

America, thy seeds of fate have borne
a fruit of many breeds, many pages
of hard work, sorrow and suffering—
tough strugglers of oaken men—
women of rich tissues—they live on
—the fathers and mothers of soldiers,
sailors, fliers, farmers, builders,
workers—their sons and daughters
take over—tomorrow belongs to the
children.



Road to Victory.
A Procession of
Photographs of the
Nation at War

The Museum of Modern Art,
New York
September 1942
Curated by Edward Steichen
Design by Herbert Bayer
Travelled to San Francisco,
Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago
and London

ROAD TO VICTORY



In the begin it was virgin land and America as promises — and the Indians by thousands paved the way. The Red Man gave over to an endless side of white men in endless numbers with a long hunger and a end to the land they wanted — and the eastern seaboard through the pioneers and home seekers — and the Mississippi waterway system — and the furries and factories to the streets of the west coast.







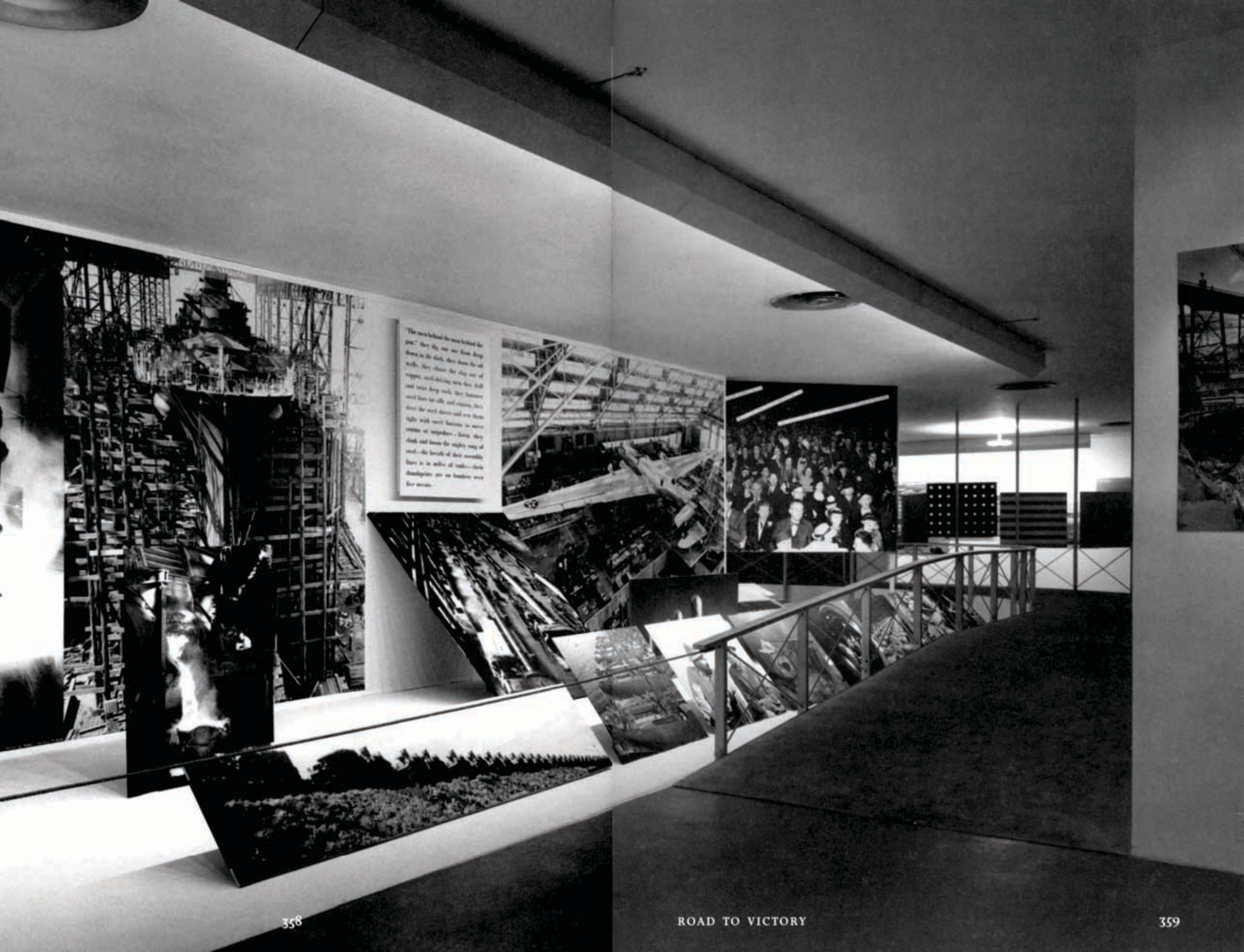
"War—they asked for it—now, by the living God, they'll get it."



