



A Post-Fascist *Family of Man*? Cold War  
Humanism, Democracy and  
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1. These were selected by Dorothy Norman, and included quotations from James Joyce, Shakespeare, Euripides, and sayings from the Maori, Navajo, Sioux, and Kwakiutl Indians.

2. See Neil Campbell, 'Cold War Containment Culture and Photography: Robert Frank's The Americans and the 1950s', in David Holloway and John Beck (eds), *American Visual Cultures* (Continuum: New York, 2005), p. 146.

3. See Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 66, and Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (St Martin's Press: New York, 1997), p. 83.

4. See Allan Sekula, 'The Traffic in Photographs', *Art Journal*, vol. 41, no. 1, Spring 1981, pp. 15–25.

5. Eugenia Kaledin, *Daily Life in the United States, 1940–1959: Shifting Worlds* (Greenwood Press: Westport, 2000), p. 178.

In 1955 Edward Steichen's exhibition *The Family of Man* opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Selected from millions of photographs, under Steichen's strong authorial vision, the images formed a vast illustrated magazine-style montage; an editorialised installation, divided into thirty-eight sections punctuated by religious, literary, or philosophical sayings from around the world.<sup>1</sup> A clear symptom of its Cold War age, after meandering through the exhibition space with hundreds of images printed in black and white, visitors were met with a 6 × 8 foot colour reproduction of a mushroom cloud, taken during US H-Bomb testing. An abstract manifestation of the cultural anxiety surrounding the bomb in the 1950s; it was a stark reminder of the ultimate fallout that could result from ideological and cultural differences. Accompanied by a warning from Bertrand Russell that an atomic war would cause 'universal death', the bomb's potential destruction was cast in 'comfortingly' universalising terms. A large proportion of the images in *The Family of Man* were selected from the archives of the popular weekly magazine *Life*, which pioneered populist photojournalism in America from 1936 and reached its greatest circulation in the 1950s. The magazine pictured the world from a glaringly American perspective. Indeed, in the 1940s, *Life's* owner Henry Luce had used the magazine to celebrate 'The American Century', announcing that nation's values as the world's guiding light.<sup>2</sup> Under the auspices of the United States Information Agency (USIA), this 'guiding light' was shone around the Cold War world as the show went on tour fulfilling President Eisenhower's foreign policy remit to develop new forms of propaganda without 'the propaganda tone'.<sup>3</sup> The sponsors of the show's tour – one of them being *Coca-Cola Overseas*, the carbonated drink corporation's monthly publication – reinforced its American vision, simultaneously wedding diplomatic and consumerist desires. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that for Allan Sekula Steichen's exhibition represented a profoundly corporate image of the world, as a Cold War utopia.<sup>4</sup> Utopia or propaganda, the vision expounded in Steichen's exhibition appeared to be in popular demand on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Seen by over 270,000 people in New York, more than half of the population of Belgrade also visited the exhibition.<sup>5</sup> *The Family of Man's* European tour began in West Berlin in September 1955, where it was shown at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Figs 1 and 2), before moving on to the Städtische Lenbach-Galerie in the formerly American occupied Munich. Clearly, the decision to open the exhibition's European tour in Berlin was clearly a highly strategic one. As a city divided by American and Soviet dreams, Berlin straddled East and West. Furthermore, West Germany was America's new, and arguably most strategically important, ally against the Soviet Union.



**Fig. 1.** Installation shot, *The Family of Man*, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin, 1955. (Photo: United States Information Agency, National Archive, Washington DC.)

By the time the exhibition finally closed six years later in 1961, the year the Berlin Wall had been erected (inaugurating a very real fracturing of Steichen's global family), it had been seen by more than nine million people around the globe, and was, by all reckonings, the most successful photography exhibition of all time.<sup>6</sup> However, in one of its earliest, and now most well-known critiques, Roland Barthes argued that *The Family of Man* aimed 'to suppress the determining weight of History', dangerously excluding political issues and racial, class, or cultural differences.<sup>7</sup> For Barthes, Steichen's classic humanism failed because it wrongly postulated that 'in scratching the history of men a little [...] one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature'.<sup>8</sup> In the countless critiques that followed, the exhibition's humanism has been derided as vulgar, idealised, sentimentalised, instrumentalising, ideological, kitsch, bourgeois, capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal, and neo-colonialist.<sup>9</sup> When Barthes mounted his indictment of the show after seeing it in Paris in 1956, he argued that one should always remember to 'scour nature, its "laws" and its "limits" in order to discover History there, and at last, to establish Nature itself as historical'.<sup>10</sup> In his recent rereading of the exhibition, Blake Stimson has sought to re-engage with its late modernist humanism in relation to other major photographic

6. The original exhibition was reproduced and circulated in the form of five replicas. These appeared in ninety-one venues in thirty-eight countries (from Berlin to Nairobi and Tokyo to Kabul). See Eric J. Sandeen, 'The Show You See With Your Heart: The Family of Man on Tour in the Cold War World', in Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (eds), *The Family of Man, 1955–2001: Humanism and Postmodernism, A Reappraisal of the Photo-Exhibition by Edward Steichen* (Jonas Verlag: Marburg, 2005), pp. 101–19.

7. Roland Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', in his *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (Hill and Wang: New York, 1972), p. 100.

8. Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', p. 100.

9. For a good overview of the critical responses to the exhibition, see Monique Berlier, 'The Family of Man: Readings of an Exhibition', in Bonnie Brennan and Hanno Hardt (eds), *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1999), pp. 222–30.



Fig. 2. Installation shot, *The Family of Man*, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin, 1955. (Photo: United States Information Agency, National Archive, Washington DC.)

10. Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', p. 101.

11. Stimson, *The Pivot of the World*, p. 3.

12. An exception is John O' Brian's 'The Nuclear Family of Man', *Japan Focus: Asia Pacific Journal*, July (2008) <[http://www.japanfocus.org/-John-O\\_Brian/2816](http://www.japanfocus.org/-John-O_Brian/2816)> [accessed 14 September 2012].

13. See Kristen Gresh, 'The European Roots of The Family of Man', *The History of Photography Special Issue on the Family of Man*, vol. 29, no.4, Winter 2005, pp. 331–43, and Sandeen, 'The International Reception of The Family of Man' in the same issue, pp. 344–54.

14. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images: The Family of Man and the Shoa', in *The Family of Man, 1955–2001*, pp. 81–99; Timm Starl, 'Eternal Man: Karl Pawek and the Weltausstellungen der Photographie', in *The Family of Man, 1955–2001*, pp. 123–39; and Jörn Glasenapp, *Die Deutsche Nachkriegsfotografie: Eine Mentalitätsgeschichte in Bildern* (Wilhelm Fink: Munich, 2008).

projects of the 1950s, casting it as reflecting a system of political belonging driven by 'a sense of identity-in-crisis', built on a shared fascination with, and fear of, *non-identity*.<sup>11</sup> Arguably, nowhere else was identity more in crisis, and a new sense of post-national belonging more in need, than in postwar Germany. Yet if surprisingly few scholars have interrogated *The Family of Man*'s problematic humanism from the specific perspective of the various host nations, still fewer have examined the show in relation to Germany.<sup>12</sup> Notably, both Kristen Gresh and Eric Sandeen have provided valuable readings of the European roots and reception of the exhibition, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Yet although their research has unearthed crucial facts about *The Family of Man*'s relationship to Germany, neither exclusively focuses on the German context. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, Timm Starl, and Jörn Glasenapp have considered the exhibition in relation to Germany, the former probing its relationship to and suppression of the Holocaust, and the latter two examining its legacy in the West German context, and all three readings make clear that the exhibition's relationship to Germany has many previously overlooked nuances and complexities.<sup>14</sup> Yet both all avoid fully grappling with *The Family of Man* in relation to both its prewar German roots, and its Cold War reception in a divided Germany.

