



**JOHN  
VINK**  
**Sidelines**



*En toen deze nieuwsgierigheid  
bevredigd raakte, werd het helaas  
een soort onrust... de onrust van  
wie tussen twee werelden komt te  
staan, en ten slotte tot geen van  
beide meer behoort.*

— Louis Paul Boon  
*De paradijsvogel* (1958)

*Et lorsque cette curiosité fut as-  
souvie, elle devint hélas une sorte  
d'inquiétude... l'inquiétude de celui  
qui se retrouve entre deux mondes,  
et finalement n'appartient plus à  
aucun d'eux.*

— Louis Paul Boon  
*L'Oiseau Paradis* (1958)

*And when this curiosity was satisfied,  
it unfortunately became a kind of worry...  
the worry of someone who finds himself  
between two worlds, and ultimately no  
longer belongs to either of them.*

— Louis Paul Boon, *The Bird of Paradise* (1958)

## Voorwoord

### Sidelines (Zijlijnen)

De zijlijnen die ik zie bevinden zich op de scheidingslijnen tussen rust en chaos, tussen kalmte en rumoer, tussen veiligheid en gevaar, tussen zekerheid en twijfel. Je speelt of je kijkt, je neemt deel of niet, je voldoet aan verschillende regels naargelang de kant waar je bevindt. De zijlijnen zijn verloren valleien, ruimtes vlak voor of vlak na een oorlog, coherente maar weinig spectaculaire levensroutes. Bijna altijd gaat het over het behoren tot een gebied, een land, een cultuur of, integendeel, over een ontworteling, een breuk, over het ontkennen van een identiteit. *Zijlijnen* is een stippellijn die door een landschap trekt.

*Zijlijnen* is ook de beschrijving van mijn eigen reisroute, en laat evenzeer de aan-eenrijging van keuzes zien als de begane vergissingen, onoplettendheden, luiheden. *Zijlijnen* gaat over wat overblijft van wat bewust verkozen werd om gefotografeerd of niet gefotografeerd te worden, of over wat niet gefotografeerd kan worden. Door die zijlijnen te zien heb ik ten slotte het gevoel zelf ook op een zijlijn te zitten.

Een foto zet een portie tijd op een zijspoor, te benutten voor later, wanneer het geheugen faalt of om een herinnering te staven. En daar ben ik aangekomen: een fragment achterlatend, alleen nog een referentie over een tijdperk.

## Avant-propos

### Sidelines (Lignes de touche)

Mes lignes de touche tracent une frontière entre paix et chaos, calme et bruit, sécurité et danger, certitude et doute. On joue ou on regarde, on participe ou non, on obéit à des règles différentes selon le côté où l'on se trouve. Les lignes de touche sont ces vallées perdues, ces moments qui précèdent ou suivent immédiatement une guerre, ces parcours de vie cohérents, mais peu spectaculaires. Presque toujours, il est question d'appartenance à un territoire, à un pays, à une culture ou, au contraire, de déracinement, de rupture, de négation d'une identité. *Lignes de touche* est un chemin en pointillé qui traverse un paysage.

*Lignes de touche* est aussi la description de mon propre itinéraire, montrant autant l'enchaînement des choix que les erreurs, les oubliés, les paresseuses. *Lignes de touche* traite de ce qui reste après que l'on a laissé de côté ce que l'on a choisi de ne pas photographier ou ce qui ne peut pas l'être. À force de les regarder, j'ai le sentiment de me trouver moi-même sur l'une de ces lignes.

Une photographie met en réserve une portion de temps à utiliser plus tard, lorsque la mémoire défaillit ou que l'on veut étayer un souvenir. Et c'est là où j'en suis arrivé : je laisse derrière moi un fragment, simple référence à une époque.

# Introduction

## ***Sidelines***

The sidelines I see are found on the boundary between peace and chaos, between silence and noise, between safety and danger, between certainty and doubt. You're playing or watching, you're participating or not, you comply with different rules depending on which side you're on. The sidelines are lost valleys, moments just before or just after a war, coherent but unremarkable life paths. The focus is almost always on belonging to an area, a country, a culture... or the opposite: being lost and displaced, wrenched away, the loss of an identity. *Sidelines* - a series of dotted lines that run through a landscape.

*Sidelines* is also a description of my own journey, showing the chain of decisions as well as the slip-ups, missed opportunities and lazy choices. *Sidelines* is about what is left after deliberate choices to photograph or not to photograph have been made, and about what could not be photographed. By having seen those sidelines, in the end, I too feel like I am sitting on a sideline.

A photo sets a portion of time to one side, to be called upon later to reinforce memories that are starting to fade. And that's where I am now: leaving behind fragments, references to specific points in time.

— John Vink





# Beginnings.

The early years: Belgium, Italy, the World Cup in Mexico, the Tour de France. Where nostalgia reigns and Vink starts making his visual stories from the sidelines: *joie de vivre* and its exuberance, but also routine and unguarded moments.

De beginjaren: België, Italië, de Mundial in Mexico, de Tour de France. Waar nostalgie troef is en Vink start met beeldverhalen vanaf de zijlijn: *joie de vivre* en haar uitspattingen, maar ook routine en onbewaakte momenten.

Les premières années : la Belgique, l'Italie, le Mundial au Mexique, le Tour de France. Là où la nostalgie l'emporte et où Vink se lance dans des récits visuels saisis depuis la ligne de touche : la joie de vivre et l'exubérance, mais aussi la routine et les moments où on baisse la garde.















# Sahel.

Vink moved on to the Sahel, a region in Africa that suffered dramatic water shortages. His project, *Water in the Sahel* (1985-1987), for which he received the W. Eugene Smith Grant in 1986, shows both the inventive water management practices and the resilience of the local population.

