confusion because we were completely immobilized."

The blurred photo is one of thousands which were taken on D-Day. It appears that the snapshot has considerable technical deficiencies. In retrospect, however, the picture still advanced to be one of those icons in our collective memory which document the victory of the Allied Forces over Nazi-Germany. Capa managed here to visually sum up in a nutshell four levels of meaning of an important moment of the war: biographic, for the protagonists; military, for the Allied Forces; receptive, for later generations of observers; and autobiographic, for the photographer himself.

Besides the lack of focus and certain dynamics in the composition of the picture, the photo from the aircraft-carrier *USS Enterprise* has a further similarity with Capa´s photography: also that soldier seems to be acting alone, other people are not detectable in the picture. But here we see an anonymous, non-identifiable soldier, gripping with both hands the shaft-handle of the dolly, on which he is transporting with all his might the bomb to the aircraft. The surroundings are intact and seem as sterile as an operating room. The pushing soldier is on board of an aircraft carrier, on secure American territory. The target of attack in Afghanistan is far away, the military opponent is not in the picture — no sign of the effects or actions of war.

Robert Capa´s take and the *Associated Press´* photo both single out the moment, in which a military conflict enters a new phase. Whereas the historical take from the immediate vicinity draws attention to the vulnerability of the individual (and was, therefore, later used as a model for scenic adaption by Steven Spielberg for his film *The Soldier James Ryan*, the aircraft-carrier photo refers, from a safe distance to actual fighting, to the actions of a winning nation, leaving no doubt that she shall prevail. The iconographic parallels must not hide the fact, that here an anti-war picture stands against a propaganda photo. The propaganda photo is visually reminiscent of the D-Day image. The hope is for the observer to experience the same

effect although the photo carries the optimism of the sophisticated and logistically superior nation.

Victims

The second leitmotif shows the victims of war, especially women and children. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published on October 30, 2001, an impressive picture of a group of women, wearing *burkas*. The subtitle was: *Hope in Peschawar (Hoffnung in Peschawar)* (illust. 10) The mother in the foreground has turned her small, sleeping creature away from her body, towards the photographer. Her right hand rests on the back of the child´s head. The women have lost their homes and their families. From Afghanistan they fled to Pakistan, and sought shelter in a refugee camp near Peschawar. The faces of the women are desperate with fear, despairing their uncertain future.

Pictures of women and children, and mother-and-child motifs characterize especially war coverage supporting the side of the victims. The photos show the situation following air raids, escape or expulsion. The portrayal of the mother-and-child, as an iconographic leitmotif in art history, also in photographic form, closely related to the Christian Madonna motif. Since the last third of the 19th century, photos of Virgin-Mary-portrayals, originating in the place of pilgrimage Lourdes, have been used for miraculous healings. But also photography in the social-documentary tradition has assimilated the religious motif. Lewis Hine took his photo in 1905 on Ellis Island: the portrait of an Italian mother sitting in front of a detention cell with her child. The woman is still wearing the traditional garb of her homeland and a dark head-scarf. The child is looking upward, toward some point outside the frame of the photo, just as if it were searching the heavens of deliverance. The photographer transported the tradition of art history into the beginning 20th century. The social problem-areas of escape, migration and need, are identical with the fate of the biblical virgin and child, causing the photo to later be titled *Madonna in the Tenement Blocks*.

Pictures of women and children are, therefore, symbols, identifiable at first sight. Pierre Bourdieu coined the term *narrative symbolism* for this phenomenon. The symbolism created in the mother-and-child motif alludes also in war photography to a picture of the family rooted deeply in collective memory. Taken together, the narrative symbolism and the religious associations of the mother-and-child motif are predestined for use as propaganda. The Spanish Republicans, for example, published in the year 1937 the poster *QUE HACES TU PARA? (What are you doing to prevent this?)*, to drum up aid for Madrid. (illust. 13) The portrait of a mother-and-child is collaged in front of ruins and also underneath a flying

formation of bombers. The mother has her crying child pressed closely to her body. Different is the photo of a napalm victim and her daughter by Philip Jones Griffiths, 1980. (illust. 14) Griffiths comments: "The horribly disfigured woman adopted the girl while she was still a baby. Her parents had been killed during an air raid." Griffiths breaks away from photo-tradition with his composition: the subduedly lit faces are placed in complete frontality, each individually yet at the same height, in front of a black background. The thematic division seems, in contrast to the tradition Madonna and child, dividing and bonding: dividing because of the optical disconnection, bonding because it refers to the relationship of the two women to each other, who both are equally dependent upon the other, as war and life history have deeply connected them. Retrospectively the photo makes clear the irreversibility of wounding and its consequences for the biography of an individual. It gives the observer the feeling of hopelessness; sympathy and brotherly/sisterly love can be hardly conjured with this picture. Both of the women seem secularized or deconsecrated — perhaps no one can help them anymore, not even a higher power.