In this essay, I hope to do just that, examining the German roots and reception of *The Family of Man* – qua Barthes – as a means of interrogating the ‘laws’ and ‘limits’ of postwar photographic humanism in a divided Germany, so as to rediscover the history inherent in it. This task is arguably all the more urgent in relation to Germany where suppressing ‘the weight of history’ was far too common a cultural phenomenon during the postwar decade of cultural amnesia, and humanism was too often allied with both a cultural forgetting and an apolitical metaphysical abstraction. At the same time, it is hoped that by viewing the exhibition from the ideological perspectives of a divided Cold War Germany, one might be able to reanimate, complicate, and re-politicise what has been understood as Steichen’s insipid and timeless Americanised humanism.

### German Roots and German Receptions

Long before it was decided that the show should open its European tour in West Berlin, Steichen had visited West Germany to meet and view the work of potential photographers for inclusion in his exhibition. Of the eleven European nations he toured, visiting photographic agencies, magazine offices, museums, galleries, and photography schools, Steichen – who could speak and read German – apparently stopped in more cities in West Germany than in any other country – six in total: Munich, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Trier, and Saarbrücken. During this European trip, made in 1952, Gresh tells us that Steichen met at least 150 photographers.<sup>15</sup> Yet Gresh, who has conducted interviews with a significant proportion of the photographers involved in the exhibition, has stressed that we have comparatively little information regarding his German visit – a symptom she puts down to the chaos of postwar reconstruction.<sup>16</sup> We do know that many of Steichen’s meetings in Germany were facilitated by the curator, collector, and photographer Fritz Gruber. As the founder of Photokina, the annual international photography event held in Cologne since 1950, Gruber was extremely well connected in the worlds of both art photography and photojournalism. Steichen also met with Otto Steinert the pioneer of Neue Sachlichkeit (Subjective Photography), in Saarbrücken, and although Steinert’s abstract and experimental photography did not feature in *The Family of Man*, it was included in the large overview of postwar photography in Europe organised by Steichen in 1953.<sup>17</sup> We also know that the curator was particularly interested in securing the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) portraiture work of August Sander for *The Family of Man*, that he met with Sander during his trip, and that he remained in contact with him for many years afterwards. Steichen was presumably attracted to Sander’s self-declared belief in the universal language of photography, and the ways in which the German photographer had used the medium to present a social portrait of society in his ambitious project of the 1920s, *Antlitz der Zeit* (‘Face of Our Time’).<sup>18</sup> Doubtless Steichen also made contacts with West German press archives and agencies, which would have helped him to ‘recruit’ appropriate photographers and images. Based on the catalogue (which includes most of the images), by my count, there were at least eleven German photographers in the exhibition.<sup>19</sup> These included more established figures such as Sander (who had three works in the show) and the modernist documentary and fashion photographer Herbert List, as well as documentary photographers such as Hermann Claasen, who became well known for his ‘trümmerfotografien’ (rubble images) depicting the destruction of Cologne.

15. Gresh, ‘The European Roots’ (2005), p. 332.

16. Gresh, ‘The European Roots’ (2005), p. 337.

17. See the MoMA press release ‘Postwar European Photography to Be Shown at Museum’, May 1953.

18. See Sander’s 1931 radio lecture ‘Photographie als Weltgesprache (Photography as a Universal Language)’, discussed by Virginia Heckert, in ‘Albert Renger-Patzsch as Educator: “Learn to See the World”’, *History of Photography*, vol. 21, no. 3, Autumn 1997, p. 211.

19. Fifteen to twenty images were apparently excluded from the catalogue, including the photo of the mushroom cloud. See Berlier, ‘The Family of Man’, p. 216.

20. Power in the Pacific (1945) and The Road to Victory (1942). On Bayer's conception of the exhibition, and his influence at MoMA, see Stimson, *Pivot of the World*, pp. 82–6; Christopher Phillips, 'The Judgment Seat of Photography', in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 24–32; and Mary Anne Staniszewski, *A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1999).

21. See Phillips, 'The Judgment Seat of Photography'.

22. See Matthew Witkovsky, 'Laboratories and Classrooms', in Witkovsky (ed.), *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe 1918–1945* (Thames and Hudson: London, 2007), p. 58

23. The American National Exhibit, which featured *The Family of Man* alongside display of American design and commodities took place at Sokolniki Park in Moscow in 1959.

24. See Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity*, p. 208. On the exhibition, see Ute Eskildsen and Horak, *Film und Foto der zwanziger Jahre* (Verlag Gerd Hatje: Stuttgart, 1979).

25. See Patricia A. Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997), p. 299, fn 61.

26. See Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity*, p. 97.

27. See Zoe C. Smith 'Germany's Kurt Korff: An Emigré's Influence on Early Life', *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 2–3, Summer 1988, pp. 412–24.

Steichen also included the work of the press photographers Rudolf Busler, and Erich Andres, the latter of whom had been directly involved in producing Nazi propaganda images during the war, as well as less well-known amateurs and studio photographers such as Willie Huttig. There were also around the same number of formerly German-born, naturalised American practitioners, including prominent modernists and press photographers (many of whom worked for *Life*) who had emigrated to America before the war, such as Andreas Feininger, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Clemens Kalischer, Ralph Crane, and Otto Hagel.

Beyond the German photographers with whom Steichen met, and who were ultimately included in the exhibition, a German influence is clearly present in the look of *The Family of Man's* installation, which, as many critics have noted, has its roots in the German modernist design of the Bauhaus and the avant-garde experimentation of the 1920s. From the beginning of his time at MoMA, Steichen was associated with the Bauhaus artist/designer Herbert Bayer, who had designed two of Steichen's earlier war photography shows.<sup>20</sup> Although not directly involved in this exhibition – and ultimately critical of it – Bayer's influence is clearly present in the radical, montaged layout and the use of the language of advertising to activate and accentuate the desired audience response.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Steichen's exhibition was actually related to a specifically German history of didactic, ambitious, large-scale travelling exhibitions that played a significant role in the photographic culture of German modernism in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Such exhibitions – including Berlin's *Kino und Foto* (Cinema and Photo) of 1925, the 1928 *Neue Wege in der Photographie*, (New Ways in Photography) in Jena and *Foto der Gegenwart*, (Contemporary Photo) which took place in Essen the following year – were designed to educate the public about photography, frequently combining photography as art, science, technology, advertising, and print, and utilising dynamic innovative display techniques. Often such exhibitions merged with larger shows on hygiene, design, and technology, just as *The Family of Man* would at the American Exhibit in Moscow.<sup>23</sup> The most significant of all such exhibitions was the travelling survey show *Film und Foto* organised by the Deutscher Werkbund in 1929, which – rivalling Steichen's show – has also been referred to as the most important photography exhibition of all time.<sup>24</sup> Steichen had first-hand experience of this exhibition, curating the American section in collaboration with Edward Weston.<sup>25</sup> The exhibition's merging of press, art photography, and advertising; the non-hierarchical nature of its display; and the way in which the images were sorted simply by name, country, or professional orientation are all features which would re-emerge in *The Family of Man*.