"December 7, 1941"

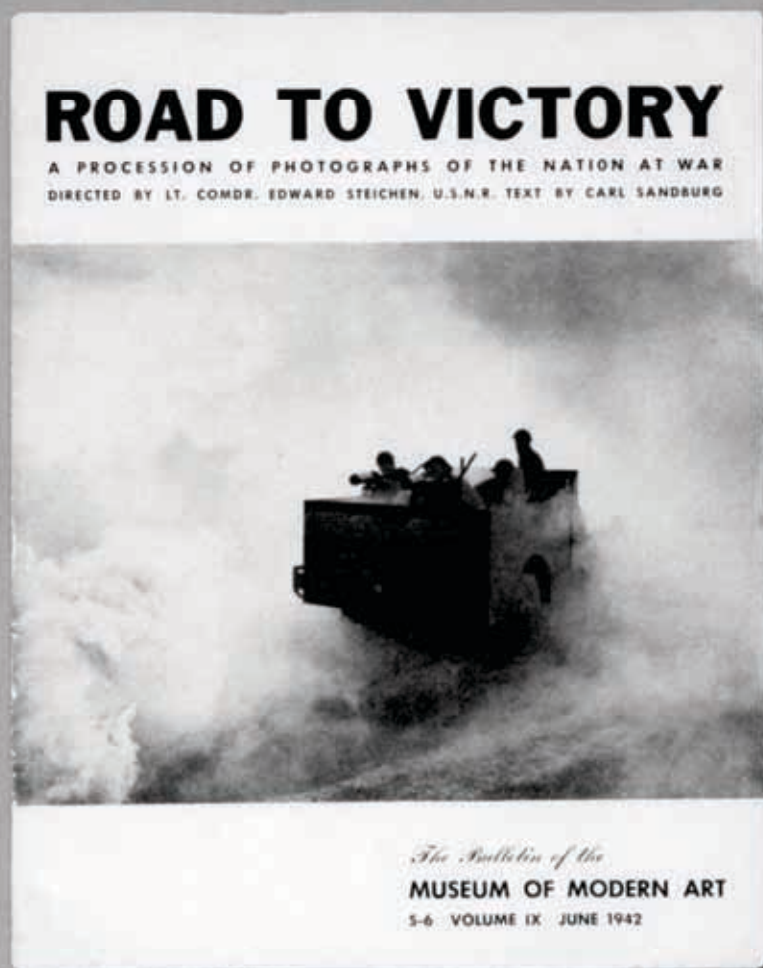


"Two Faces"



"The men behind the men behind the gun," they dig and see their deep down in the dark, they show the old wells, they show the dug out of rags, and doing more they drill and take deep work, they hammer and lay for life and reason, they start the work down and on to their right with steel beams to meet men at together... here they work and know the night song of steel... the breath of their available here is in miles of land... their disciplines are on builders need for men.

Cover of the *Road to Victory* exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942



A Note on the Exhibition

Monroe Wheeler

Although *Road to Victory* was planned in October 1941, America's entrance into the war immediately charged it with new significance. Lieutenant Commander Edward Steichen, USNR, was especially assigned by the Navy to assemble the exhibition. During six months of research and preparation, Commander Steichen examined tens of thousands of photographs generously submitted by those whose names are listed on page 2. Nearly ninety per cent of the pictures have been supplied by departments and agencies of the United States Government, the largest number coming from the Farm Security Administration, the Army Signal Corps and the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics. The 150 photographs finally selected have all been enlarged to mural sizes varying from three by four feet to ten by forty feet.¹

It is noteworthy that Commander Steichen—perhaps the most celebrated living technician of the camera—has neither included any of his own photographs nor limited his choice of examples to those of technical excellence. Fascination with technical perfection has distracted many photographers and connoisseurs of photography from its chief natural functions of documentation and human interest recording. Commander Steichen's selection comprises examples that are above all thrilling visual images of our nation

in this critical day and age.

Commander Steichen enlisted the services of his illustrious brother-in-law, Carl Sandburg, who, in his characteristic brilliant and colloquial style, has accompanied the photographic sequence with an intelligent and inspiring commentary. This has been printed in beautiful Bodoni type, and enlarged and displayed upon placards of various sizes—some of them as large as the photo-murals. This combination of creative writing and pictorial art of the same inspiration is so successful that it is impossible to dissociate the work of the collaborators.

The photographic procession occupies the entire second floor of the Museum. From the outset it was apparent that so vast and complex an exhibition would require a very special arrangement. The technical installation was assigned to Herbert Bayer, who installed the Museum's Bauhaus exhibition in 1938. Because of one of the remarkable architectural features of the Museum, its movable walls, the vast, free space required for the great murals could easily be provided.

The force of the exhibition lies above all in the sequence of the pictures. Each room is a chapter, each photograph a sentence. It moves with magnificent simplicity and a kind of visual eloquence from the landscape of the

1. To make the large murals, the negatives were enlarged in sections upon strips of photographic paper forty inches wide. The museum wall was first sized, then covered with a layer

of wallpaper, next with one of cloth, and then the photographs were pasted on the cloth by paper hangers. The seams were lightly airbrushed, imperfections were retouched by hand

and finally the whole mural was painted with dull varnish to eliminate the glaring reflections rendered by the surface of photographic paper.

'A Note on the Exhibition', *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. IX, nos. 5-6 (June 1942), pp 18-20.

primeval continent through the folk ways of simple Americans, the extraordinary mechanism of peace and war, to the cavalcade of men flying and sailing and motoring and marching to the defense of that continent.

