

**ANTOINE AGOUDJIAN AND THE RESTOS DU CŒUR**  
**BY ROBERT DOISNEAU**

*During one year, Antoine Agoudjian has criss-crossed France through the lens of the Restos du cœur. A book of his photographs, with a foreword by Frédéric Dard as a tribute to Coluche, will be released in November in aid to the association.*

*A portrait of the photographer by Robert Doisneau.*

Amongst all image-makers I have met, Antoine Agoudjian seems to be holding a special place. I don't know anyone who so vigorously refuses to be part of the firing squads of current events. On his way to the Restos du cœur, friend Antoine, his generosity slung over his shoulder, was rehearsing the speech he was intending to address the information officers.

"I want to denounce the egoism hidden between abundance and poverty — no, that's too pompous! Let's get back to it more plainly.

I promise myself to refrain any graphic skilfulness.

I make a commitment not to yield to indulgent picturesqueness, and even less to use the harshness of situations.

I swear not to use trickery.

I will refrain from judgement, an attitude that brings only the comfort of clear conscience.

I want to be something else than a cold observer."

These grounds, disclosed in front of people who had already heard quite a few, had the pitch of absolute sincerity.

No excessive formalities, young man, when do you start?

Then, anguish. Let's listen to Antoine: "I couldn't sleep anymore. I bashfully began to take panning shots. Then, as I was getting closer, I dared listen to them. To listen is important. I learned what conviviality meant. That it is often more difficult to take than to give. That it is nice to feel respected — many don't wish to be seen. If someone agrees to give away his image, you have to make him sign an authorization — a dreadful trial for my timidity —, but it's very well thus, this sign of respect you owe to models.

"You have to understand that daily requirements are that many problems: how to wash, dress, eat? Where to sleep? How to avoid getting robbed? If what I have done can seem simplistic to professionals, I have been sincere and I think I have never yielded to shamelessness. Will my action slightly help them get out of a circle of inevitability? You don't have a job so you can't have a home; and without a home you cannot find a job. It's enough to make you bang your head against the wall. At times, the questioning about the power of images would re-emerge.

"In the old days, pictures by Lewis Hine and Jacob A. Riss showing the faces of children slaved by nascent industry, then the living conditions of the destitute, have managed to raise the public awareness of a right-thinking British society and to facilitate the vote of a few protective laws.

"The power of image isn't limited to a mere trivialization of injustice, to making tragedy familiar. It can become a tool capable of changing social relations."

From Toulouse to Nancy — from Nancy to Marseille by way of Lens and Le Kremlin-Bicêtre, our friend Antoine has lived an outstanding human experience.

Today, he fears any photographic work will seem pointless to him. Actually, for the moment, he says, I don't know where I'm going anymore. It's still very fuzzy in my head. Which is quite ironic for such a photographer.