

David  
Goldblatt

Some

Afrikaners

All photographed.



## SOME AFRIKANERS PHOTOGRAPHED

The photographs in this book are of some Afrikaner people in South Africa. There are glimpses into their world, and a few of the subjects are other South Africans who, although not Afrikaners, are part of it.

This book is not an outline, still less a systematic survey of Afrikaner life, nor are the people in these photographs a cross-section of the Afrikaner People.

After the manner of this country, I had grown up among yet largely apart from Afrikaners. However I began to have more contact with them when, as a young man, I worked in my father's business. And I came gradually to feel a need to know more closely something of the life and values of people whose influence so pervaded the place of my birth and who, I realised, had long been a powerful presence in my own life.

Those Afrikaners whom, at that time I came to know a little, were of our town and district. Miners, artisans, farmers from the Western Transvaal, plot-holders from outside the town, small businessmen, minor officials, railwaymen and the families of these men: I was strangely affected by some of them, for they seemed to be imbued in great concentration with potent and often contradictory qualities that both moved and disturbed me. I know well the dangers of generalising and do so only to sketch most briefly: among these people there was austerity of spirit and lifestyle, and there was directness and uprightness; there was narrowness and there was floridity and lustiness; there was confidence and a sense of belonging, of knowing exactly who one is and of where one stands in the world; there was a tenacious conviction of rightness, of absolute unarguable rightness; there was an almost visceral bond with the soil and the bush, and in some, at the same time, a lack of regard for these; and withal, there was fear, and at times a terrible need to debase the feared. I was witness to acts of remarkable generosity of spirit – so much more than kindness – and to others of ungoverned meanness. Sometimes it seemed that all was there simultaneously in moments of impossible contradiction.

So I came to photograph Afrikaners, moving slowly beyond the district and the people I knew. For a while, I thought of photographing *the* Afrikaner People. It took time to understand that for me such a project would be grossly pretentious and probably impossible to achieve in any meaningful sense – in any case it is not what I wanted. I did not have the encyclopedic vision that might enable me to achieve an acceptably 'balanced' picture of a people. I was concerned with a few minutiae of Afrikaner life, with a few people.

I needed to grasp something of what a man is and is becoming in all the particularity of himself and his bricks and bit of earth and of this place and to contain all this in a photograph. To do this, and to discover the shapes and shades of his loves and fears and of my own, would be enough.

Thus this book. Rather a haphazard collection of photographs to be sure, but I hope not incoherent.

David Goldblatt  
Johannesburg 1975

This book richly reveals the people David Goldblatt has photographed and something of their world and their time. But *Some Afrikaners Photographed* is not an attempt at definition. It is the personal vision of a man aware of his own identity who has tried through his camera to find and grasp the identity of others. In doing this he has transcended the 'we' and the 'them' which so dominate relations within South Africa. The integrity of the photographer combined with the directness and intensity of his perception have produced a collection of photographs of compelling significance – to photography and to our understanding of the people he has photographed.

David Goldblatt was born and grew up in Randfontein. There he worked in a family business until 1963 when he began to devote all his time to photography. His work has been widely published in South Africa and in Europe and the United States. There have been several exhibitions of his work in Cape Town and Johannesburg, including during 1974, major shows at The Space, Cape Town, and the Carlton Centre, Johannesburg. In 1974 the Photographers' Gallery, London, exhibited 100 of Goldblatt's photographs. Together with the writer Nadine Gordimer he is the co-author of *On the Mines* (Struik 1973).

## C OMMENTS:

*Die Burger*, Paul Alberts, March 21, 1974; 'Goldblatt, 'n naturalis, is begaan oor mense as 'n sosiologiese wese; sy foto's is daarom meesal sosiologiese landskappe.'

*Rapport*, Johan Strydom, November 4, 1973; 'Hoewel hy betekenis nastreef, soek hy nie bewustelik na trefkrag of essensie nie.'

*The Star*, Denis Godfrey, December 8, 1973; 'Two rare and remarkable talents – those of Nadine Gordimer (words) and David Goldblatt (photography) have combined to produce the most outstanding piece of illustrated reportage of the Transvaal scene I have seen' (*On The Mines*, Struik 1973).

*Rand Daily Mail*, Anne Sassoon, October 29, 1973; 'As soon as you take that first glance you are led irresistibly into a world you never thought you knew.'

Nadine Gordimer; 'Here . . . is . . . our world, terrible and beautiful, in aspects we are perhaps too blind to see until he gives us the freedom of his extraordinary insight, his intellectual courage, and his gifts as a photographer.'