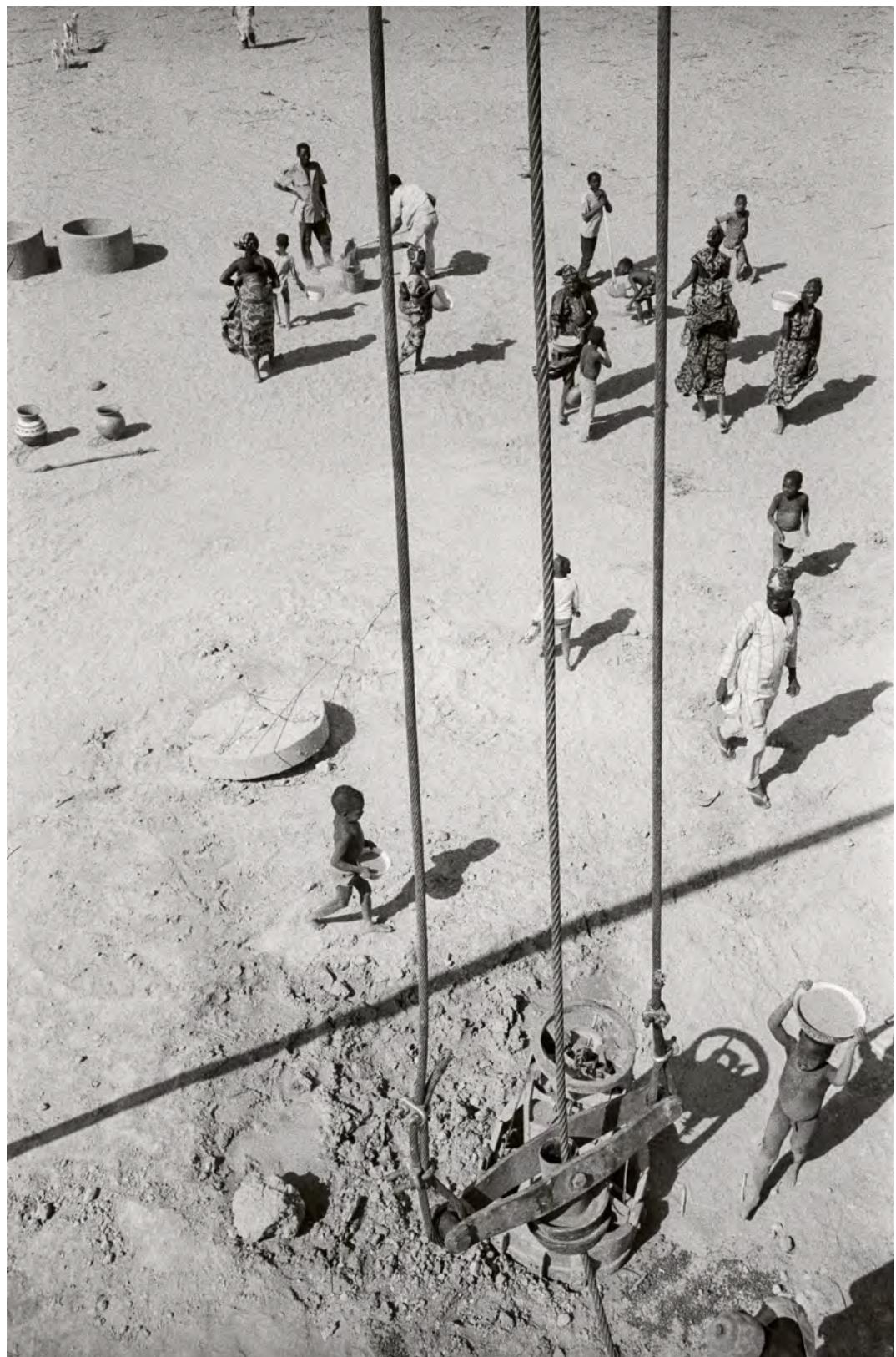
Vink trekt naar de Sahel, een regio in Afrika die kreunt onder dramatische waterschaarste. Zijn project *Water in the Sahel* (1985-1987) legt zowel het inventieve watermanagement als de veerkracht van de lokale bevolking vast. Vink ontvangt hiervoor in 1986 de Eugene Smith-prijs.

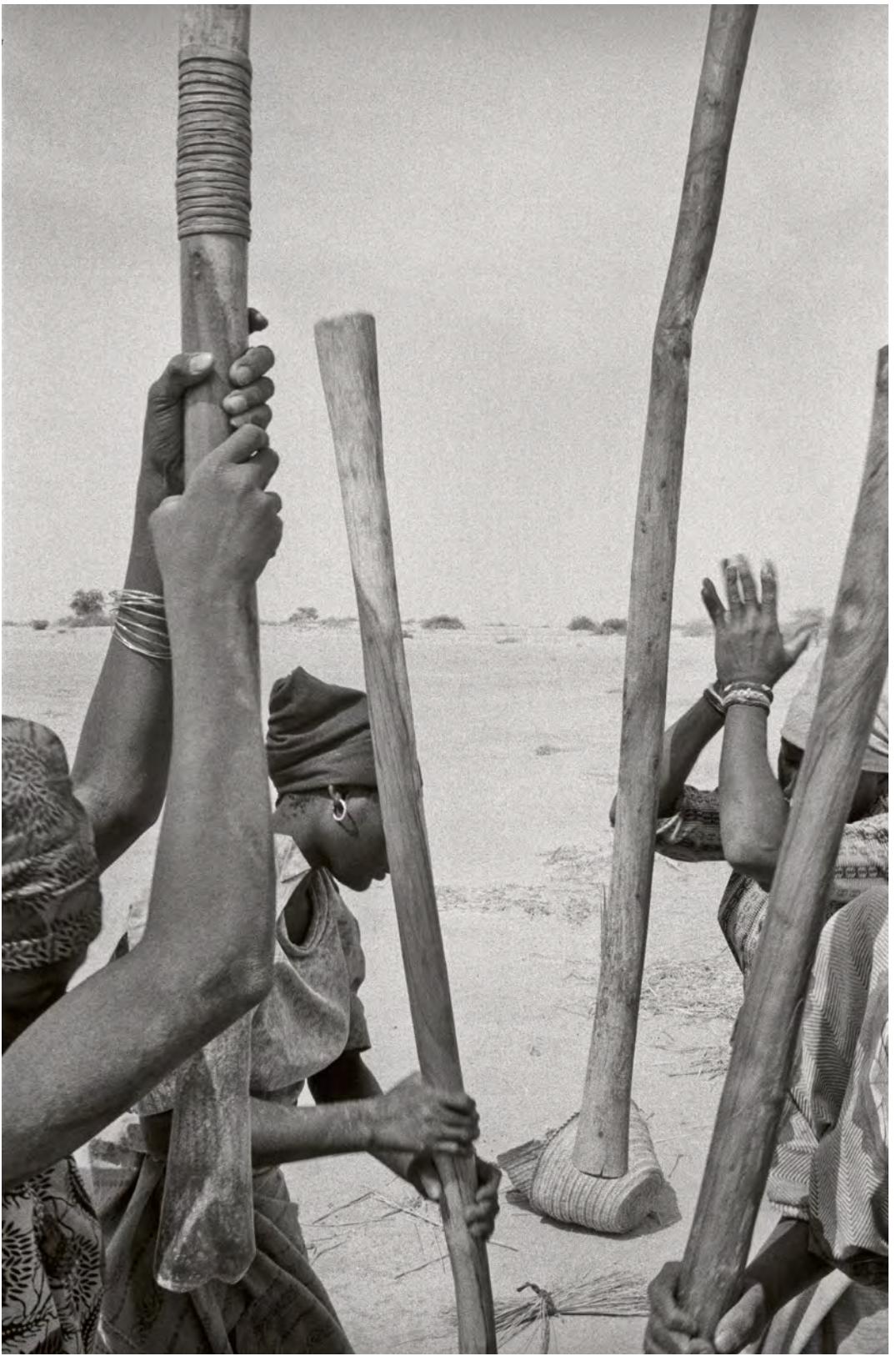
Vink se rend au Sahel, une région d'Afrique qui souffre d'une pénurie d'eau dramatique. Son projet *Water in the Sahel* (1985-1987) illustre à la fois la gestion inventive de cette ressource et la résilience de la population locale. Il sera couronné par le prix Eugene Smith en 1986.