Photographers quote famous pictures. They immortalize the moment "which, in its profusion of symbolism, can awaken memories of the varied fabrics of our cultural history." In this context, the portraits of fleeing women and mother-and-child motifs become especially important, for they stylize religious image-patterns of the female and motherly body, which has its roots in the Christian tradition of portrayals, for example in that of the murder of the children of Bethlehem. From the European perspective, the increased publication of this pictorial motif can serve to justify a war — namely to free women in Afghanistan. Such photographs transport sympathy for the weak in war, which more and more affected ever more civilians, women, children and elderly during the 20th century. Following this line of argumentation: mother-and-child motifs are always anti-war pictures — pictures therefore, which are always difficult to reconcile with the demands of a war-faring nation. One look at the war reports of the daily press in the USA seems to verify the assumption. Portrayals of Afghan women and children and other victims of acts of war are rare in US-American newspapers. On the other hand, the papers often print photos of American families saying farewell on the runway to their husband and father in uniform, before his departure-flight into the war-zone.

As in Second World War, we are dealing in Afghanistan with a male view of a male enemy. In contrast to the photos of women and children, the portrayal of the male inhabitant of Afghanistan is equal to ethnic degradation, in that the "enemy" that cannot be caught, receives a face. We see dark, strange and secretive people who are going off to war with

antiquated weapons in rickety vehicles. Folkloristic motifs jump out at us suggesting something natural, unwavering, clinging to traditions. Also exotic-folkloristic motifs are to be counted into the usual spectrum of war photography — here an example from the photographer John Burke taken during the Afghan war in the year 1878. Together with stereotypically presented high technology, photographs with folklorizing, exotic motifs, barren desert landscapes, worn-out equipment, and destroyed cities transmit the superiority of allied civilization compared to the Oriental "chaos". These pictures rely on their ordering the observer to remember, leading him or her away from the current war, back to earlier conflicts and their results, which the country was at one time at the mercy of: the inheritance of the Soviets: ruins, blown-apart landscapes and broken faces marked by poverty. The actual happenings are then hidden by images already known.

For the western observer the danger lies in the fact that the content of the photo is strangely remote alien. Thus causing the observer reflecting on the photo in a non objective way. This in turn could serve to reduce feelings of guilt, and ultimately legitimize the war. Thereby it is extremely important that Afghan women move within a Christian-Western pictorial tradition in war photography, which is why it is easier to identify with the women. The men, on the other hand, are associated with Muslim religious visual patterns, and are thus stylized to adversaries.

Maltreated Bodies

Now let us turn to the pictorial aspect of maltreated bodies. In opposition to mother-and-child motifs, pictures of wounded or killed soldiers and civilians were very rare in the German daily press. Up until the end of 2001, five motifs of wounded people were documented, who were being treated in hospitals. Talibans, soldiers of the Northern Alliance as well as children were to be seen. None of these pictures appeared on a front page. Here is an example taken from the *tageszeitung*.

Whereas photographs of women, children and injured civilians rather indirectly, yet no less impressively, visualize the consequences of war, pictures of soldiers killed or wounded in action, pictures of combat, destruction, bodily harm, death and violence can be more immediately understood. Still, the legibility of these pictures is ambivalent: photographs of dead bodies can on the one hand seem accusatory, being proof of violence — one´s own and the enemy´s. On the other hand, when dealing with the other side´s dead, they can demonstrate the own troops´ power to strike.