As many critics have observed, the all-American aesthetic of *Life* magazine dominated Steichen's exhibition, and compromised the supposed neutrality of the magazine's ethnographic eye, reflecting the imperialist nature of its ideological editorial mission. However, even this element of Steichen's exhibition was arguably one that had its origins in the German-illustrated press of the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, like many other American- and British-illustrated journals, *Life* was unthinkable without the participation of émigrés from central Europe.<sup>26</sup> Quite apart from the large number of German émigrés who made up its photographic staff, from its inception in 1936, the magazine's artistic direction and its pioneering of the photo-essay had been guided by Kurt Korff, formerly editor of *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* ('Berlin Illustrated Newspaper' or *BIZ*).<sup>27</sup>

With such roots and precedents, as well as the contemporaneous popularity of huge photo fairs and exhibitions such as Gruber's, arguably Steichen's German audience was unusually well primed for *The Family of Man*. However, there was another more recent and explicitly political exhibition tradition that also played a crucial part in influencing *The Family of Man*'s reception in West Germany. The American Department of Defense and later the State Department sent exhibitions of American arts and consumer products to West Germany under the auspices of reeducation and reorientation. The 'democratisation' programmes of the late 1940s and 1950s often involved the production and distribution of pamphlets, movies, and magazines, as well as special exhibitions – including countless photography shows on American life – staged at United States Information Centres, to illustrate the basic advantages of democracy. Throughout the 1950s, MoMA's design curator Edgar Kaufmann organised a series of exhibitions in West Germany promoting American models of domesticity. Like *The Family of Man*, they held up the American way of life as not only a universally valid model, but as one to which other countries should aspire.<sup>28</sup> Such exhibitions became such a staple that West Berlin was given its own permanent venue – the George Marshall-House, which, three years before Steichen's exhibition opened, housed the 1952 exhibition *We are Building a Better Life* (Fig. 3). Showcasing American domestic life, its centrepiece was a real-life nuclear family (of actors) in an open-roofed idealised American home, packed with consumer products and new appliances. More popular even than Steichen's exhibition, it attracted over half a million visitors in its three-week stop in West Berlin, an estimated 40% of whom were from East Germany.<sup>29</sup> It also set the stage for Cold War antagonisms on the domestic front; a battle which would reach its peak with so-called kitchen debate, in which Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon were filmed arguing about their country's respective ideologies and high-tech kitchen appliances during a joint visit to the American National Exhibition in Moscow of 1959, where *The Family of Man* was also installed.

The fact that *The Family of Man* was deployed as part of the US democratisation programmes in Germany is hardly surprising. As Christina Klein has stressed, every aspect of the exhibition's tour was determined by America's Cold War political and military agenda. It visited Lebanon after US Marines had been sent there; in the Eastern Bloc, it was shown as part of the American National Exhibit in Moscow, and it visited Belgrade, in acknowledgment of Tito's Yugoslavia as the only communist country which had refused to join the Soviet bloc.<sup>30</sup> *The Family of Man* was doubtless seen by its new West German public in the context of such American postwar cultural policies and exhibition initiatives. Given the clear ideological objectives of *The Family of Man*'s tour, we might expect Walter Ulbricht and the German Democratic Republic's leading Party members to have been extremely skeptical, not to say suspicious of Eisenhower's cultural imperialism. In contrast, for Konrad Adenauer's feverishly Americanising, 'democratising' Federal Republic government (in receipt of a great deal of American dollars and soon home to hundreds of US nuclear missiles), a positive reception to Steichen's show would seem almost guaranteed. The atomic message of Steichen's exhibition would surely have been readily received in West German culture as it shifted eagerly and prematurely, from denazification to Cold War anti-communism.<sup>31</sup> This was even more assured, given the fact that Steichen's atomic fantasy chimed particularly well with the still apocalyptic mood in contemporary West Germany – reflected in the

28. On American houses and the cultural initiatives associated with the Marshall Plan, see Sheryl Kroen, 'Negotiations with the American Way: The Consumer and the Social Contract in Post-war Europe', in John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (eds), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories* (Berg: Oxford, 2006), p. 252. And for a fascinating reading of *The Family of Man* in relation to democracy and its American audience, see Fred Turner, 'The Family of Man and the Politics of Attention in Cold War America', *Public Culture*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 55–84.

29. See Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2010), p. 124.

30. Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2003), p. 188.

31. It is worth stressing that despite Steichen's sustained attempts to get the exhibition shown in Dresden, the USIA were not prepared to exhibit *The Family of Man* in East Germany, because they did not recognise the regime. Indeed, in terms of the international politics of 'democracy' versus 'anti-communism', it is worth noting that the American government (responsible for *The Family of Man*'s tour) also realised the importance of fostering anti-communist public opinion in West Germany, and the CIA even sponsored pro-democratic, anti-communist literature, such as Melvin J. Lasky's journal *Der Monat*. On anti-communism in the Federal Republic, see Patrick Major, *The Death of the KPD: Communism and Anti-Communism in West Germany, 1945–1956* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997).



**Fig. 3.** Installation shot of the exhibition *We are Building a Better Life*, George Marshall House, West Berlin, 1952 (Photo: United States Information Agency, National Archives, Washington DC.)

32. See Elliot Yale Neaman, *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1999), p. 171.

numerous science-fiction novels in the immediate postwar period which imagined futuristic worlds and new beginnings after modern civilisation had been wiped out. These included Ernst Jünger's 1949 *Heliopolis*, which told the story of a futuristic city after a devastating war, framed by the power struggle of two super-powers.<sup>32</sup>

Yet perversely, given the vast ideological differences that separated the two Germanies, *The Family of Man* (and the universalising humanism it represented) enjoyed official and public popularity in both East and West

Germany, where it had a significant and lasting influence upon both states' postwar photographic cultures. It is true that the exhibition's abstract universalism was viewed critically by some sections of the East German authorities, particularly because its show of collective unity failed to represent the class struggle. The GDR's most vocal photography expert, Berthold Beiler, attacked the exhibition as formalist, anti-democratic, and decadent.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, for Beiler – like Barthes, and many of the exhibition's more recent critics – Steichen's humanism failed because it only showed half the picture; it removed man from the society which defined him, and it failed to show suffering, which, for Beiler was the product of neofascism, militarism, and 'the dark men of atomic insanity'.<sup>34</sup> However, Ulbricht himself was intrigued by the exhibition, not least by its effective use of photography as a medium fit for a mass audience.<sup>35</sup> As Karl Gernot Kuehn has recently argued, *The Family of Man's* 'compassionate and egalitarian depiction of humanity from all over the world brought it well within the new parameters of socialist acceptability'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, by 1960, another of the GDR's official photography specialists Gerhard Henninger would state that 'A few years ago, the exhibition *The Family of Man* pointed to the great possibilities which can be expanded significantly under the new social conditions of socialist life'.<sup>37</sup>

The politics of the public reception of the exhibition's Americanising vision in both Germanies is complicated. On the one hand, the effort to democratise and Americanise West German culture in the 1950s might have made *The Family of Man's* blatant American vision more palatable to a broad section of the West German public, or perhaps less glaringly obvious. However, on the other hand, the aggressive sweep of the kind of Americanisation it showcased also gave rise to an explicit animosity towards the darker side of American influences. Such sentiments were increasingly felt by sections of the West German population, particularly the cultural elite, who decried the increasing impact of American popular culture and subsequent decline of a German 'Hochkultur' (high culture). Indeed, as early as 1953 the German philosopher Ludwig Marcuse argued that Europe and America no longer existed, because Europe had been reduced to a kind of 'second America'.<sup>38</sup> And by 1969, the cultural commentator and writer Jürgen Ploog would refer to the Federal Republic mockingly as 'the Cola-Hinterland'.<sup>39</sup> Equally, even with – or perhaps because of – the explicit anti-Americanism of the East German state, which targeted the capitalist imperial corruption American culture symbolised, the popular reception of exhibitions showcasing American consumer culture in East Germany, as in communist Eastern Europe, was complex. This is made clear by the reception of the exhibition *This is America: Visions of an American Dream*, which circulated throughout the Eastern Bloc in 1952, and was intended to counter the fascination with American life, through it focus on images of the Klu Klux Klan, violent comic books and pornographic pin-ups.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, however, the intended anti-Americanism of the exhibition back-fired, as the exhibition proved enormously popular across the Eastern Bloc with a public hungry to find out more about the demonised West.