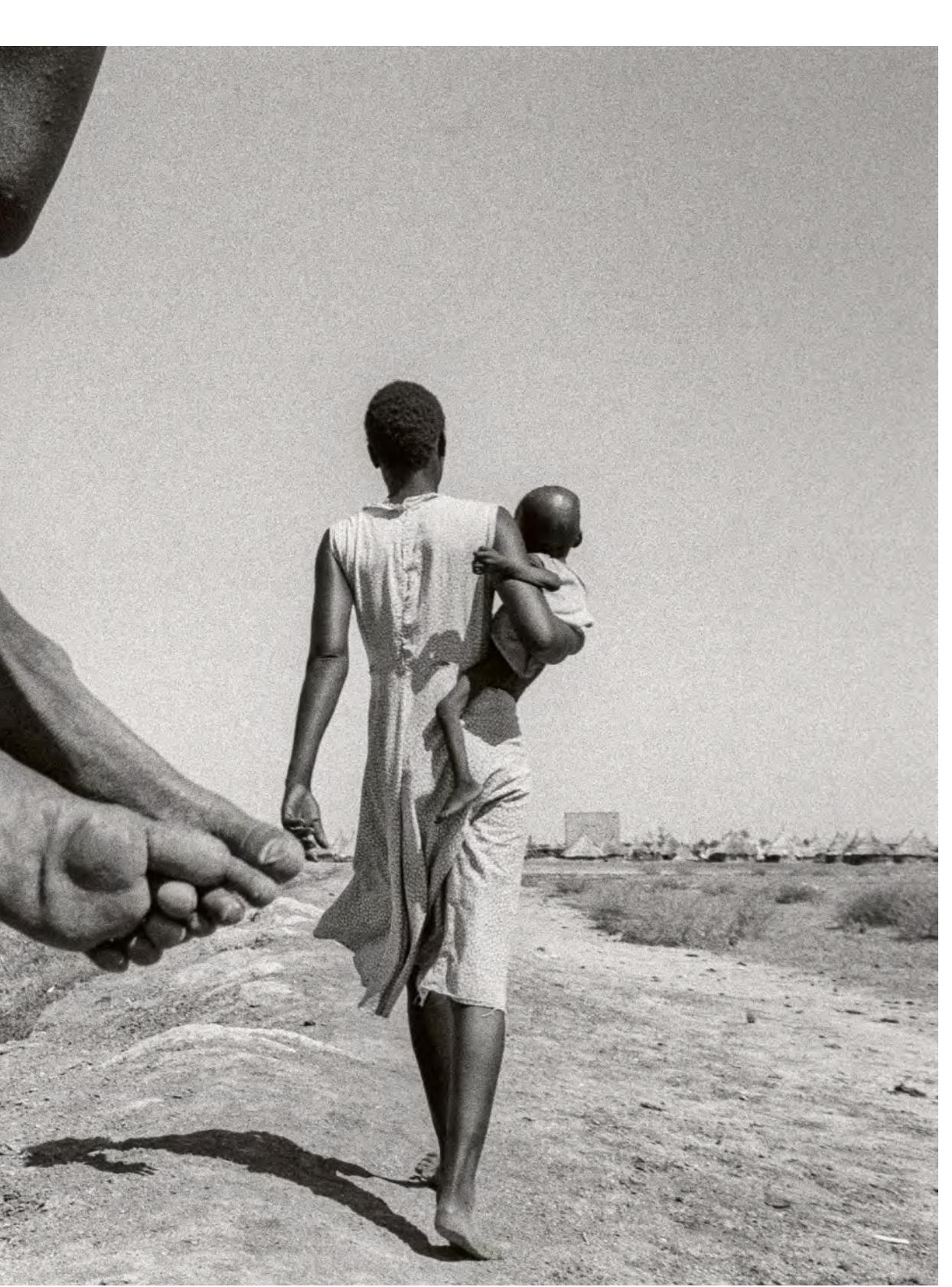




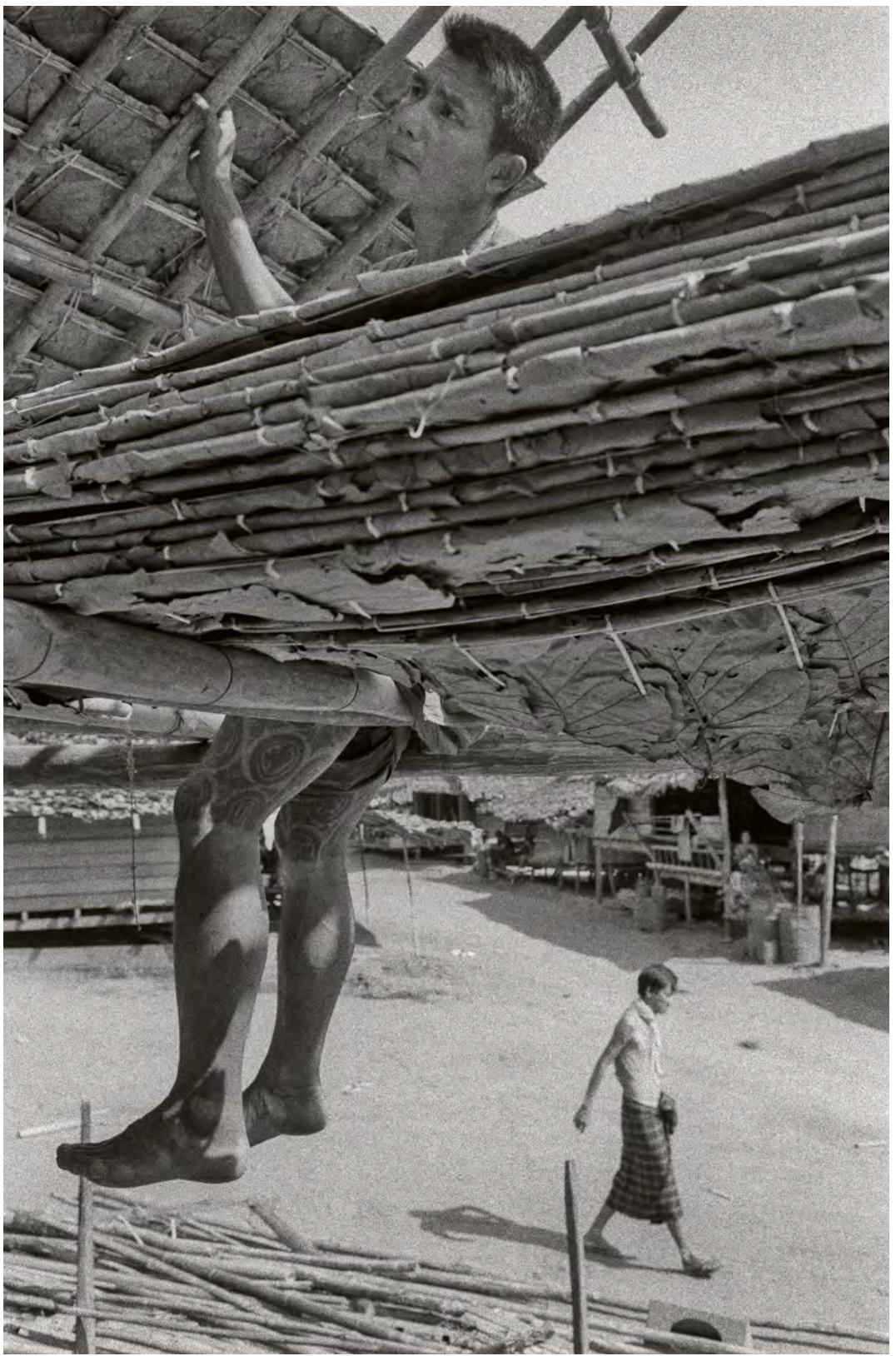
















# Turmoil.

Vink finds his way into the midst of news events: the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia (1989), the fall of Ceaușescu during the Romanian Revolution (1989), the tsunami in Indonesia (2004), etc. We see resistance, rebellion, silence and reconstruction.