One of the few photos of dead during the war in Afghanistan was published by the *tageszeitung* on November 29th, 2001. (illust. 18) In the days before, a revolt of the Talibans in the prison camp of Kale-e-Dschangi near Masar-i-Sharif had been suppressed by the soldiers of the Northern Alliance, with the assistance of British and American troops. The numbers of the dead and injured reached into the hundreds. In the photo two dead men are identifiable — apparently Taliban fighters in a trench. The foot of a further dead person juts into the left side of the picture and is lying on the chest of one of the corpses.

The placement of the photo in the back of the newspaper, its publication within the context of a demand of the prisoners aid organization *amnesty international*, and the small format of the picture which could be mistaken for an advertisement, all lead to the assumption that the editors did not want to give the event large amounts of visual space. The portrayal is reminiscent of Timothy O´Sullivan´s photo of a Confederate soldier killed in combat on the roadside in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 1863. With twisted limbs, the young man is lying behind a tree-trunk, underneath his long rifle, the tip of which touches his leg. His head is crooked at the neck. Coagulated blood from the mouth and nose marks his cheek. Like in Goya´s cycle *Desastres de la Guerra*, and like Capa later, a soldier is lifted out of the masses here. The identifiable, dead body confronts us with the tragic fate of an individual — violence as a visible pictorial pattern. Next to the soldier, there is a lone rifle lying at some distance in the dirt. The abandoned shotgun represents an additional dead, unseen in the photograph. O´Sullivan´s camera captured both pictorial patterns of war violence: the visible killing and the unseen death.

The parallels between the two photographers are amazing, considering they are divided by 140 years. It is the personal view of the individualized body, of twisted human heaps, whose existence was ceased by violence. And yet, differences are there. Whereas O´Sullivan´s picture refers to armed combat with the two shotguns as direct symbols — ending lethally for one of the soldiers — the *AP*-photo of the "bloodbath" in Masar-i-Sharif shows no weapons next to the corpses. It therefore remains unclear how the soldiers died. Did it occur in the fight around the prison camp, or were they "liquidated" after being disarmed as rebels?

In the Falklands War, and even more so in the Gulf War, the killed and wounded British and US soldiers remained unseen, so that especially the Gulf War could be seen through the eyes of an American television viewer as a "home game", or, as Jean Baudrillard exaggerated, as have not even taken place. The cameras were aimed at the machinery and even more so at the burnt bodies of Iraqi soldiers. Also in the free press, the photographic

visualization of injury and death was a result of its political function and its patriotic influence on the official view on the war in the mass media. The "enemy", made visible individually as a wounded fighter or as a shot-through corpse, is bodily destroyed through death and defeat in a projected sense. Applied to war coverage, the non-existance of one´s own death symbolizes the covering-up of one´s own claims to power, letting only those become visible, who are or would be subject to one´s power.

The Flag Symbol

Beneath the title "The Spirit of New York", the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* printed in its December 1st/2nd issue a photo with the following subtitle: "US-Marines raise in Afghanistan the American flag and a banner of New York City, given to them by firemen after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th." Two soldiers are trying to secure a thin bamboo pole with the flags in the sandy ground. Both are gripping the still tilted "mast" in their hands. Two more armed Marines are standing at attention; in the background, low, flat-roofed buildings can be seen. The staged motif refers symbolically back through the history of the United States, demonstrating at the same time the origins of the current war. (illust. 19)

Early flag motifs appeared in the USA already during the Revolutionary War. An unknown photographer, for example, took a picture in his studio of a soldier who presented the slashed and torn flag of his regiment. (illust. 21) The heavily affected object stands for the Union´s large numbers of losses. The soldier, although being portrayed from the front, turns his head away from the camera, seeming uncertain and hardly a proud hero. The composition of the photo is iconographically related to the world-wide perhaps most often reproduced take of the Second World War: Joe Rosenthal´s raising of the flag at the top of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima on February 23rd, 1945. Whereas Robert Capa´s photo of the stranded soldier under fire brings attention to the vulnerability and weakness of the individual fighter, the photo from Iwo Jima symbolizes soldierly heroicism, victory, unity, and national identity: the six Marines are working together — all for one and one for all. Without the three supporting soldiers, the colleagues up front would not be able to anchor the heavy flagstaff.