Regardless of this complex reception of American culture and democracy, both East and West German publics were certainly keen to see Steichen's exhibition. Approximately 44,000 people visited *The Family of Man* in West Berlin between 17 September and 9 October 1955 (Figs 4 and 5).<sup>41</sup> Further, USIA statistics indicated that one quarter to a third of those visitors came from East Germany.<sup>42</sup> In an USIA cable from 20 October it was reported that:

33. This point is made by Ulrich Domröse in his 'Nichts ist einfach wie es scheint', in Dömrose (ed.) *Nichts ist so einfach wie es scheint: Ostdeutsche Photographie, 1945–1989* (Berlinische Galerie: Berlin, 1992), p. 10.

34. See Glasenapp, *Die Deutsche Nachkriegsfotografie*, p. 217, fn 17.

35. Karl Gernot Kuehn, *Caught: The Art of Photography in the German Democratic Republic* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997), p. 57.

36. Kuehn, *Caught: The Art of Photography*, p. 56.

37. Gerhard Henninger, 'Path and Goal of Amateur Photography in the GDR', in John P. Jacob (ed.), *Recollecting a Culture: Photography and the Evolution of a Socialist Aesthetic in East Germany* (Photographic Resource Centre: Boston, 1998), p. 111.

38. See Ludwig Marcuse, 'European Anti-Americanism', *Partisan Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, May–June 1953, pp. 314–20, and Reinhold Wagnleitner's *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: the Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. by Diana M. Wolf (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1994), p. 8.

39. On this, see Michael Ermarth, 'Between Blight and Blessing: The Influence of American Popular Culture on the Federal Republic', in Detlef Junker (ed.) *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945–1990, A Handbook*, vol. 2, 1968–1990 (German Historical Institute Washington D.C. and Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), pp. 334–40, and Jürgen Ploog, *Cola-Hinterland* (Joseph Melzer Verlag: Darmstadt, 1969).

40. This exhibition is described by Leopold Tyman, see David Crowley, *Warsaw* (Reaktion Books: New York, 2003), p. 104.

41. This was between 17 September and 9 October 1955. See Sandeen, 'The International Reception of the Family of Man' (2005), p. 350.

42. Sandeen, 'The International Reception of the Family of Man' (2005), p. 350.



**Fig. 4.** Installation shot, visitors at *The Family of Man*, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin, 1955. (Photo: United States Information Agency, National Archive, Washington DC.)

43. Sandeen, 'The International Reception of the Family of Man' (2005), p. 350. Sandeen has examined the audience response to the work in more depth. See his article above.

44. Sandeen, 'The Show You See With Your Heart', p. 107.

45. MoMA press release entitled 'Museum of Modern Art Plans International Photography Exhibition', New York, 31 January 1954, p. 1.

[the] exhibit made a profound impression on most visitors. Many went to see it several times; cases have been recorded of persons visiting it 5–6 times. Characteristic of the exhibit is that it appealed to the highbrows as much as the lowbrows and middlebrows. Among Berlin's intellectual and cultural leaders it was considered a 'must' and was widely (and favourably) discussed. But in terms of numbers, housewives, workers, students and white collar workers predominated.<sup>43</sup>

Of particular interest, in terms of the efficacy of the show's hidden propaganda or the pro-American bias of the West German press, is another report stressing that few of the Berlin press reviews explicitly associated the exhibition with the American Government.<sup>44</sup> Arguably the exhibition's popularity in both Germanies was precisely because of its avowedly apolitical (and supposedly anti-ideological) stance – 'we are not concerned with photographs that border on propaganda for or against any political ideologies', Steichen's first press release had claimed.<sup>45</sup> This was a statement that so resonated not only with the same withdrawal from ideology that defined the public mood of the 1950s in West Germany, but also in the German Democratic Republic, as a reaction against the ideological saturation of culture under 'actually existing socialism'.



**Fig. 5.** Installation shot, *The Family of Man*, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin, 1955. (Photo: United States Information Agency, National Archive, Washington DC.)

In terms of the empathy a German audience might have experienced, it is interesting that out of the 503 images, approximately 20 depicted German subjects. Of these, several could be said to be 'iconic' images of Germany, including Crane's image of a Munich beer hall, which – as a highly loaded expression of German nationalism in the postwar period – made poignant contrast with his other image of German refugees in the aftermath of the war, and an image of postwar destruction taken by Hagel. The overwhelming majority of the German photographs, however, are in keeping with the largely sentimental images displayed throughout the show. Despite the total destruction that had been so recently experienced in Germany, most depict happy children playing, people dancing or working (although in a few instances we can see rubble in the background). Only three German images in the exhibition explicitly document Nazism and the war in Germany: Crane's, Hagel's, and an image by an anonymous photographer, used as an

exhibit in the Nuremberg trials, which depicts the Nazi's crushing of the 1943 uprising at the Warsaw ghetto, and the rounding up of men, women, and children at gun-point prior to their deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp.

46. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images'.

47. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images'.

48. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images', p. 81.

49. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images', p. 81.

50. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images', p. 81.

51. This is a point also made by Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2005), p. 60.

52. M. Keith Booker, *The Post-Utopian Imagination: American Culture in the Long 1950s* (Greenwood Press: Westport, 2002), p. 9.

53. These included the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee, and Jewish War Veterans. See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Mariner Books: Boston, 2000), p. 123.

### Traumatic Repressions: Steichen's Humanism and the Holocaust

For Schmidt-Linsenhoff, Barthes' rehabilitation of a kind of 'progressive humanism' fails to recognise the unconscious subtext of Steichen's exhibition that he otherwise convincingly critiques.<sup>46</sup> For her, it is Steichen's deployment of the anonymous picture taken at the Warsaw Ghetto depicting the largest single revolt by the Jews during the Holocaust which reveals *The Family of Man's* irredeemable humanism. She argues that Steichen's use of the image, juxtaposed originally with a photograph taken in Israel by Ana Eiwkin-Brick (a photographer of Russian-Jewish descent) showing a woman with her arm upraised in defiance – dangerously transforms the Holocaust 'into a triumph of resistance and humanity'.<sup>47</sup> Schmidt-Linsenhoff claims that Steichen's exhibition should therefore be 'read as a historical script' that deals with survival following the breakdown of civilisation as represented by Auschwitz'.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, she maintains that in avoiding the representation of Auschwitz, Steichen avoids the issue of whether the Holocaust could, in fact, be understood as the product of his cherished western humanism.<sup>49</sup> Discussing the omission of the images taken of the concentration camps by Margaret Bourke-White, George Rodger, Lee Miller, and David Seymour – all photographers working for *Life*, a publication otherwise plundered heavily for the show – in relation to recent studies of the psychological mechanisms for trauma, Schmidt-Linsenhoff argues that the unconscious sub-text of the exhibition is that the Holocaust will not happen again, because it never really took place.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, including any photographs of the concentration camps would have problematised Steichen's great collective universality, by giving crimes against humanity a distinctively German face. In contrast, the atomic bomb – unaccompanied by the specific images of burnt and mutilated Japanese bodies – appeared to be a more comfortably abstract evil; the great global leveller.<sup>51</sup>