Following the entrance hall, there is a series of small rooms in which are shown photographs of American daily life. Thereafter, one is confronted with an immense mural of the construction of Shasta Dam, and photographs which represent production, including one of Boulder Dam, of which one awed visitor said, 'It is a combination of Rheims Cathedral and Niagara Falls.' Then one comes upon a long, winding ramp, which gives a view of photographs variously placed—some standing free, some sloping at angles on the floor below the ramp and some hanging from the ceiling.

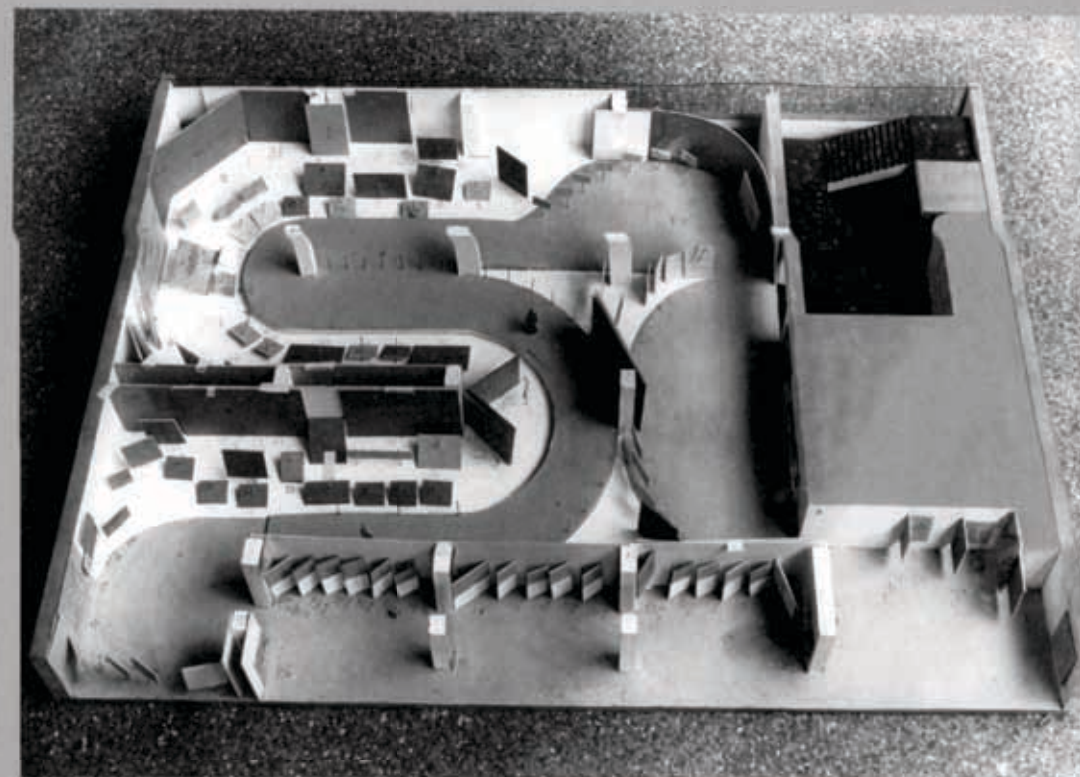
Then one sees a great mural of an America First meeting upon which appear as captions the complacent isolationist phrases of a year or two ago: 'It can't happen to us'; 'We've got two oceans protecting us'; 'The United States is not in the slightest danger of invasion.' This serves as an introduction to the most dramatic point in the exhibition, an alcove showing the powder magazine of the destroyer *Shaw* exploding at Pearl Harbor. Below this is an enlarged photograph of the Japanese Ambassador Nomura and the Japanese peace envoy, Kurusu, both laughing heartily. To the left is a Texas Farmer whose eyes are fixed upon the Pearl Harbor explosion as he says: 'War—they asked for it—now, by the living God, they'll get it.' Certain Americans are still unwilling to arouse or inspire hate, even of a mortal enemy, but the emotion that this alcove evokes is not so much hate as a sense of terrible

necessity and noble strength.

Then follow American troops on a transport sailing to Ireland, tanks, planes, ships and among them all the faces of the men and women who constitute the basic strength of the country. And this theme of Commander Steichen's great pictorial composition is made very clear at the end by a sequence of six photos of fathers and mothers in front of an immense mural of marching sons.

There has been no minimising of the gravity of the war, but few people will see this exhibition without feeling that they are part of the power of America, and that if that power is exerted to the utmost our freedom shall endure.

Model of the installation of the *Road to Victory* exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942.



Edward Steichen (right) and Carl Sandburg working on the model for *Road to Victory* exhibition, ca. 1942



After careful study of the original idea of the layout for galleries of the exhibition, *Panorama of Defense*,¹ we have developed another scheme. The fortunate elements as well as the various aspects over which improvement may be made have been considered. The new plan, we believe, retains the advantages of the first, in particular its spaciousness and the placement of the large photomural so there may be a long approach to it. We have used the original idea of diagonal walls but with a different conception of the initial entrance to the galleries. In so doing the problem of circulation is more adequately solved. Also the first opening walls of the exhibition attain greater dramatic interest by virtue of the fact that a now direct approach may be made to them. We believe you will agree there is wisdom in designing the galleries keeping the factor of circulation well in mind, as one of major importance.

A scheme that determines the progress of the spectator through the exhibition, hereby is directly associated with the process of planning a dramatic sequence, which will place each mural or wall to its greatest psychological, as well as visual advantage.