Vink bevindt zich in het midden van de actualiteit: de Fluwelen Revolutie (1989) in Tsjechoslovakije, de val van Ceaușescu (1989) tijdens de Roemeense Revolutie, de tsunami in Indonesië (2004)... We zien verzet, oproer, verstomming en heropbouw.

Vink est au cœur de l'actualité : la révolution de velours (1989) en Tchécoslovaquie, la chute de Ceaușescu (1989) lors de la révolution roumaine, le tsunami en Indonésie (2004)... Ses photos captent la résistance, le chaos, le désarroi et la reconstruction.



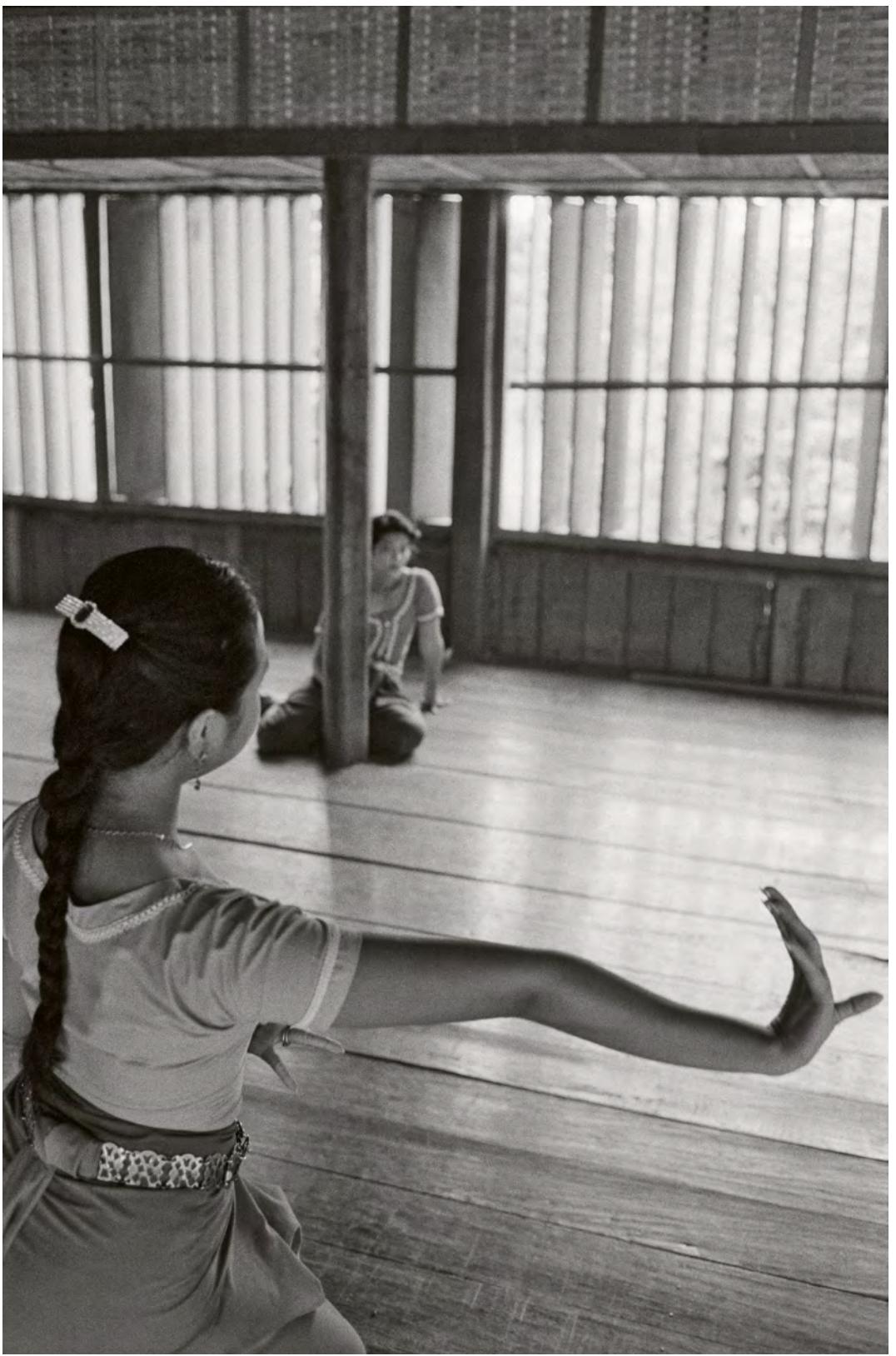








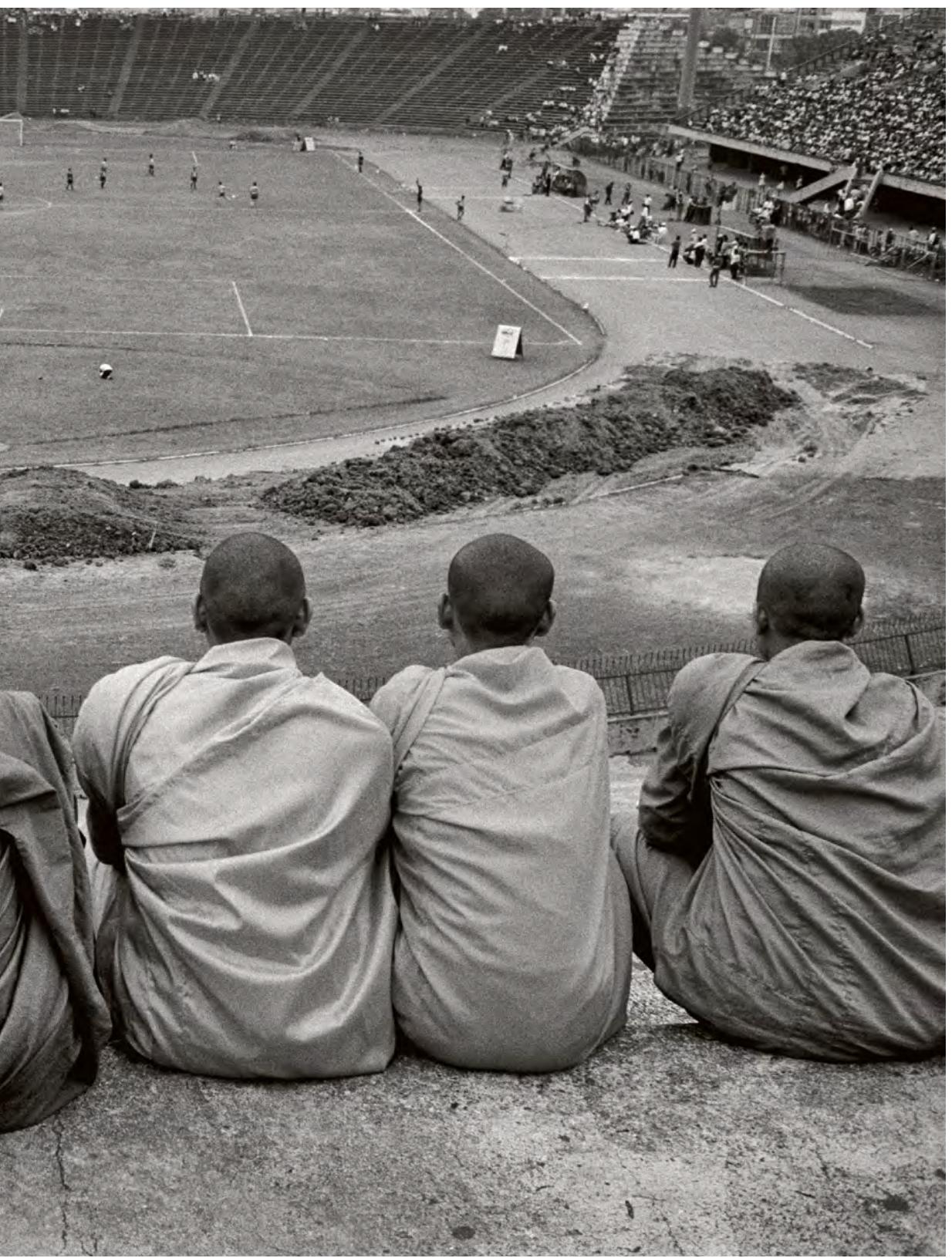












# Asia.

Travelling through Asia in the 1990s, Vink creates richly layered visual stories: the first rains in Laos, *carte blanche* in Vietnam, overpopulation in Delhi (India), New Year celebrations in Sri Lanka...

Reizend door Azië in de jaren 90 creëert Vink veelzijdige beeldverhalen: de eerste regens in Laos, carte blanche in Vietnam, de overbevolking in Delhi, India, nieuwjaarsvieringen in Sri Lanka...

En parcourant l'Asie dans les années 1990, Vink compose des récits visuels aux multiples facettes : premières pluies au Laos, carte blanche au Vietnam, surpopulation à Delhi, célébrations du Nouvel An au Sri Lanka...