However, the Cold War politics of the atom bomb also complicate the Steichen's representation of the Holocaust. Given the intensity of 'the culture of the bomb' in the 1950s – the recent American atrocities in Japan and the potential consequences of future nuclear war – it arguably loomed larger in the American cultural imagination than the Holocaust. Any direct comparison asserted between Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Holocaust was politically problematic. As Tom Engelhardt has argued, the unimaginable violence of the final victory over Japan threatened to conflate American actions with the atrocities committed by the Nazis, and thus 'to undermine the American myth of noble victory in war'.<sup>52</sup> Also, the politics of remembering the Holocaust were not as clear-cut in America in the 1950s as Schmidt-Linsenhoff's critique suggests. In criticising Steichen's suppression of the Holocaust, she fails to account adequately for the paradoxical situation obtaining in the 1950s (although transformed by the 1960s), whereby, as Peter Novick has argued, many principal American Jewish organisations were unanimously united in their opposition to a memorialising of the Holocaust because 'it would not be in the best interests of Jewry'.<sup>53</sup> In this context, Steichen's omission reflected American Jewish communities' own complex working through of the Holocaust in the 1950s. Further, Steichen's

sentimentalising rhetoric of humanity's triumph which, Schmidt-Linsenhoff argues, absorbs and universalises the Holocaust, also appears both less sentimentalising and less universalising when compared with another key event which took place simultaneously in New York in 1955 – and marked a significant moment in the reception of the Holocaust in American culture – the Broadway theatrical production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.<sup>54</sup> A play which caused great contention due to the almost complete omission of many specific Jewish references and the insertion of an MGM style 'happy ending'; a popular story of the Holocaust even more repressed, ahistorical and universalising than Steichen's.

In fact, the Nazi atrocities were not entirely excluded from *The Family of Man*, at least not from MoMA's staging of the exhibition. Indeed, the rarely discussed film programme curated by Steichen to accompany the exhibition in New York included Henri Cartier Bresson's 32 min film *Le Retour*, commissioned in 1945 by the American Office of War Information.<sup>55</sup> This film, which provides the cinematic backdrop to Bresson's famous photograph depicting a former Gestapo officer being slapped in the face, was shot in a former deportation camp in Dessau, in late April 1945. The camp which existed from 1944 to 1945 was a satellite camp of one of the most notorious concentration camps, Buchenwald and had an inmate population of about 340 political prisoners, forced labourers, and refugees. Steichen's cinematic inclusion of the film complicates Schmidt-Linsenhoff's reading of Steichen's failure to represent the Holocaust or the concentration camps.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, her interpretation of the accompanying image depicting the figure with a raised arm, which she appears to perceive as a defiant woman representing heroic resistance – and in turn, Steichen's triumphant humanism – is problematised, if, as other commentators such as Monique Berlier have argued, the portrait actually depicts a Palestinian woman raising her hand in despair.<sup>57</sup> This would have had particular resonance in 1955, a year that the Palestinian–Israeli conflict was escalating and the UN had passed several resolutions against Israeli aggression. In connecting the Warsaw Ghetto image to this one, Steichen could be understood as articulating a very different message – not that the Holocaust did not happen, but that its immediate legacy could be seen in the political situation in Palestine, and the continuation of human suffering there.

However, Schmidt-Linsenhoff is certainly right to argue that the lack of any images explicitly documenting the concentration camps in *The Family of Man* played a useful diplomatic role, given that one of the central aims of USIA propaganda was the moral rehabilitation of the Germans.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the account of two prominent postwar West German photographers, Gabriele and Helmut Nothhelfer, is enlightening. They asserted that 'Germans could walk through the exhibit with no fears, the photographs [were] not accusing them, they [did] not confront them with the horrible crimes of Nazi Germany...'.<sup>59</sup> This adds another dimension to the exhibition's resounding popularity in both postwar Germanies. As many commentators, perhaps most notably Andreas Huyssen, have observed, in West Germany the 1950s were a decade marked by a profound cultural amnesia in relation to its very recent past, and a strong preoccupation with universalisms and post-political sentiments.<sup>60</sup> During this decade, it was not the atrocities against the Jews, but the horrific experiences of Germans on the Eastern Front and elsewhere that dominated the media.<sup>61</sup> This cultural moralising and disavowal clearly helped in the reconstruction of the individual personality in the aftermath of totalitarianism.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in 1983, the German philosopher Herman Lübbe argued that the 'partial silence'

54. See Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History is Bought*, (Routledge: New York, 1999), p. 29, and Ewout van der Knaap (ed.) *Uncovering the Holocaust: the International Reception of Night and Fog* (Wallflower Press: London, 2006), p.156.

55. See the MoMA press release 'Film List for *Family of Man*', 1955.

56. See Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images', p. 89.

57. This is Berlier's reading of the image, see her 'The Family of Man', p. 226. I would argue that the woman looks more like a Palestinian village woman, and shares many similarities with the women documented by the photographer in the book *Palestine*, 1949, by her husband Daniel Brick.

58. Schmidt-Linsenhoff, 'Denied Images', p. 89.

59. Gabriele and Helmut Nothhelfer '1955 Nous Tous – The Family of Man in Berlin', in Jean Back and Gabriel Bauret (eds), *The Family of Man: Temoignages et documents* (Artevents/CAN: Luxembourg, 1994), pp. 141–45.

60. See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (Routledge: London, 1994).

61. Elizabeth Heineman, 'The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's "Crisis Years" and West German National Identity', in Hannah Schissler (ed.) *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1948–1968* (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 2001) p. 20.

62. See Frank Biess, 'Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning POWs and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945–1955', in Schissler (ed.) *The Miracle Years*, p. 73.

63. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Harvard University Press: Boston, 1997), p. 6.

64. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory*, p. 6.

65. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory*, p. 15.

66. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory*, p. 107.

67. See 'Chapter Two: Capitalist Realism', in Dietmar Elger (ed.) *Gerhard Richter: A Life in Painting*, trans. by Elizabeth M. Solaro (Dumont: Cologne, 2002), pp. 32–69.

68. See Starl, 'Eternal Man', pp. 123–39.

about the Nazi past had to be understood as a 'social-psychological and political necessity for the transformation of our postwar population into the citizenry of the Federal Republic'.<sup>63</sup> In the 1950s the dominant mood was ripe for *The Family of Man's* saccharine sentimentality, it was one of the disillusionment, strongly anti-ideological and apolitical. Clearly depoliticised responses served political ends; such functional pragmatism aided the all-encompassing embrace of American consumerism and culture, whilst the faltering denazification of society had failed to remove many high-ranking Nazi's and party members from positions of power in the new state. As Jeffrey Herf's research has revealed, this failure to accept any responsibility for the Holocaust or the destructions of the war was shared in East Germany.<sup>64</sup> There Ullbricht and the SED (Socialist Unity Party) denied any involvement in a Nazi past, which was recast as the product of the fascist and capitalist West. As Herf has rightly stressed, in the GDR, dominant postwar interpretations were dialectically reframed so as to view disasters merely as preludes to subsequent communist successes.<sup>65</sup> More astonishingly, such a denial enabled a strong and governmentally endorsed anti-Semitism to develop in East Germany, manifested already in the 1950s by calls from within the SED to purge the 'cosmopolitans'.<sup>66</sup>