In the first plan the arrangement builds up to one focal point, that is the 40-foot photo mural, but with disadvantages for the balance of the exhibition. Also the location of the projection screens was not fully considered in the plan. As to the idea of placing these screens on each side of the large mural, as suggested on the first plan, we believe it would establish too great a

concentration of the major elements of the exhibition at this one point.

In the new plan their position is treated with greater practical consideration. As shown on the new plan, we advocate placing them in different rooms. Thus, they will attain a greater visual advantage and will help to build for greater variety through the exhibition. Use of a projection screen in the last gallery, in particular, gives increased interest to a spot that tends to lag in the usual large exhibition.

We believe this new plan, in so far as the physical scheme of the gallery may function toward this end, opens greater possibility for an exhibition possessing a sustained dramatic tempo throughout.

Letter to Mr Steichen concerning a 2nd ground plan for the exhibition *Panorama of Defense*, dated 12 December 1941, and sent by Dyer to Monroe Wheeler, Beaumont Newhall and David Hunter McAlpin.

1. *Road to Victory* was called, alternatively, *Arsenal of Democracy* and *Panorama of Defense*, before Pearl Harbour. [Editor's note.]

Pages of the *Road to Victory* exhibition catalogue,
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942



In the beginning was night land and America was primitive – and the Indians by thousands paved the Great Plains – and the Red Man gave us an endless robe of white snow by endless centuries with a land longer and so cold in the land they crossed upon the rocks was found through the Appalachians and the business side of pioneers and frontiersmen – not joining the spreading arteries of the Mississippi waterway system – not in the Rockies and beyond to the long coasts of the west coast.

ROAD TO VICTORY, a procession of photographs of the nation at war, shown by Associated Camera Club members Edward Weston, J. W. M. Ford, G. and S. Hart, and others. Installation designed by Edward Weston.

The Museum of Modern Art gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of Mrs. J. C. Taylor, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Security Administration, Agricultural Movement Administration, Bureau of Agricultural Production, Extension Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, Office for Emergency Management, National Youth Administration, U. S. Post Office, National Film, Educational Service, National Youth Administration, Inc. Equal Opportunity Administration, and the assistance of Edward M. Allen and Stephen T. Hahn. Invaluable photographs and much by Peter Henry, the individual photograph credits on page 11.

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Views to the skyline and beyond.

What makes bread and bread breaks longer – bread to the rescue of life.



STEICHEN'S 'ROAD TO VICTORY'

Christopher Phillips

On 20 May 1942, some six months after the attack on Pearl Harbour, a disparate company gathered for a private dinner in the penthouse of the Museum of Modern Art. Those greeting David Hunter McAlpin, trustee chairman of the museum's committee on photography and the evening's host, included Mr and Mrs Roy Stryker, publisher Condé Nast, Mrs Simon Guggenheim and the 78-year-old Alfred Stieglitz. The dinner marked the opening of a spectacular photographic exhibition, *Road to Victory*, and was held to honour its two principal organisers: Lt. Commander Edward Steichen (newly commissioned by the Navy), who had selected the photographs, and his brother-in-law, the poet Carl Sandburg, who had composed the accompanying text.¹

The first visitors to reach the exhibition itself discovered that all of the interior walls of the museum's second-floor galleries had been removed by Herbert Bayer, the emigré artist/designer who had supervised the installation, to make way for Steichen's giant 'procession of photographs of the nation at war'. Through a sequence of heroically enlarged documentary images, gleaned for the most part from government files, a dramatic panorama of the American land and people was unfurled. As visitors moved around the exhibition on a predetermined path, many seemed surprised at the intensity of their own emotional reaction, as did the *New York Times*' art reviewer Edwin Alden Jewell. 'It would not at all amaze me to see people, even people who have thought themselves very worldly, nonchalant or hard-boiled, leave this exhibition with brimming eyes.'²

1. 'Sandburg, Steichen Honored at Dinner', *New York Times* (21 May 1942), I, p. 22.

2. Edwin Alden Jewell, 'Portrait of a

Nation', *New York Times* (24 May 1942), VIII, p. 5.

'Steichen's Road to Victory', *Exposure*, no. 18 (1980), pp. 38–48.

In New York, the critical response was enthusiastic from all quarters. Ralph Steiner, writing in *PM*, observed with some interest: 'The photographs are displayed by Bayer as photographs have never been displayed before. They don't sit quietly against the wall. They jut out from the walls and up from the floors to assault your vision...'³ On the left, the *Daily Worker* proclaimed: 'It is the most sensational exhibit of photographs that ever was shown in these parts.... What a country to fight for!'⁴ During the summer of 1942 more than 80,000 people made their way to MoMA to see *Road to Victory*, and it was quickly scheduled to proceed to Chicago, St. Louis, Portland and Rochester, N.Y., while smaller 'replicas' were shipped to Britain, South America and the Pacific. Asked by *Newsweek* to account for the overwhelming popular success of the exhibition, Steichen replied: 'It shows the good common horse sense of the common people. It will give them something to base their faith upon.'⁵

Even if it served only to fix more precisely the point at which American documentary photography was mobilised behind the national war effort, *Road to Victory* would reward closer attention. It may be more provocative, however, to consider the way in which *Road to Victory* predicated a certain form of museum exhibition, one which was to become Steichen's trademark during his 15 years as director of MoMA's Department of Photography, culminating in 1955 in *The Family of Man*. In photographic circles, the latter has been widely criticised for any number of reasons, but never seriously analysed in terms of the tradition from which it arose. The notion of the exhibition-as-social-essay stands as a particularly interesting episode in photography's bumpy road to acceptance as a museum art, and what follows is an attempt to sketch briefly the combination of events and personalities, which, in 1942, contributed more than a little to its distinctive form.