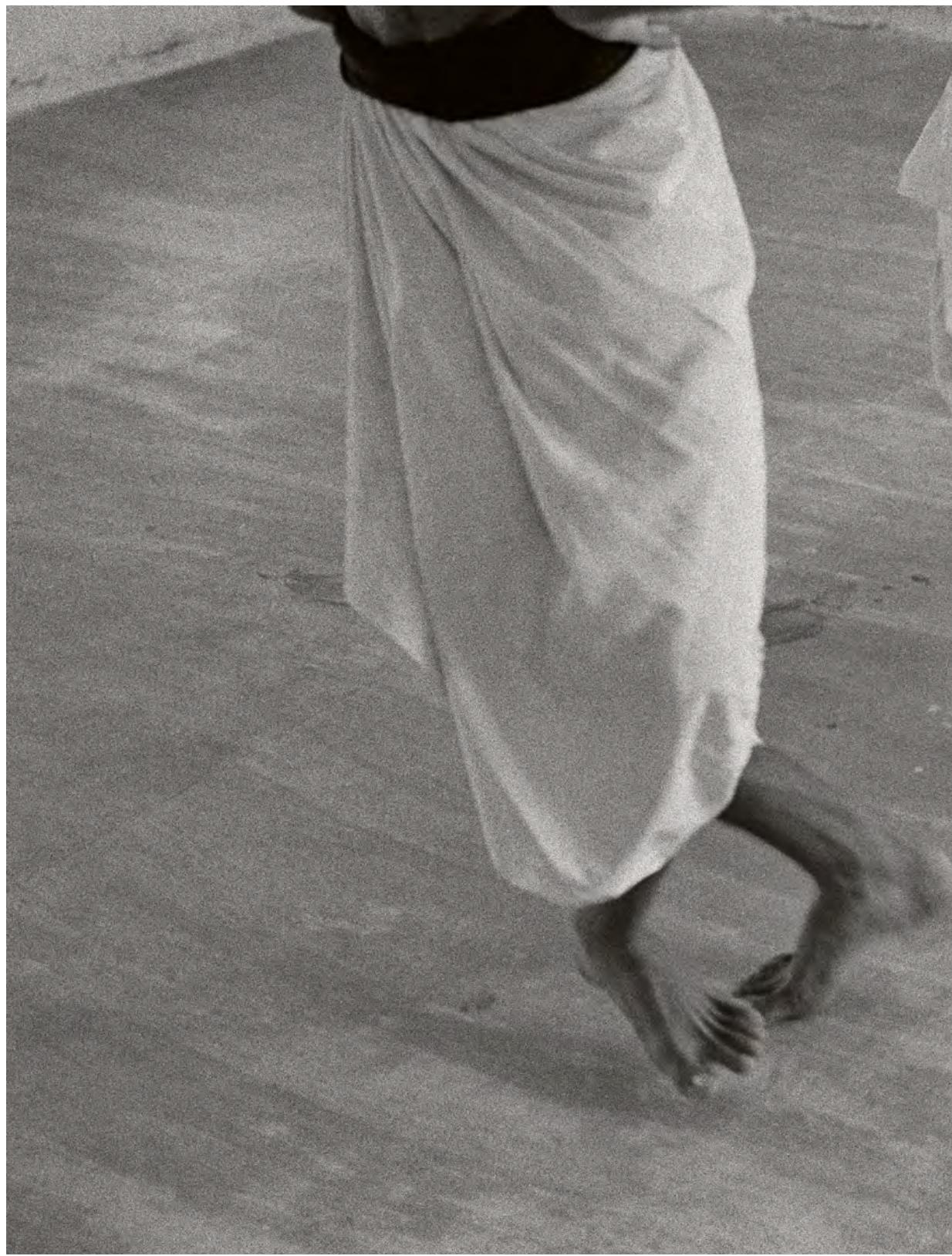








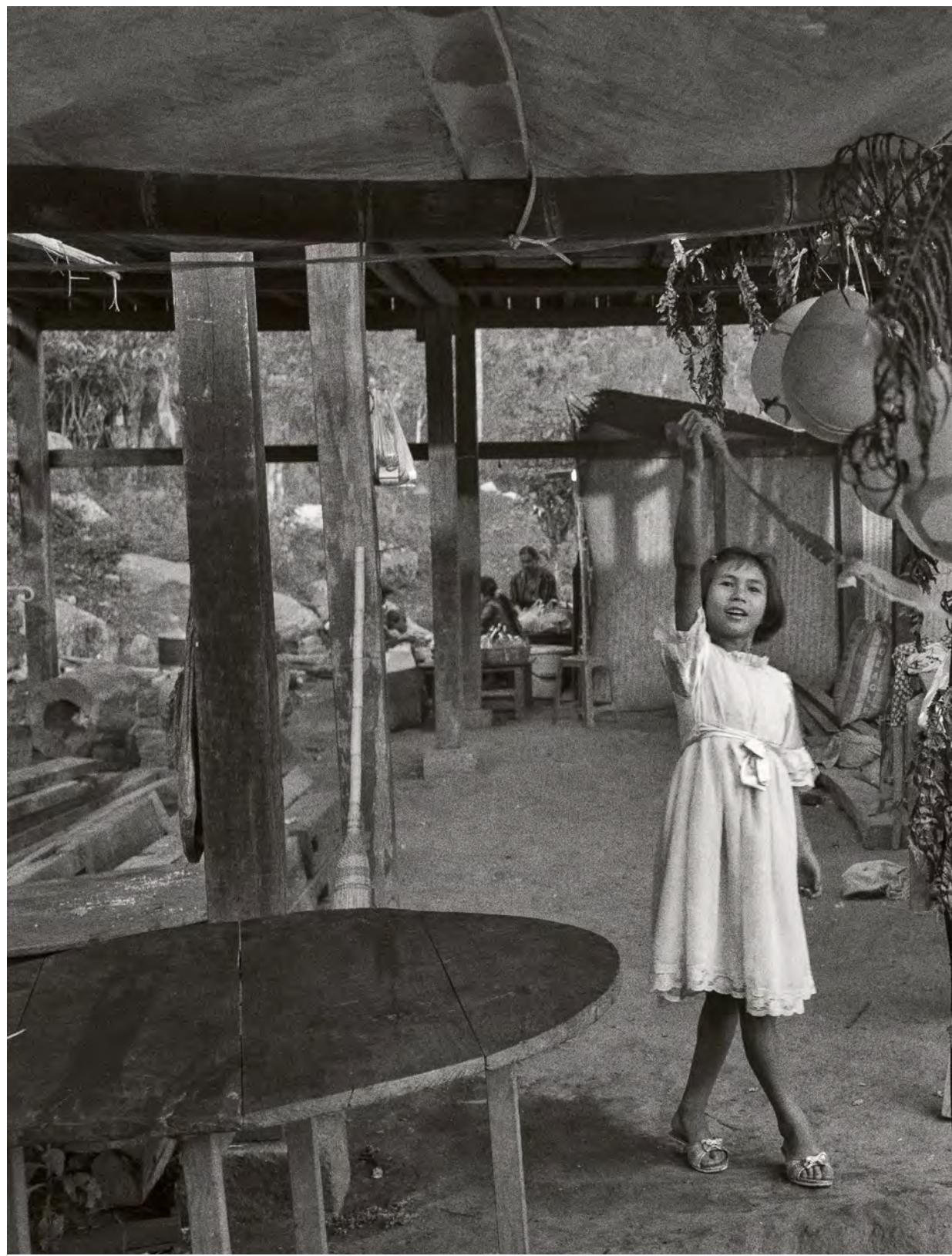










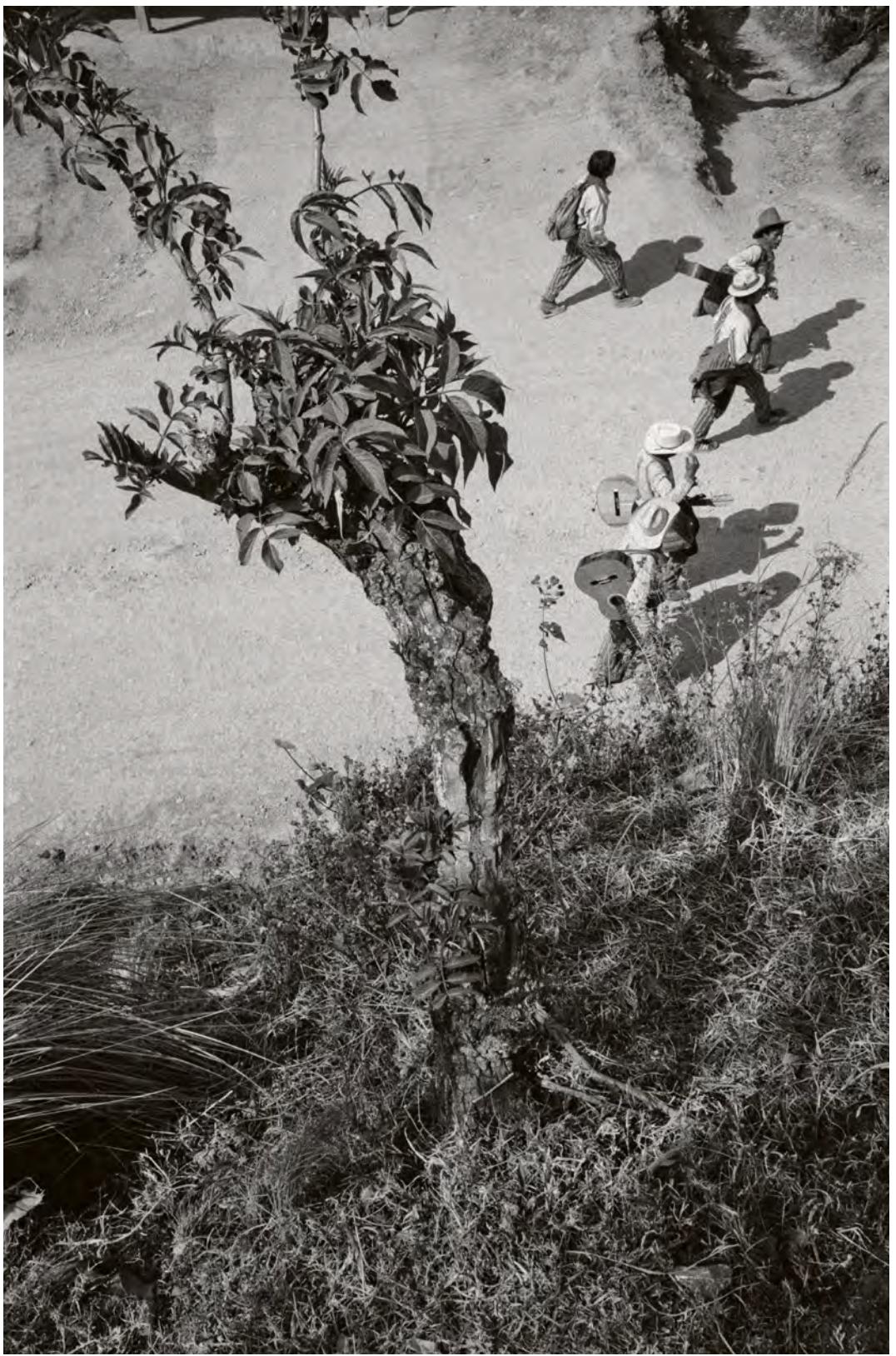












# Heimat.

Vink's travels and their sidelines converge. Vink seeks peace and quiet, returns, and we are shown his two sanctuaries: Cambodia and Belgium. Cambodia, 35 years after that first encounter, an autocracy with increasing economic prosperity and the consumerism that comes with it. Belgium, *ons Belgiekske*, that Vink always comes home to.

