

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

No. 136

FOR RELEASE:

Friday, Jan. 18, 1963

- 302

THE BITTER YEARS: 1935-1941 edited by Edward Steichen. Introduction by Grace M. Mayer. 36 pp.; 27 plates; paper \$1.25. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Doubleday & Co., Inc. January 18, 1963

On January 18 the Museum of Modern Art will publish a 36-page book of outstanding photographs of America during the Depression selected from thousands taken by the Farm Security Administration to record the events of the period. The Bitter Years: 1935-1941 is edited by Edward Steichen, Director Emeritus of the Photography Department, who assembled the Museum's recent exhibition on which the book is based.

As Mr. Steichen says, "It is good at this time to be reminded of those 'Bitter Years' and to bring them into the consciousness of a new generation which has problems of its own, but is largely unaware of the endurance and fortitude that made the Depression one of America's victorious hours."

Among the 27 photographs reproduced are such famous works as Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother," Arthur Rothstein's "Dust Storm," Walker Evans' "Sharecropper's Family," Russell Lee's study of the gnarled hands of a farm woman, and Ben Shahn's portrait of a destitute tenant farmer's wife. The book includes comments recorded by Miss Lange which reveal the pride and courage of the people she photographed.

Mr. Steichen dedicated the book as well as the exhibition to Roy E. Stryker, director of the F.S.A. historical unit, and to his photographers who made one of the most important and successful visual documentations ever undertaken by any government. Stryker, who is not a photographer himself, assembled a team of young men and women, many of whom are today leading figures in the field of photography: Paul Carter, John Collier, Jr., Jack Delano, Walker Evans, Theo Jung, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Carl Mydans, Arthur Rothstein, Ben Shahn, John Vachon and Marion Post Wolcott.

The book includes a brief discussion of the aims and accomplishments of the project by Grace M. Mayer, Curator of the Photography Department. The Resettlement Administration, which later became the F.S.A., was established in 1935 to alleviate the problems of farmers victimized by man-made and natural disasters--the mechanization of agriculture, drought, dust-storms, erosion. As Rexford G. Tugwell, then Under Secretary of Agriculture and administrator of the agency, says in the preface "...we intended not only to bring the resources of government to the assistance of those who were distressed or starved out but to make certain that never again should Americans be exposed to such cruelties." Roy Stryker, Tugwell's former colleague on the Economics Faculty at Columbia, was asked to organize a photographic survey of conditions in rural areas and small towns across the country. "...The superb job he and his collaborators did speaks for itself. It is not only a technical triumph but a record of neglect and warning."

The book is available at the Museum or by mail for \$1.25 plus 25 cents postage and will be distributed nationally by Doubleday and Co., Inc.

Review copies and photographs available from Nancy Reed, Assistant Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. Circle 5-8900.