3. *PM* (31 May 1942). The Edward Steichen Archive, MoMA.

4. Edith Anderson, 'Sandburg and Steichen Produce Fine War

Photo Exhibit', *Daily Worker* (24 May 1942), p. 7.

5. 'Road to Victory', *Newsweek* (1 June 1942), pp. 64-5.

In September, 1941, before the United States had officially entered the war, David Hunter McAlpin recruited Steichen to organise a large photographic exhibition directed to the theme of national defense.⁶ Although it can be seen in retrospect to have marked a decisive point in the history of MoMA's Department of Photography, this was unclear at the time. The department had been established the previous year; Beaumont Newhall (who earlier had prepared the groundbreaking exhibition, *Photography: 1839-1937*) was named curator, and McAlpin, a wealthy stockbroker and collector, became chairman of the committee set up to guide the department. Newhall's interest in photography reflected his training as an art historian, and centred on the individual photographer as creative artist. *Sixty Photographs: A Survey of Camera Esthetics*, the first exhibition presented by Newhall and Ansel Adams (who had been brought in to act as the department's vice-chairman), examined original prints by Stieglitz, Strand, Atget and Moholy-Nagy, among others, and confidently set photography alongside the traditional fine arts.⁷

The exhibition that McAlpin, in the fall of 1941, proposed Steichen undertake seemed to have less to do with the programme of the new department than with the series of defense-related exhibitions that the museum had sponsored since the outbreak of the European war in September 1939. In 1940, *War Comes to the People: A Story Written with the Lens* presented scenes from the opening of the conflict. *Britain at War*, the next year, showed paintings and photographs from that embattled nation. *Image of Freedom*, featuring photographs selected by Newhall and MoMA's director Alfred H. Barr, Jr., aimed more directly at shoring up the American spirit in disheartening times. The exhibition that Steichen was called upon to organise was seen as an extension in the same line.

Steichen, then 61, had closed his New York studio in 1938 after a long reign as the city's most celebrated portraitist and fashion photographer. The project that McAlpin proposed offered him the chance to act upon

6. Carl Sandburg, 'Road to Victory', in *Home Front Memo* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), p. 307. McAlpin, in correspondence with the author dated 25 March 1980,

confirmed that he had suggested that Steichen be brought in to direct the exhibition.

7. See 'The New Department of Photography', *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 8,

no. 2 (December 1940 - January 1941), pp. 1-14; especially Newhall's 'Program of the Department', pp. 4-5.

several interests that had occupied his attention since that time. Spurred, perhaps, by the success of his brother-in-law Sandburg's epic poem 'The People Yes' in 1936, Steichen had begun to turn over in his mind the idea of an immense 'Portrait of America' executed in photomurals, a format he had employed with great success in the early 1930s. Wayne Miller, who served as Steichen's assistant on *The Family of Man*, has recalled:

He told me that before the war, in the late thirties, he had the idea of doing a massive big show on America, and it was going to be the spirit of America, the face of America, and so forth. He hoped to use the Grand Central Station.... He wanted to use the walls of that and have pictures from floor to ceiling; I guess it must be five to six stories high inside.⁸

There were to be panoramic murals of the American land, cities and factories, leading into a series of smaller scenes of everyday life in homes, offices, streets and hospitals. Winding throughout would be a decorative motif of tasselled, growing corn.⁹

Although it's unclear how many of the images Steichen intended to produce himself, by the spring of 1938 he had discovered that one group of photographers had for several years been chronicling an unsuspected face of contemporary America. In April 1938, New York's Grand Central Palace played host to the International Photographic Exhibition, the largest display of photographs that the city had ever seen under one roof. Organised by Willard Morgan, the event featured more than 3,000 pictures gathered from the far-flung corners of the photographic world: pictorial work from camera clubs; news, theatrical and industrial photography; historical images by Brady, Hill and Adamson, Daguerre and Atget; new colour processes from Europe and America; and a large

8. Transcript of WXXI-TV (Rochester) interview with Wayne Miller (Autumn 1979). Reel #1-038; p. 1.

9. 'Camera, Career, Corn', *Time* (10 January 1938), p. 36. See also Lt. J. H. Cutler, 'Meet

Captain Steichen', undated Navy press release in the Information File of the International Museum of Photography/George Eastman House, for Steichen's recollection of his plans for this exhibition. Steichen had used the photo-

mural format with great success in the early thirties; see Nicholas Haz, 'Steichen's Photomurals at New York's Radio City', *American Photography* (July 1933), pp. 404-8.

number of photomurals.¹⁰ But the most controversial display was the section of 70 photographs submitted by the historical section of the Farm Security Association. These images from the heart of the Depression – by Lange, Lee, Rothstein and Evans, among others – created a minor sensation. Roy Stryker, chief of the FSA's historical section, wrote to a friend: 'It is not exaggerating a bit to say that we scooped the show. Even Steichen went to the show in a perfunctory manner and got a surprise when he ran into our section.'¹¹