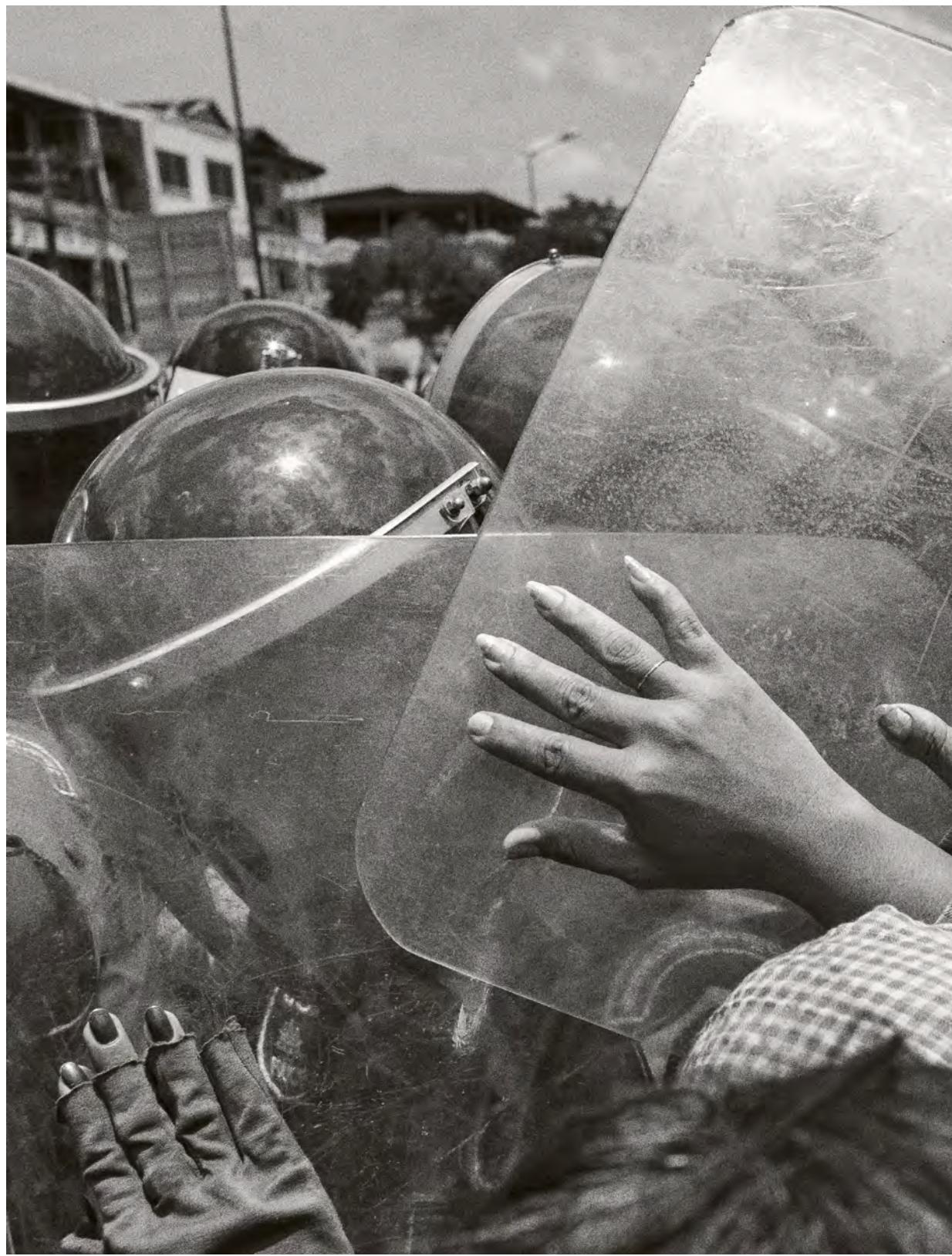
Vinks reisroutes en hun  
zijlijnen komen samen.  
Vink zoekt rust, keert  
terug, en we zien zijn  
twee toevluchtsoorden:  
Cambodja en België.  
Cambodja, 35 jaar na de  
eerste kennismaking, een  
autocratie met meer eco-  
nomische welvaart en bij-  
behorend consumentisme.  
België, ‘ons Belgiekske’,  
waar Vink toch steeds weer  
thuiskomt.

Les itinéraires de Vink et  
ses lignes de touche se  
rejoignent. Vink cherche  
la quiétude, revient, et nous  
voyons ses deux refuges :  
le Cambodge et la Belgique.  
Le Cambodge, 35 ans  
après la première rencon-  
tre, une autocratie plus  
prospère, mais aussi plus  
consumériste. La Belgique,  
« notre petite Belgique »,  
où Vink revient pourtant  
toujours.