#### Karl Pawek's What is Man? Post-Fascist Identity, Humanism, and Photography in West Germany

In the West German context, *The Family of Man's* Americanised, international vision of photography supplied the same kind of idealised, supposedly apolitical, ahistorical example for photographic culture in the postwar period as Abstract Expressionism and international abstraction would in the field of painting. Indeed, it is telling that MoMA would follow Steichen's export with *New American Painting* and *Jackson Pollock: 1912–1956*, both of which toured West Germany in 1958 and 1959, respectively. However, in this climate a strategy increasingly popular with German writers and artists resisting the simple imitation of all American cultural imports was to take appropriate them, but only by simultaneously taking an explicitly critical line on them. For example, this was clear in the work of Gerhard Richter – who had completed his artistic training under 'actually existing socialism' in East Germany and left for the West in 1961 – and Sigmar Polke's *Capitalist Realism*, a much more critical German version of Pop Art with which they experimented in the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> In this context many West German writers, artists, photographers, curators, and commentators of the late 1950s and 1960s also self-consciously sought to re-engage the cultural works and strategies of a German modernist past, by way of a political refusal to let all postwar culture be mediated via America. *The Family of Man's* popularity, and its emergence as a model for the postwar refashioning of West German photographic culture, is particularly interesting in this regard, because, as we know, unlike many other cultural imports, Steichen's exhibition was, itself, already engaged in prewar European and specifically German modern visual cultures and exhibition practices.

As noted by Starl, one of the most striking examples of the immediate impact of *The Family of Man* in West Germany was the 1964 'World Exhibition of Photography'. Entitled *What Is Man?* it was masterminded by the Austrian editor and curator Karl Pawek – who had been strongly associated with the National Socialists – and organised in homage to Steichen's exhibition.<sup>68</sup> *What Is Man?* opened nine years after the Berlin staging of Steichen's



Fig. 6. Installation shot *What is Man?* Akademie der Künste, West Berlin, 1965. (Photo: ADK Archiv, Berlin.)

exhibition, and three years after it finished its world tour. Premiering at Zurich's *Kunstgewerbemuseum* on 1 October 1964, like Steichen's show it toured the world, receiving 3.5 million visitors from thirty-nine countries over a period of four years<sup>69</sup> (Figs 6 and 7). Again, replicating *The Family of Man*, multiple versions of the exhibition (in this case, seven) were created for its tour. One day after its fanfare opening, its tour began simultaneously at the Steineren Haus in Frankfurt am Main, Essen's Museum Folkwang and in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum.<sup>70</sup> In the show's catalogue, Pawek – a curator and former editor of the German photography magazines *magnum* and *Stern* – stressed that he wanted to keep alive Steichen's 'magnificent' concept and his memorable exhibition, continuing his humanist approach.<sup>71</sup> This homage would actually extend until the end of the 1970s, as Pawek went on to organise three more similarly ambitious exhibitions in 1968, 1973, and 1977.<sup>72</sup>

Pawek's *What is Man?* included 555 photographs by 264 photographers from thirty countries (with West Germans and Europeans dominating, including East Germans and many photographers from the Eastern Bloc). If Steichen's exhibition had seemed unofficially to sponsor *Life*, reflecting the many close connections the curator had with the illustrated press in America, Pawek's show was officially endorsed and sponsored by *Stern*, the German weekly general-interest magazine. Beginning its publication in 1948, *Stern* quickly became the leading postwar magazine in the country, known for its foregrounding of photography and its blend of light and serious material. If *Life* represented a particular ideological vision of the American dream, in its early years, *Stern* was problematically associated with National Socialism, as many of its leading photographers – including Hilmar Pabel, Max Ehlert,

69. In terms of the four exhibitions, 480,000 catalogues were sold by 1996. A combined total number of visitors to all exhibitions reached 25 million. See Starl, 'Eternal Man', p. 123.

70. Very little has been written about this exhibition, and the only significant readings of it are found in the two chapters: Tim Starl, 'Eternal Man: Karl Pawek and the Weltausstellungen der Photographie', in *The Family of Man, 1955–2001*, pp. 123–139, which briefly examines the exhibition in relation to *The Family of Man*, and Jörn Glasenapp's 'Zwischen Life-Fotografie und Musealer Konsekration', in his *Die Deutsche Nachkriegsfotografie: Eine Mentalitätsgeschichte in Bildern* (Wilhelm Fink: Munich, 2008), pp. 213–57.

71. See Starl, 'Eternal Man', in *The Family of Man, 1955–2001*, p. 123.

72. The second exhibition took place in 1968 and was entitled 'Die Frau' (Women), the third 'Unterwegs zum Paradies' (Journey to Paradise) in 1973, and the fourth, 'Die Kinder dieser Welt' (The Children of the World) in 1977.



Fig. 7. Installation shot *What is Man?* Akademie der Künste, West Berlin, 1965. (Photo: ADK Archiv, Berlin.)

73. See Karl Pawek (ed.) *World Exhibition of Photography, 55 Photos by 264 Photographers from 30 Countries on the Theme What is Man?* (Verlag Gruner + Jahr: Hamburg, 1964)

Wolfgang Weber, Harald Lechenperg and Hanns Hubmann, Leopold Fischer and Wolf Strache — had been high-ranking propaganda and Nazi photographers during the war.

Echoing Steichen's exhibition, Pawek grouped the images in his show into forty-two universal themes, relaying a similarly sentimental view of the unity of mankind and affirming the similarities of people around the world. In both exhibitions, clusters of images show couples in love, children being born, people dancing and at work. Just as in *The Family of Man*, the images were displayed without specific captions or dates, with only the name of the photographer and sometimes the location given, so that the images spoke for themselves in what both curators viewed as the universal language of photography. However, the religious and philosophical quotations that accompanied Steichen's images were notably absent in Pawek's show. Refusing to include any textual appendages, Pawek argued instead that the images must be understood as photographic phrases. Paradoxically, unlike Steichen's entirely ahistorical and decontextualised images, Pawek did provide more historical specificity in the form of the details and dates of each image in the back of the exhibition catalogue.<sup>73</sup>

On the surface, the same optimistic sentimentality seems as abundant in both exhibitions. The Holocaust is once more glaringly absent, in keeping with the cultural experience of amnesia in the postwar period. Although the Holocaust was a less immediate cultural memory by 1964, in fact this made Pawek's omission of it all the more remarkable. For, if the 1950s were marked by cultural amnesia, it was in the 1960s that West German culture began to

show signs of ‘working through’ the Nazi past, prompted by a younger generation that would revolt in the student movement of the late 1960s. Initially, the re-emergence of the Holocaust in popular culture was partly prompted by Adolf Eichmann’s trial in 1961 which was televised live around the world, and his execution in Israel the following year.

Yet despite the sentimentalising and saccharine sequences of images, *What is Man?* soon emerges as a far more jarringly politicised photo-essay than *The Family of Man*. Both National Socialism and the aftermath of the war in Germany are depicted much more explicitly and in far more shocking images in Pawek’s show, than Steichen permitted. In a double-page spread of the catalogue (which matches the exhibition layout), the East German Richard Peter Snr’s 1946 image of a returned German prisoner of war is juxtaposed with an image by Strache, also known in Germany for his popular picture book documenting Hitler’s autobahns.<sup>74</sup> Strache’s iconic image from 1942 shows a gas-masked woman pushing a pram past a ruined Berlin cinema beneath a sign reading ‘Journey into the Past’. Next to this Dmitri Baltermans’ photograph of the same year, depicted Soviet families looking for survivors among the dead in Kerch, Crimea. On the next page, one of the Richard Peter’s infamous images of a destroyed Dresden depicts the melted skeletal form of an air-raid warden, his swastika armband intact, opposite Mario de Biasi’s documentation of the gruesome scene of public lynching after the 1956 revolt in Budapest. The only comparable image in Steichen’s exhibition was Mathew Brady’s photograph of the crumpled body of a dead man during the American Civil War, but this was historicised and contextualised in a more gentle group of images dealing with death in the guise of ceremonial and burial, immediately spliced with optimistic images of birth.