Steichen was, indeed, so struck by the FSA photographs that he had a substantial number of them reproduced later that year in *U.S. Camera Annual*, a popular round-up of the year's best photography for which he served as one-man jury. Introducing the pictures in a short essay, he drew an important distinction between two kinds of photographic documents, distinguishing those that are purely informational from those he called 'good story-telling pictures'. The FSA photographs fell into the latter group; they were human documents that 'told stories, and told them with such simple and blunt directness that they made many a citizen wince'.¹² He doubted that this combination of visual and emotional impact in itself constituted propaganda. 'Pictures in themselves are very rarely propaganda. It is the use of pictures that makes them propaganda. These prints are obviously charged with human dynamite and the dynamite must not be set off to become propaganda; they are not propaganda – not yet.'¹³

When, in October 1941, Steichen began to search for the images out of which to organise the MoMA exhibition (called, alternatively, *Arsenal of Democracy* and *Panorama of Defense*, before Pearl Harbour), he set off on an exhaustive examination of the photographic files of government agencies, the military services, *Time-Life*, U.S. Steel, the Associated Press and many individual photographers.¹⁴ But of the 134 photographs eventually selected, more than one-third came from the files of the Farm Security Administration. Edwin Rosskam, who handled picture research and

10. 'Photography Show Will Open April 18', *New York Times* (3 April 1938), II-1. See in addition Frank Crowninshield's account in the 1939 *U.S. Camera Annual*.

11. Roy Stryker to Ed Locke, 26 April 1938; quoted in E. Jack Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade* (New York: Da Capo, 1977), p. 132.

12. Edward Steichen, 'The F.S.A. Photographers', *U.S.*

Camera Annual (1939), p. 44.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Sandburg, *Home Front Memo*, op. cit., pp. 306, 308.

exhibit planning for the FSA at the time, remembers that when Steichen arrived to inspect the pictures, Roy Stryker was on hand personally to guide him around. Where important visitors like Steichen were concerned, Rosskam recalls, 'Stryker bestirred himself'.¹⁵

Times, and the national mood, had changed, and few of the FSA photographers that Steichen selected for *Road to Victory* came from the hard-hitting documentation of the nation's 'lower third' that had so impressed him in 1938. During the four years since that time, Stryker had specifically instructed his photographers to obtain a more judiciously balanced view of rural, small-town and urban subjects. By now the FSA file included scenes of hard-working labourers in defense plants, Marion Post Wolcott's idealised portrayal of New England small-town life, and pictures of America's Midwestern 'horn of plenty'. Not surprisingly, these were the images to which Steichen now turned most readily.

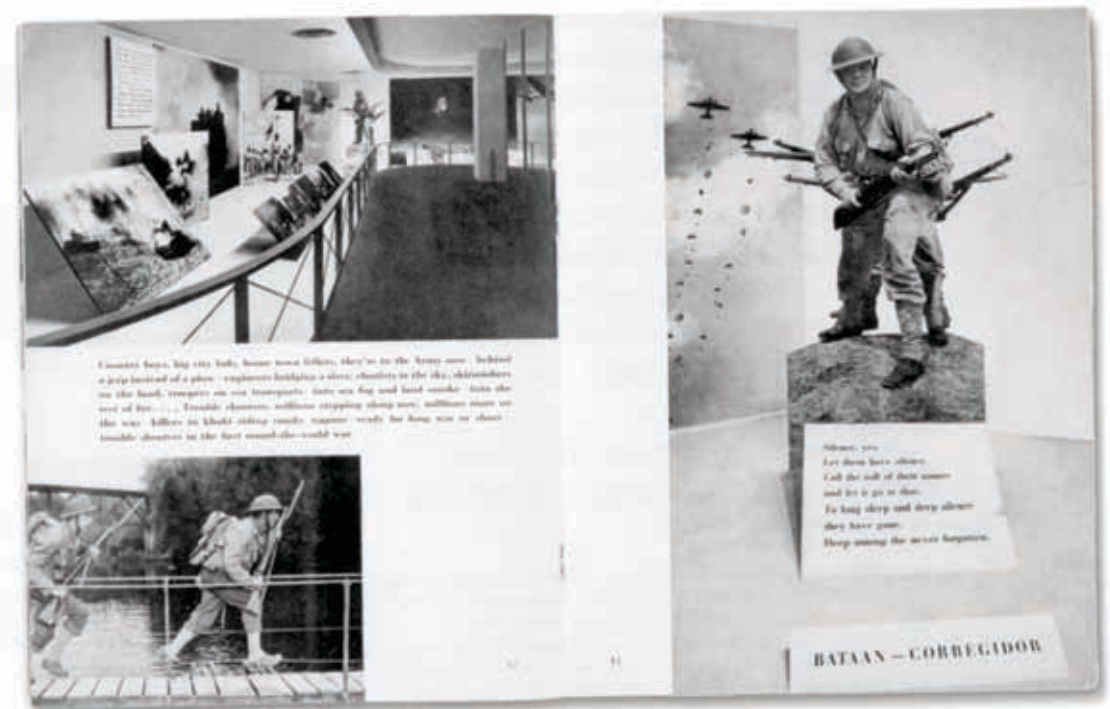
When Sandburg arrived at Steichen's Connecticut home in April 1942 to prepare the exhibition's unifying text, he found Steichen beginning to arrange 8 x 10-inch copy prints into thematic sequences. By this time the United States was no longer an observer but a full-fledged participant in the war, lending an air of even greater urgency to the task. The times demanded not only an 'epic portrait', but a reinvigorated myth of the American land and people, and this is what Steichen set out to provide. He drew upon a number of themes first broached in 'The People Yes'. In its final form *Road to Victory* carried a distinctly Sandburgian flavour in its mystical attachment to the American earth, and in its valorisation of the proud, vigilant, determined faces of 'the people'. Westerners, New Englanders, Southerners; farmers, factory workers, gas-station attendants; whites, blacks, Filipinos; all so very different, but all united by a common dream: America. As William Stott has pointed out, 'unity-in-diversity' was to become one of the overriding themes of American wartime rhetoric, and *Road to Victory* evidenced its earliest and most compelling expression in photographic form.¹⁶