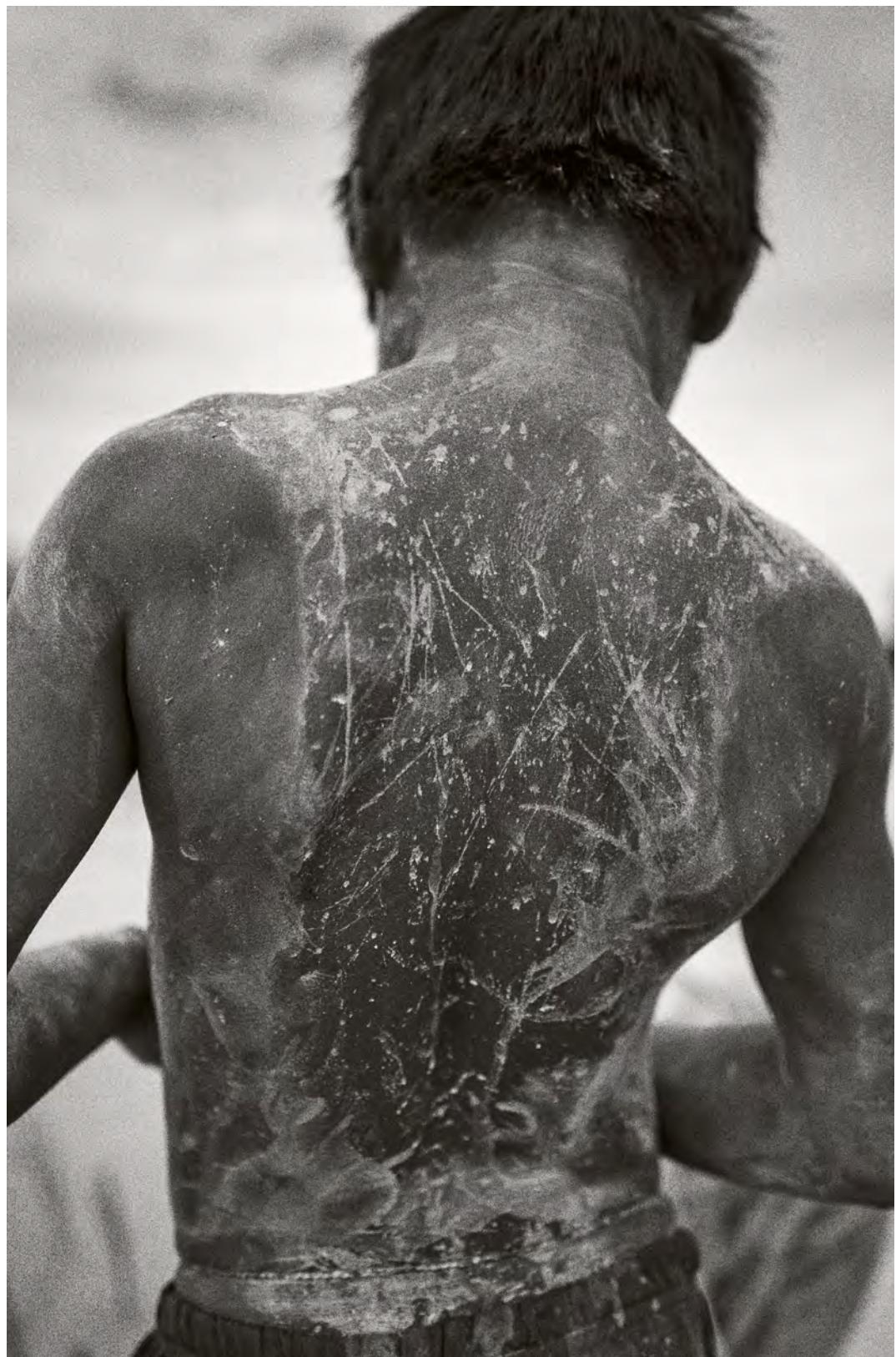


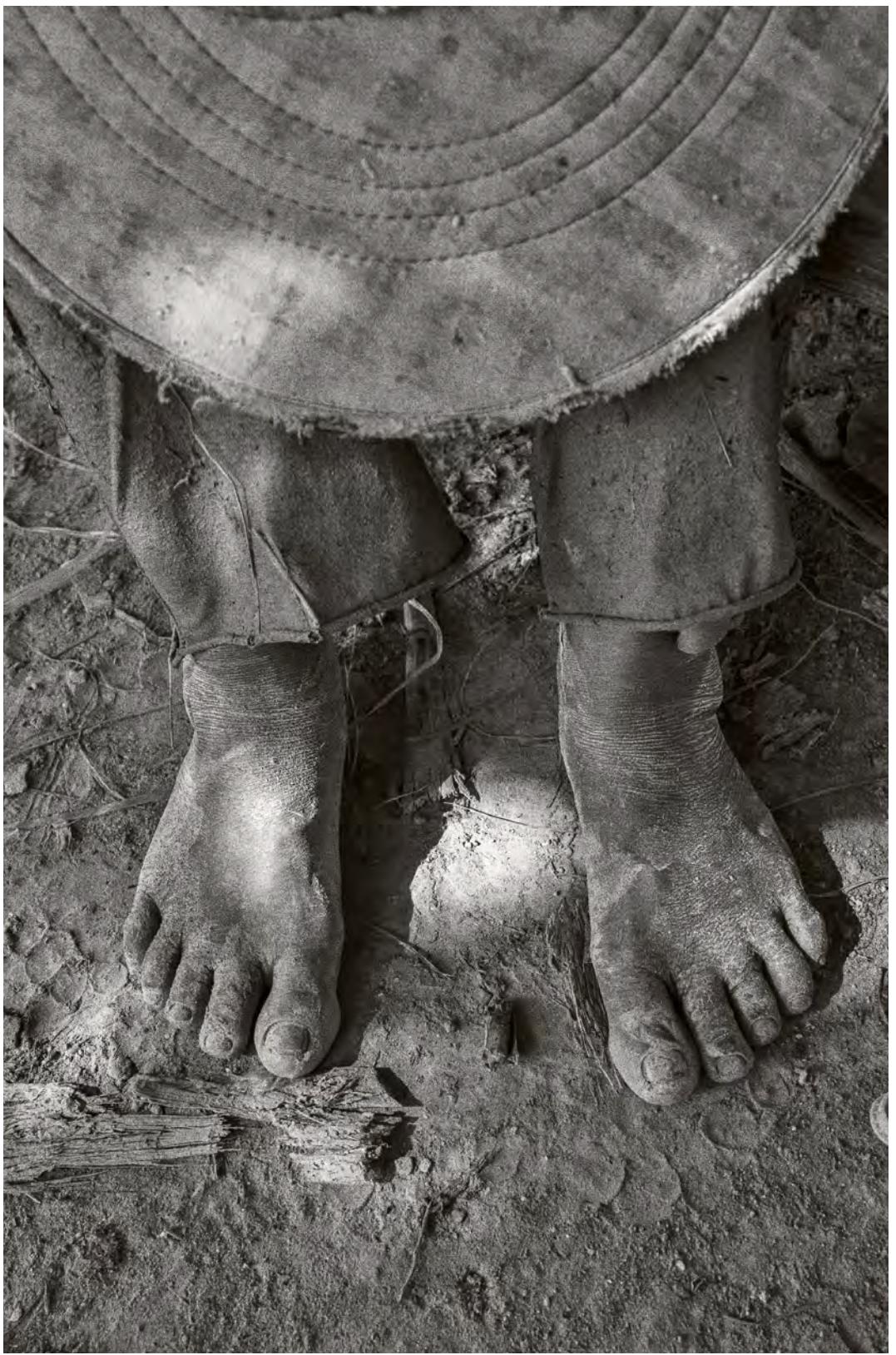
























# Captions

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USA, Colorado, 30-04-1986.  
Self-portrait in a freight car  
crossing the USA.

## Beginnings

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Farmers clearing a beetroot field.

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BELGIUM, Mauraige, 13-01-1980.  
A technical assistant waiting for  
his rider at a cyclo-cross race.

P. 24-25  
BELGIUM, Belceil, 13-07-1980.  
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P. 26-27  
BELGIUM, Fleurus, 11-04-1982.  
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P. 30-31  
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## Sahel

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water infiltration to improve  
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MALI, Tondibi, 03-02-1987.  
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MALI, Tondibi, 19-12-1985.  
Members of a cooperative working  
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MALI, Tondibi, 03-02-1987.  
Transporting the straw from a pre-  
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MALI, Bia, 20-12-1985.  
Schoolchildren watering a  
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from the sale of the vegetables  
will serve to buy school materials  
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NIGER, Ayorou, 14-12-1985.  
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P. 76-77  
ANGOLA, Cubal, 05-06-1994.  
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They have to share a well with  
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SUDAN, Abyei (South Kordofan),  
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THAILAND, Sho Klo, 20-03-1991.  
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Sunday Mass.

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INDIA, Madurai (Tamil Nadu),  
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A few refugees are allowed to  
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ANGOLA, Bengo, 14-06-1994.  
There are 30,000 Angolan dis-  
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800 refugees from Zaire.

P. 97  
THAILAND, Sho Klo, 28-03-1991.  
Karen refugee repairing the roof  
of his shelter with leaves.

P. 98-99  
IRAQ, Said Sadiq (Kurdistan),  
29-02-1992. Goods for sale at an  
improvised market for Kurdish  
displaced.



# Colophon

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