In Steichen’s exhibition, idealised and apolitical versions of American and Soviet life comprised a larger picture of humanity. For example, a heroic agricultural worker in the USSR was pitched next to explicitly optimistic FSA images of America’s rural farm workers, surrounded by similarly positive images of rural labourers from China, Ireland, Italy, and Japan. The message was clear: people socialise, play musical instruments, marry and celebrate the birth of a child in the same way on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Only rarely were the specificities of the Cold War pictured, as in Michael Rougier’s image from the Korean War, and two other photographs of soldiers in Korea by Al Chang and David Duncan. Although discussing some of the violent juxtapositions that define Pawek’s exhibition, Starl does not develop any comparative reading of the exhibition in relation to Steichen’s, nor does he examine it in relation to the politics of the Cold War – the very subject that dominates Pawek’s show. Pawek’s ‘family of man’ covers a considerable range of Cold War subjects: a procession in Moscow; the reception of cosmonauts in Red Square; Czech paratroops; the Berlin Wall; a CND rally in London, and Khrushchev during a 1960 press conference. Whilst Steichen tends to favour intimate portraits – the only mass representations being the pursuit of leisure, consumer goods, or a single image of a democratic congress – Pawek’s exhibition is dominated by shifts from the single portrait to the representation of the masses in rallies, demonstrations, and ceremonies. Among images depicting rituals around the world, William Klein’s photo of a communist parade is presented alongside Feininger’s picture of 5th Avenue at noon, filled with busy consumers. Although the atomic bomb is depicted in a far less explicit way than in *The Family of Man*, it is present in much less abstract and culturally encoded

74. See Wolf Strache, *Auf allen Autobahnen, Ein Bildbuch vom neuen Reisen* (L.C. Wittich Verlag: Darmstadt, 1939).

75. Abigail Soloman-Godeau discusses the absence of teenagers in her 'The Family of Man', p. 43.

76. Steichen, 'Photography – An American Popular Art', 1952, Lucerne show, p. xxiv, Pawek, 'The Language of Photography: The Methods of this Exhibition', in *World Exhibition of Photography*, 1964, np.

77. Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, pp. 187–8.

78. Pawek 'The Language of Photography', np.

79. Pawek, 'The Language of Photography', np.

everyday forms. A blind child from Hiroshima whose parents suffered from radiation poisoning is depicted, while an image by Max Scheler shows an atomic emergency drill in a Californian school. If Steichen can easily be accused of drafting pathos into even the work of more critical and unsentimental photographers such as Frank, Klein, and Robert Doisneau, and including unrepresentative photographs by them, Pawek gives such discursivity and criticality freer rein. Works by Scheler and Klein play with images within images, whilst self-reflexive photographs by Chargesheimer and Max Jacoby explore Cold War politics as they are performed and mediated via the spectacle of photography and television. Furthermore, the belief systems and personality cults of both capitalism and communism are critically represented in Pawek's exhibition. A fascinating double-page spread of the catalogue brings together a photograph of a Soviet sculptor surrounded by Leninist busts, some bizarre American souvenirs showing Christ and JFK, Khrushchev's profile, and the strange waxwork head of Lyndon B Johnson in a barber's shop. Indeed, the specificities of the political culture of the 1960s are also represented in Pawek's exhibition, including Charles Moore's images of the civil rights era, documenting the race riots Birmingham, Alabama, and Fred Blackwell's photographs of federal troops sent in to police race riots in Cambridge, Maryland.

Unlike Steichen's images of labour and shared hardship around the world, Pawek's exhibition seems to deliberately provoke reflection upon differences in wealth and the existence of immense inequalities, suggesting the emergence of a commentary upon class. In a cluster of images, fur-stoled New York society ladies are paired with an Indian woman begging, Miss World is crowned in London, as an old homeless woman sits in a doorway in Spain. Although gender stereotypes dominate, Steichen's American nuclear family is partially displaced by prostitutes, rebellious teenagers, and disabled children.<sup>75</sup> Further, in places, in a much more radical gesture, Pawek's juxtapositions deliberately make western bourgeois traditions appear strange, and do not simply – as Steichen did – make their already 'primitive' subjects appear even more *othered*. For example, the rituality and performativity of a decadent Surrealist gathering in Paris pictured by Klein is even further accentuated via its juxtaposition with an image of Peruvian burial remains.

Indeed, whilst Steichen claims that American amateur photography is akin to 'a universal folk art', Pawek's catalogue essay argues that 'photography cannot photograph the universal, its vocabulary is composed always and only of individual objects'.<sup>76</sup> Steichen's sequencing of photographs aimed at a homogenising, flowing accumulation of images that constantly affirmed similarity above difference. Indeed, speaking of his *Family of Man*, Steichen argued that 'We can't overlook the differences' he said, 'but unless we arrange these pictures so that they stress the likeness—the similarity—we have lost out'.<sup>77</sup> Superficially, at least, Pawek's sequences also affirmed such similarities, with the curator stressing 'there is no hint of a divided world in this exhibition'.<sup>78</sup> Yet in opposition to its author's claims, stark juxtapositions dominated and violently divided Pawek's show. Against Steichen's democratising vision, Pawek deployed politicised and hierarchical juxtapositions. He asserted, 'there must also be some visual interplay [...] Photographs often clash with each other, even if they seem to belong together because of their subject matter [...] other photographs may spark off a new visual effect, and set our intelligence working by the very fact of their juxtaposition'.<sup>79</sup>

Of course, these differences may merely reflect the near decade that separates the two exhibitions. Pawek's exhibition opened in a very different world to the one *The Family of Man* had. The year 1964 was just three years after the construction of the Berlin Wall, two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and only a year after the assassination of J. F. K., in the midst of the Vietnam War, and a year which also witnessed a myriad of events marking the acceleration of the Cold War, including the shooting down of a US Air Force training plane by Soviet fighters over East Germany. The political instability of the times and the level of Cold War anxieties are reflected in the subject matter of the images Pawek selected. But the status of photography and photojournalism had also been transformed by the 1960s. If *The Family of Man* was the last expression of a soon-to-be extinct documentary social realism originating in 1930s America, Pawek's *What is Man?* reflected the displacement of photography and photojournalism by the hegemonic spectacle of TV.