Road to Victory was not the first instance after Pearl Harbour in which documentary photographs were adapted to purposes of propaganda;

15. Conversation with Edwin Rosskam, 17 April 1980. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 236.

16. William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*.

Pages of the *Road to Victory* exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942



that distinction may belong to the huge photomurals that were constructed from enlarged Farm Security Agency photographs and raised in Grand Central Station in December 1941.¹⁷ But it did mark the American appearance of a radically new kind of exhibition technique, in which individual photographs were carefully deployed as propositions that joined to form a larger argument. The narrative, story-telling use of photographs was certainly not unfamiliar to Americans by this time – *Life* magazine had seen to that – but *Road to Victory* broke new ground by combining a complicated sequence of enormous photomurals with a careful consideration of the way in which mobile spectators would encounter the material. Herbert Bayer had given much thought to new forms of exhibition design, and his contribution to the final shape of *Road to Victory* was crucial.

A native of Austria, Bayer had been Master of the Graphic Arts Department at the Bauhaus in the mid-1920s, before deciding to put his ideas into practice at the Dorland advertising agency in Berlin. It was Bayer's conviction that the rapidly accelerating tempo of modern life called for a condensed, intensified form of public communication, employing visual as well as written means. 'Visual communications' in the broadest sense became his concern, and he established a reputation as one of Europe's most innovative graphic designers, combining typography, photography and handwork to great effect.¹⁸

Bayer also set out to modernise the traditional forms of museum and gallery display. He felt that the dynamic qualities of modern life and modern art were thoroughly at odds with the reigning principles of exhibition design, which continued to emphasise a timeless, static space founded on balance and symmetry. In the late 1920s, Bayer began to experiment with the concerted use of colour, scale, elevation, typography, and texture in order to bring a calculated dynamic quality to exhibition design.

The special hallmark of the exhibitions that Bayer designed in Germany and France was the imaginative use of photographic elements.

17. 'The World's Largest Photo-Mural', *U.S. Camera* (February 1942), pp 38-42.

18. Bayer's multi-faceted career as a painter, designer, photographer, typographer, and architect

is too rich to be adequately treated here. See *Herbert Bayer: Painter, Designer, Architect* (New York/London: Reinhold/Studio Vista, 1967) for a good introduction. Alexander Dorner's *The*

Way Beyond Art: The Work of Herbert Bayer (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1947) situates Bayer's work within the theoretical concerns of the Bauhaus.

He has spoken of his fascination with the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky's use of photographic cut-outs pasted together with typeface, a practice which Lissitzky extended to large exhibition structures in the late 1920s, applying repeating photographic imagery to walls and ceilings, as well as constructivist architectural forms.¹⁹ Bayer adapted and rationalised a number of Lissitzky's devices, and put them to effective use, for instance, at the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in Berlin in 1931. There, a great photomural of a crowd of workers served as a backdrop from which larger, free-standing figures emerged.²⁰

When, in 1938, he was commissioned to design MoMA's Bauhaus exhibition – at which time he also decided to emigrate from Hitler's Germany – Bayer was able to bring into play a whole range of photographic display techniques. Nearly invisible wire supports were used to suspend photographic enlargements out from the wall toward the viewer. Prints were angled off the walls in various directions, or curled out from either end to meet the viewer. It was, no doubt, Bayer's success with the Bauhaus exhibition that led Monroe Wheeler, MoMA's director of exhibitions, to call upon him to join Steichen in preparing an appropriate installation for *Road to Victory* several years later.²¹

By this time Bayer had summarised his ideas concerning dynamic exhibition design in a short essay published in an American design journal in 1939. The modern exhibition, he suggested, 'should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate and even persuade and lead him to a planned reaction. Therefore we may say that exhibition design runs parallel with the psychology of advertising.'²² It can readily be seen that *Road to Victory*, whose motive was exhortatory and extra-aesthetic from the outset, provided a fine vehicle for implementing such concerns.

19. Paul Hill and Thomas Cooper, interview with Bayer in *Dialogue With Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1979), p 118. See Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), pp 361-63, for Lissitzky's statements on designing exhibition rooms; see also illustrations 184-229.

20. See Dorner, *The Way Beyond Art: The Work of Herbert Bayer*, op. cit., pp 202-5.

The exhibition was designed in collaboration with Walter Gropius and Moholy-Nagy.

