

Satellite: The Secret Life of Globalization
The Underclass and its Bosses in Ukraine

Statement of Collaboration:

“We make no distinction between us and them, between the backstage and front stage.”

– Larry Frolick and Donald Weber

Photographer Donald Weber and journalist Larry Frolick have worked on joint field projects since March, 2003, when they travelled with a local carpet dealer through the mountains of eastern Turkey, for a feature on the Kurds during the Iraq War. The article (7500 words, 12 photos) was just published in *Descant*, (Dec, 2005) as “Kebabistan: the Woman with Seven Heads,” and nominated for a National Magazine Award, the team’s fifth nomination for 2006.

Since then we produced features in Khao-Lak ,Thailand on the tsunami; Cambodia; Guatemala (resurgence of Amerindians); Boston 2004 Democratic Convention; Arctic 15,000-mile Arctic road trip (published as 4-part-series, “The Dominion of Oh!”; and the jungle ecology of Guyana. The result of this initial collaboration was *When the Snake Whispers Your Name*, completed 2005, a text / photo book. It chronicles the team’s ongoing dialogue on Image versus Word, and the relationship of mass media to social change during historical crises. This extract is from “Kebabistan.” We are at Silope, the border of Iraq, Day One of the Iraq War:

“I still have to get that AK-47 shot,” Don insisted, looking at that faraway nothing that always gets dumb guys like us into trouble.

“Okay, okay” I reconsidered. “Why don’t we just set them up?”

“What?”

“*The shots!* We can call it Transgressive Faux War-O’Graphy. – You pretend to be General Ngo, and I’ll be Phuc Duc, the Viet Cong prisoner who got it in the head from the General’s chrome-handled 45. We do tributes to the famous war-photos of the past! I could be running, drop my carbine. Like that Frank Capra shot from the Spanish Civil War.”

“You mean Robert Capa.”

“Whatever.” I pretended to die in mid-sentence. “Ugggh!”

“No way! I could say goodbye to my career, right then and there.”

“But a glorious exit! They’d remember you as the man who *shot* the famous *war shots!*”

Don sighed and ordered another chocolate croissant. I could imagine him running down the mud road like the Nude Girl in Napalm Picture, his cheeks jiggling hysterically out the frame.

Oh, sorry! Was that too *transgressive*?

Screw it. What’s this thing with journalists, but an anxious play between participation and objectivity, between witness and voyeur? Who *wasn’t* implicated in something? Not me, I’m as guilty as the next hyena. And isn’t this

why photojournalism had degenerated into dull cant of late? This anxious appropriation of innocence? This blood-sucking of endless victims, based on yet another Hutu-Tutsi, fake dichotomy. Who was innocent?

No one. Either we were all innocent, or none of us were.

“What are you scribbling away there?” Don fiddled with his lens, getting anxious now at the mention of Frank Capra.

“My last will,” I replied. “You should make one too.”

Our work in Ukraine continues and deepens our investigation of this suppressed public theme: backstage is where the *real* action takes place. The complicity of mass-media photojournalism and print – their historically-determined protocols and professional routines – are as much a part of the real subject of *Satellite*, as the ongoing social woundings we seek to expose.