This iconographical relationship was seen perhaps also by the firemen at Ground Zero in New York, when they, in light of the devastating catastrophe in a way seeming nearly defiant, hissed the Stars and Stripes on September 11th at 5:01 p.m. on a fallen flagstaff jutting diagonally out of the wreckage. (illust. 22) Thomas Franklin´s photo has long since advanced to a national icon. In comparison, the picture of the raising of the flag in

Afghanistan seems a cheap, caricaturing copy. The efforts of the two protagonists to anchor the pole are minimal; the flags are hanging lifelessly.

The media analyst Rainer Fabian once offered the following explanation for the patriotic use of the visual media: "War photography is what one makes of it; and what America could use of the war photos from World War II, to write history photographically, were heros." At least *Iwo Jima* photographer Rosenthal shot "his" heroes at the original scene of action, even if done in an arranged photo. In the photographs from Afghanistan are the same symbols, similar poses and "heros", too, but no Stars-and-Stripes-raising GIs (illust. 23). The new heros have been removed from the battlefield, and placed in the secure spaces of the US Military Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. The atmosphere is that of an absolutely sterile studio. We see five soldiers in subdued lighting, wounded during the revolts at the prison camp in Masar-i-Sharif. They are standing almost symmetrically in a row, facing the camera, decorated with medals. Each of them has received a flag "of his own" hanging in the background. Except for a few light bruises on their faces, there are no signs of bodily injury. Only the man in the middle is supporting himself on two crutches. We are looking into faces that the war cannot harm, which are to reflect absolute non-vulnerability. American heros whose names may be known, but who have, in their sterile presentation and indifference, lost every bit of individuality — vacuum-packed warriors with no date of expiration. These are white heros. Their black comrades, of whom also not just a few were injured, remain unseen — are practically non-existent.

The portrayal reminds of the official photo of the astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins, returned from their trip to the moon in July 1969. The motif was to be spread about in millions of copies through its use for commemorative coins, stamps and posters. Exalted and removed from daily routine is how the five decorated GIs are also presented. The purple cloth in the background of the color photograph seems liturgical and implies the presence of the Holy Ghost. The protagonists are outside of space and time, removed from their context. Having escaped "hell", the five men stand as representatives of the supernatural and of reincarnation. Designed by PR specialists for the viewers, the scenery is clerical-like, in allusion to the Pentagon as a programmatic projection of sacredness onto the military. All signs point to "victory", symbolized by the number five, which already in Roman times had such a function. The observer becomes a festive witness of a divine and presumptuous proclamation of the invulnerability of the white race, which is to cathartically rectify for the entire nation the humiliation incurred on September 11th.

The Dead Enemy

Every war ends at some point. Usually the end coincides with a public presentation of pictures. Here at the closing of my lecture, please allow me to comment on the War in Iraq.

In German media coverage, the disapproving attitude of the German government and public could be registered by the fact that both newspaper and television reports always pointed out the questionability of its pictures and information — both sides of the conflict being subject to censorship and propaganda. Since hardly any pictures of actual combat got through to public viewers during the Afghanistan War, we are now dealing with another Visual Turn. "Embedded" journalists in uniform report live on TV from a tank at the front lines. An emotional distance to the happenings could, though, still be registered, as we saw mainly pictures of advancing tanks and gun fire, but hardly any of the people effected on both sides. On the other hand, the embedded reporters saw themselves as troop members and took on their perspective. The result was a lack of distance and not a reflective coverage on the war.

The fall of the Twin Towers in New York and the panic of the fleeing masses has burned itself as a traumatic experience of our own vulnerability into the collective memory of the United States. The victory over the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan could hardly compensate enough. There was nothing to destroy in that poor country that could compare with the symbolism of the ruins of the World Trade Center. In addition, the supposed culprit was never caught. And there was never a photo taken that could have represented a final ending. In the transmitted media coverage, there were pictures of bunkers in which Osama bin Laden had supposedly barricaded himself. In front of this background, the following war in Iraq made a shift over to the ambivalent leader Saddam Hussein. This character delivered, with his monumental statues and swanky palaces, a fitting target for revenge, and, finally, a possibility to get over the trauma. Similar to September 11th in the situation of defeat, the media´s constant repetition was now a metaphor for victory. The taking of the Iraqi palaces, even though strategically unimportant, was here of key significance. Endless film loops of live reporters and cameras guiding tours through the marble halls and golden bathrooms, commenting on the dictator´s obsession for splendor and sumptuousness, were to alleviate the pressure on the Allied Forces to justify their actions.