Yet it is too easy to suggest that Steichen's affirmative, universalising deployment of photography was uniquely characteristic of a late modernist moment of the 1950s, whilst Pawek's reflected the transformed world and televisual culture of the 1960s. In fact, the kind of photographic language of violent juxtapositions and contrasts deployed in Pawek's exhibition predated Steichen's show, and actually characterised the original contexts of many of the images in *The Family of Man*, when they appeared across the pages of magazines and journals such as *Life*. If we look closer at the relationships between the documentary images and adverts in *Life* magazine of the postwar period, we find far more disturbing and violent kinds of juxtaposition, comparable with Pawek's vision. For example, the issue of *Life* from 6 May 1945, within which the concentration camp photographs were published, is punctuated by many violent juxtapositions. We see a happy couple embrace in a Palmolive Soap advert, directly opposite a documentary image depicting an elderly German couple squatting in a muddy pit. Elsewhere, this kind of juxtaposition operates within the advert itself, as in this peculiar full-page advert for rubber tyres which offsets two ladies happily sipping tea, montaged against a backdrop of exhausted soldiers pushing military jeeps up a steep and muddy hill. If, against his own populist agenda, Steichen ended up decontextualising and ahistoricising *Life*'s documentary images within the museum, Pawek seems to have constructed a photo-essay more indebted to the kind of cultural encoding across the pages of *Life*. As we know, *Life* itself owed much to the emergence of the photo-essay in Weimar Germany, due to figures such as Korff, who had pioneered the aggressive juxtapositions of the photo-essay form in the 1920s. In the Weimar period, such juxtapositions had worked to 'assault' the spectator into an activated mode of seeing – one particularly crucial given the ideological mobilisation of images by the left and right. This aggressive aesthetics of photographic rupture was also utilised by the National Socialists in their fascist photographic propaganda and the violent anti-Semitic photo-essays of *BIZ* under Nazi control during the war.<sup>80</sup> Pawek's aggressive juxtapositions take on a decidedly political character too, when we discover that this approach was honed during his editorship of the fascist journal *Die Pause* published in Vienna between 1935 and 1944, and later developed when he was editor of the German illustrated magazine *magnum* published in the 1950s, which became known for just such stark juxtapositions of jarring images.<sup>81</sup> Thus, with *What is Man?* Pawek seems to pay homage to this German modernist heritage – and arguably given his

80. On the use of juxtaposition in Nazi propaganda and in the *BIZ*, see Hanno Levy, '...without masks: Jews through the lens of "German Photography" 1933–1945', in Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (eds), *German Photography 1870–1970: Power of a Medium* (Dumont: Cologne, 1997), p. 111.

81. The monthly periodical *Die Pause* was published in Vienna 1935–1944. Pawek was editor and then senior editor at *magnum* from 1954 prior to his departure in 1962. Starl argues that this was the most important of its kind in the German-speaking territories, with an initial circulation of 10,000 rising to 22,000 by 1956 and 35,000 by 1960. Each volume had approximately 80 pages and was devoted to a particular theme. See Starl, 'Eternal Man', p. 129.

own past politics, to their right-wing and reactionary employment – as much as the unifying democratic humanism of Steichen's show.

If Steichen's exhibition drew on empathy and pleasure to eradicate political identification, using the potential of nuclear Holocaust as a sublime unifying principle, Pawek's show grappled with the idea of universals after the Holocaust, and the impossibility of securing a sense of apolitical belonging in such political times. Against its author's essentialising claims, its intensely politicised contents make a mockery of the Federal Republic's supposedly anti-ideological and democratic reinvention of West German culture and identity. But the divisions and juxtapositions in Pawek's exhibition also make us more attuned to those images of violence, pain, anxiety, or distress that punctuated and destabilised Steichen's photo-essay, often entirely neglected or repressed in the many accounts critiquing the exhibition's problematic and universalising optimism. It is relatively well known that Steichen was forced to remove a photograph which showed the public lynching of an African-American man after a few weeks of the exhibition being shown in New York.<sup>82</sup> As John O'Brian has suggested, this removal was given extra poignancy because of Barthes' critique which, ignorant of this act of censorship, brought attention to the fact, six months after the opening of *The Family of Man*, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African-American boy, was lynched in Mississippi for whistling at a white woman.<sup>83</sup> The photographs taken of his horribly mutilated face were reproduced in the international media. There appears to be no space in Steichen's *Family of Man* for Till, or other such specific, violent images with their heterogeneous and political meanings.

For many of Steichen's critics, it is the consistent imagery of children as a universal symbol of the future – the catalogue ends with Eugene Smith's sentimental image of two children stepping into a forest scene – which appear to bolster *The Family of Man's* problematic naïve humanism, and suggest the infantilisation of subjectivity it represents.<sup>84</sup> Yet, a strange photograph, which draws some parallels with the surreal and disconcerting image of the gas-masked woman with the pram by Strache in Pawek's exhibition, is Wynn Bullock's *Child in the Forest* (1951). The Bullock photograph makes a curious title-page for *The Family of Man* catalogue. The image supposedly pictures the photographer's daughter innocently playing in the woods, but the scene showing a naked young girl lying face down in the dense undergrowth, which engulfs her body and the picture's surface, is nothing but sinister and shocking in its presumed violence. It is arguably more suggestive of child murder or rape than peaceful slumber or play. Bullock's picture makes a strong contrast with Smith's saccharine image. The rupture caused by Bullock's photograph is even more pronounced as it is framed by the jarring language of Carl Sandburg's enthusiastic prologue, which speaks of 'child faces of blossom smiles'.<sup>85</sup> Bullock's image, unsurprisingly, generated great controversy when it was displayed, resulting in endless questions sent to Steichen about the provocative scene, and unlike the other images of universal suffering or even universal annihilation by the bomb, suggested a more complicated and conflicted kind of spectatorial experience. Elsewhere, political specificity and unstable meanings emerged in images of Japanese children from Nagasaki with facial scars; a cluster of images of childhood anger and violence; photographs showing oppressed workers in the Belgian Congo, working class and Black women working as servants, and Korean female protestors behind barbed wire. Even the divisive politics of the emergent Cold War culture in Germany were clear in two

82. On the removal of the lynching image, see Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Dartmouth College Press: New England, 2007), p. 119.

83. O' Brian's 'The Nuclear Family of Man', np.

84. Sekula, 'Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs)', *October*, vol. 102, Fall 2002, p. 26.

85. See Carl Sandburg, 'Prologue', *The Family of Man*, p. 4.

small images: the first, taken by an anonymous photographer, shows two young men throwing stones at Soviet tanks; and the second, a Life image by Ralph Crane, depicts displaced Germans jostling for space and being barricaded between East and West zones in Berlin.

Many recent rereadings of the exhibition have sought to reclaim a more progressive or even radical politics for Steichen – often citing his risky and political inclusion of many photographers associated with the Photo League and under extreme McCarthyist attack in the 1950s.<sup>86</sup> Such readings could also be mobilised in relation to the more problematic and destabilising images in his photo-essay, which seem to work against its otherwise homogenising optimism and naviety. However we position Steichen's politics, his possible intention to picture a more complex and progressive humanism than Barthes allowed for, or his desire to produce a more politicised and unstable viewing experience than suggested by Sekula, it is clear that *The Family of Man* tried to envisage and activate a post-national kind of citizenship and commonality, just before such identification would be recast in global consumerist terms (as was already in the process of happening with the exhibition's deployment by Eisenhower).<sup>87</sup> In contrast, Pawek's post-fascist, heterogeneous humanism drew on this internationalist universalising vision, so as to schizophrenically enable the forgetting of the National Socialist's 'new man', whilst simultaneously re-imagining German identity reframed by the ideological differences of the Cold War. If Steichen's constant stress upon the similarity between pictures and an empathetic emotionality was meant to replace difference with identity for his spectators whether German, American, or Soviet, Pawek's homage is testament to the fact that for many West Germans in the 1960s, identification was a fraught and even schizophrenic experience, as democratic liberalism, consumerist American individualism and the collectivism expounded by 'actually existing socialism' all seemed to embody both alien and everyday forms of belonging.

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86. See Lilli Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal into the Cold War* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1999), p. 129; Sandeen, 'The Show You See With Your Heart'; Stimson, *Pivot of the World*.

87. Stimson, *Pivot of the World*, p. 4.