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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OPENS EXHIBITION OF THERESE BONNEY'S
WAR HISTORY WRITTEN WITH THE LENS

The meaning of war, written on the faces of the people in devastated Europe and recorded by the eloquent lens of Therese Bonney's camera, is being shown in an exhibition of two hundred photographs by this eminent American journalist and photographer. The exhibition, entitled War Comes to the People: History Written with the Lens by Therese Bonney, opens to the public today (Wednesday, December 11) at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, where it will be on view daily through Sunday, January 5, except for Christmas Day when the entire Museum will be closed.

Miss Bonney photographed the people of Finland in the last days of that country's prosperous peace in the summer and fall of 1939. She continued to photograph them from the beginning of the Finnish-Soviet war to its end in the bitter peace of March 1940. She was in Belgium eight hours before the invasion. At the front, in the villages, along the roads--she went with the refugees along the Belgian-French front and into France down to Bordeaux, photographing everywhere as she went.

Her pictures and their brief, fragmentary captions tell a story of human tragedy in terms not of soldiers, guns, tanks, airplanes and other weapons of war but in their total and terrible effect on the little people of the earth who cannot fight back: the children, the old people, the mothers with babies, the wounded and the forever lost.

In the exhibition, text and photographs have been planned to supplement one another and have been given equal prominence in display. The layout of War Comes to the People as well as the words and pictures, is entirely the work of Miss Bonney. The Museum presents the exhibition not only because it is an eloquent, timely and very moving statement, but also because it combines the literary

and photographic arts in a new exhibition technique.

Miss Bonney's unusual presentation of her graphic volume of living history is perhaps best told in her own captions which tie picture to picture with a running commentary almost like a motion picture sound track. She begins with a prologue of four great photographs:

IN AUGUST
AT THE GREAT MANOEUVRES

(Past the close-up profile of a small Finlander, eyes intent under cap, looms the commanding figure of Finland's great Field Marshal astride his horse, his gaze intent as the boy's on the troop manoeuvres)

I STOOD BESIDE
A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE

(An old, old woman, kerchief around head, hand partly covering mouth in a gesture of apprehension, war and the fear of war mirrored in her watching eyes)

WATCHED
THE TROOPS GO BY

(Through the rectangle made by the legs of a war horse we see what the little boy, the Field Marshal and the old woman gaze at so intently-- the brilliant manoeuvres of Finland's Army)

AND SAW WHAT SHE SAW
THOSE WHO WERE
TO GIVE THEIR LIVES

(A symbol of the same men who were to give their lives for Finland)

The volume of war continues, chapter after chapter:

I. THERE WAS PEACE IN A LAND

President, Archbishop, Prime Minister peacefully active...The great Sibelius...Workers in factories...Lassies milking their cows...World-famed Maki training for the Olympics...Market places humming in every village and town...Women weaving...Young folk dancing...Farmers' wives putting up jam for the winter.

II. SUDDENLY

War declared in Europe...Parliament meets to discuss neutrality...People praying for peace.

III. AND THEN...

Guns ready in the forest of Karelia...Crutches waiting in the University Hall...Professors without classes...New lessons for children, air-raid precautions..."And there was light," but in air-raid shelters...Refugees.

IV. SOON AFTER

Professors in uniform...Girl scouts...Red Cross workers...Auto busses converted into ambulances... Gas masks for children...Soldiers march to the East, refugees to the West.

V. FROM DAY TO DAY

An actress making up--and a new role: bandages for the wounded...Changing guard in the sunshine--mobilization at night...Polytechnic students back to class--their school in ruins...From Olympic Games posters to air-raid signs...Women and children pray...The bombs fall.

VI. THEN CAME CHRISTMAS

Church and sleigh bells ring...And yet operating on the wounded goes on.

VII. THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THE LAND

Bombing everywhere...Temples burn...Ships sink... Wards full of women and children, civilian victims... Rooms unsafe for the dying...Wounded carried to shelters...So many homeless.

VIII. AND HELP...

Hoover delegates...American Red Cross...Swedish volunteers...Salvationists...Danish officers... French nurse...A Portuguese aviator.

IX. THERE WAS A PEACE

The news in the street...Stunned correspondents file the story...Flags at half staff...The reason, an army exhausted...The Price: 450,000 homeless.

X. AND IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

A Sunday in May near Brussels...Cocktail hour... Women gossip...Children play...Grown-ups talk neutrality.

XI. AND ANOTHER...

War so far away...Soldiers at work in the fields, home on leave...Children play as men dig trenches... Suddenly communications disrupted...Transportation paralyzed...Only an hour to leave...Hordes of refugees...So many days, so little food...Before churches, stations...In barns, under carts, along the roads...Tried so hard to save what they love--a clock, a dog, a doll...Babies born on roadsides... Meals cooked in the fields...Thousands of children lost...Danger everywhere...Impossible to fight back... Bombs fall...And the old give example to the young to trudge on.

There is at present a similar exhibition of photographs by Miss Bonney entitled To Whom the Wars are Done, on view in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., until December 15. The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art will close Sunday evening, January 5, after which it will be circulated to various cities throughout the country.