The newspapers reported similar contents on the day after. Most German and American gazettes printed the *AP* photo from John Moore without commentary, in which US

sergeant Chad Touchett and five GIs were sitting in one of the living rooms in Hussein´s palace on the banks of the Tigris. (illust. 28) Surrounded by his co-combatants from the 7th Infantry Regiment, the officer is sitting with his legs apart on a rococo easy chair and is taking a long draw on his cigarette — a pictorial motif, that would normally land on the cutting-room floor in the non-smoking country USA. Apparently though, a historical moment was to be recorded at a symbolic place: with a taste for freedom and adventure, the conqueror leaves his scent right in the lion´s den. The motif of invading the space of the enemy at the moment of victory is an essential element of the iconography of war. The popular painting *In the Base Quarters (Im Etappenquartier)* from Anton von Werner, 1894, for example, shows the rococo interior of a French castle, which the Prussian cavalry had requisitioned in 1871. (illust. 29) Here, too, someone is smoking, an officer is lounging on a plush armchair, another is singing to the piano playing.

What in Anton von Werner´s picture can be interpreted as an adaption across time of Wilhelminian, soldierly coziness, which was to be transplanted into the country of the defeated, becomes a satirical gesture in May 1945. For a colleague (David E. Scherman), the female photographer Lee Miller posed naked with a washcloth in Hitler´s bathtub in his apartment in Munich. (illust. 30) The dictator, visualized in an official portrait photo, is present as a "spectator" and as a picture within a picture in a frame on the edge of the bathtub; to the right is a small sculpture on a chest of drawers. The bath seems on the whole rather spartan. If the explanation was not included, and the two draped props were ignored, it could be just about any random bathroom. The voyeuristic takeover of one of the most private spheres of the German dictator, occurs solely through the exposed woman, who, formerly an artist of the Parisian avantgarde and Man Ray´s model, is a representative of classical modern art. The defeated Germans were visual witnesses of the breaking of the Nazi dictatorship´s spell, which may have seemed like desecration to the hard-liners and old reactionaries amongst them. Iconographically, the picture within a picture is related to the death of the protagonist. In this light, Hitler´s disappearance was at least visually validated for those freed from Nazi terror — even though there was no actual documentation of his mortal remains. The photo could, therefore, serve as verification of his unconditional surrender. Similar messages were transmitted from the toilets of Saddam Hussein´s palaces, though it should be noted that the symbolic power of a photograph can be much greater than that of a film registered superficially on a television screen. Photography has, as Vilém Flusser writes, retained for itself a last bit of materiality: the television report on the war in Iraq can only be watched; the photo in the newspaper can be cut out, labeled, or crumpled up and thrown in the

waste basket — ritual gestures as possible reactions to the messages of pictures which one finds unbearable.

A further picture was taken several months after the official end of the war. The international members of the media were presented with the corpses of the two sons of Hussein. This pictorial motif, too, has its place in the history of war photography and art, as well. I would like to mention the photograph of the dead Parisian Communards, who were presented by the monarchy in opens casks in 1871; or the picture of Benito Mussolini´s corpse, strung up by its feet; or, finally, the photo of Che Guevara´s mortal remains, reminiscent of Mantegna´s 15th century, lying, dead Christ. Pictures like these have an ambiguous function. At first they appear to be a documentation of victory, showing that the enemy side´s central protagonist has been killed and has become a trophy. Then they act as direct visual verification of an end of power, for the own audience and that of the enemy. The own audience should understand that the war was justifiable, the enemy´s audience should take the pictures as an admonition and as a sign that the "game" is over. Ultimately, these pictures demonstrate the meaning of visual news on the whole: seeing is believing.

Photographs of war always transport the personal view of the photographer: he or she chooses the motif and decides when to release the shutter. Along the same lines, it is important not to overestimate the effectiveness of photography as a journalistic medium, as not even the impressive pictures of the likes of Capa, Griffiths or Burrows are able to reflect the reality of war. For the famous war photographer James Nachtwey, war photography can achieve a political dimension: it should "arouse respect for humanity", and, when used correctly, it can "actually become an antidote" — when published in the right space, one might add. Nachtwey photographed a bare room with open casks on the day the Allied Forces marched into Baghdad (illust. 31) A man is bent over the bagged remains of his relative, a memorial candle flickers in the background. Nachtwey comments: "I have seen people who have lost everything. And yet, each one had preserved his dignity, the inalienable core of the human condition."

Nachtwey´s photograph speaks an impressive language. The man seen is parting from a loved one. We see the moment of complete loss. The consequences of war are focused onto the biography of this one individual. Suffering and mourning are perceivable across all boundaries — religion and the state of the nation play no role. That is why this photograph is an anti-war photo. And anti-war photos receive no space on the covers, in moments of triumph. This picture in the arts section of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was meant only to illustrate their critique on the photographer´s current exhibition.

In summary:

1. In the photographs of women, flag symbols, folkloristic motifs, and soldiers killed in combat in the Afghanistan War, a tradition of pictorial patterns is set forth, which was begun in the 19th century, or even earlier. The focus is not on what is visible, but rather on the registration of unseen violence and death.

2. The European media printed more photos of women and children. These are anchored as anti-war photos in our collective pictorial memory. They are also interpretable, though, as justification for the war against the Taliban, being oppressors of women. On the other hand, pictures of Afghan women and children — of victims, in other words — are seldom printed in the American media. The preference here is for the patriotic presentation of American women, saying farewell to their men who are going off to war.

3. The visual language is turning away from the individual and distantly focusing on the insubstantial aestheticism of unspecific happenings. Examples here would be the aerial takes of bunkers and missile landings.

4. Through symbols, allegories, and iconographic picture patterns, references to a collective pictorial memory have been made. The war was to be seen as a just cause, and victory to be seen as sure.

5. Warfare and the end of the war in Afghanistan were not put into pictorially very concrete terms. In comparison, there was a "visual turn" in the Iraq War. The military wagered more on the distribution of pictures meant to illustrate the sensibility of their interests.

6. Lastly, there is a noticeable tendency during both wars to stage photos. These were used to underline both the own invulnerability, and the inferiority of the enemy.

This is where my talk supposed to end, but allow me a few remarks on the images from Abu Ghraib that we were confronted with on May and June of this year. I noticed the following:

1. The Bush Administration was busier dealing with the public relations disaster, i.e. the dissemination of the pictures, than with the complex issue of who was responsible among the military leadership and of the crime itself, revealed by these pictures.

2. The word "torture" was carefully avoided in the U.S. media. The prisoners had possibly been "abused", in the end in fact "humiliated" — more than that was not admitted.

3. What the pictures showed was horrifying; the fact that the pictures were even taken was horrifying — with the perpetrators grinning happily into the camera next to their helpless prisoners.

Nevertheless, Goddard still adds: it is not we who see, but rather the camera. The pictures themselves are not new. Comparable photographs were taken by Germans during the Second World War, by Frenchmen in Indochina, by Americans in Vietnam. Mew is, firstly, the change of media that took place during the war in Iraq. The most recent pictures are no longer to be had via the official news agencies, but rather online, via the Internet.[2]

At the same time, there are, secondly, iconographic references — for example to Passolini's film *The 120 days of Sodom* from 1975, which describes tormenting orgies in a fascist reguge in northern Italy. Incidentally, the comparison was made by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on May 4th 2004, in an article with the headline: "The 120 days of Bagdad". Thirdly, it is striking that the pictures demonstrate that in this point, via the Internet, in an intermedial transmission, the general "pornification" of everyday life has been transferred to war.

And fourthly, the gender aspect of the images was new. The obvious fact that women prepared to commit acts of violence, their brutalization, which on the other hand also refers to the demonization of woman during the late medieval Inquisition.

Images are developed and placed strategically. The images from Abu Ghraib were embedded in a web of references. The pictures of the torture can never be erased. This is due to our digital world, in which there is de facto no censorship for pictures any more. Perhaps those pictures were necessary, in order to make the horror real for those who would otherwise have denied the facts, looked away and gone on with their daily lives.

Up until then, there had only been words. In our time of endless digital self-dissemination, world are easier to silence and are forgotten more quickly.

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[2] See: Sean Flyn: Duc Phong, Vietnam 1966: Underlines: "A Vietnam suspect is hung up an questioned by mercenaries of the Chinese Nung tribe. The Nungs formed a unit organized and commanded by U.S. Special Forces. After fifteen minutes in this position, the suspect admitted being a sniper." (UPI)