21. MoMA's Department of Rights and Reproductions holds a full selection of installation views of both the Bauhaus and *Road to Victory* exhibitions. For anyone curious about the development of

exhibition design in America, the MoMA holdings are of extreme interest.

22. Herbert Bayer, 'Fundamentals of Exhibition Design', *PM*, (December 1939 – January 1940), p 17. *PM* (*Production Manager*) was the publication of New York's Laboratory School of Industrial Design [see the reproduction in pp 211-19 of this volume].

According to Bayer, Steichen initially presented him with the 'story' and consecutive development of the images, from which he proceeded to build a three-dimensional model indicating the placement and relative size of the enlargements.²³ The two men apparently hit it off well. Bayer has recalled: 'He constantly asked me for my opinions. We always spread photographs on the floor and he always became sentimental about American things.'²⁴ The final installation followed Bayer's model closely, and incorporated its most original features.

After he had cleared MoMA's second-floor galleries of their moveable walls, Bayer had the remaining walls, floor, and ceiling painted a uniform white. Having already determined upon a floor-plan that would guide visitors in a predetermined route through the exhibition, he used the largest murals – some up to forty feet in length – to articulate the main elements of division. The floor-plan thus supported the narrative of the images: 'Each room is a chapter, each photograph is a sentence,' suggested the museum's bulletin.²⁵

To furnish an air of dynamism to the enlargements, many were made free-standing or free-floating, thin wires supporting them at a variety of angles from floor to ceiling. At the exhibition's critical juncture, a dramatic juxtaposition of the Pearl Harbour explosion and a hard-bitten 'Texas farmer', Bayer underlined the effect by calling into play his 'principle of extended vision'. The spectator was led up a raised ramp that afforded a dramatic vista, and the ramp itself, as it wound through the series of military images that followed, became the literal embodiment of the 'road' to which the exhibition's title referred. The concluding enlargements grew progressively bigger, culminating in a gently curving 40-foot mural presenting row upon row of marching American troops. Over the larger mural were superimposed a number of smaller images depicting proud fathers and beaming American mothers. As remarked by Alexander Dörner in his very interesting study of Bayer's work: 'The visitor was led from one such reaction to another, and finally to the climactic reaction of intense sympathy with the life of the USA and an ardent wish to help it and share its aims.'²⁶

23. Herbert Bayer, correspondence with the author, 14 April 1980.

24. Hill and Cooper, *Dialogue with Photography*, op. cit., p. 125.

25. Monroe Wheeler, 'A Note on the Exhibition', *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. IX, nos. 5-6 (June 1942) [see pp. 361-62 of this volume].

26. Dörner, *The Way Beyond Art: The Work of Herbert Bayer*, op. cit., p. 207.

Photography critic Elizabeth McCausland, in one of the more thoughtful responses to *Road to Victory*, was quick to realise that 'Here art has been made a weapon of unmistakable intent and power'. She insisted, however, that the exhibition aimed not to mold its audience's mind – that smacked too much of totalitarian practice – but to 'evoke the deepest aspiration and historic remembrance of human beings'. She noted with some satisfaction that after years of acrid debate over the value of socially engaged art, here art had 'taken sides on the side of the American people'. She pinned the medal on art.²⁷

Such attitudes toward photography's supposed social mission persisted well into the post-war world. In 1947, it might easily have been thought that Steichen's appointment as director of MoMA's Department of Photography signaled, on his part, a renewed interest in photography's fine-art side. This was not entirely the case, however. The wide popular success and critical acclaim that had greeted *Road to Victory* (and its 1945 successor, *Power in the Pacific*, which Steichen organised on behalf of the U.S. Navy) opened the way to an alternative future for photography at MoMA. Photography's claims as a fine art were to take a back seat to its role as a vehicle of high-minded social communication. Such was the implication of the remarks made by MoMA's president, Nelson Rockefeller, when he welcomed Steichen to MoMA.

Steichen... joins the Museum of Modern Art to bring to as wide an audience as possible the best work being done in photography throughout the world, and to employ it creatively as a means of interpretation in major museum exhibitions where photography is not the theme but the medium through which great achievements and great moments are graphically presented.²⁸

In an interview which took place not long after his appointment, the *New York Times* noted that during the war Steichen had been 'impressed by what could be achieved by taking pictures on a grandiose scale and

27. Elizabeth McCausland, 'Photographs Illustrate Our Road to Victory', *Photo Notes* (June 1942), p. 3. Reprinted from the *Springfield Sunday Union and Republican* (31 May 1942).

28. 'Edward Steichen Appointed Head of Photography at Museum of Modern Art', undated MoMA press release, The Edward Steichen Archive, MoMA. The first exhibition

announced by the expanded department was to be *Photography in the Service of Science in War and Peace*; it was, however, never presented.

using them selectively to tell a complete story.' How did he think this lesson could be applied at MoMA? The *Times* continued:

Sooner or later he wants to gather under his wing the 200,000 of America's amateurs who are already skilled photographers and teach them something about making pictures. Later on he wants them to send the pictures to him for sorting and cataloguing; then, some time, he wants exhibitions on a grand scale, in the manner of his war picture exhibits. Ultimately, perhaps, there will be a great building in the nation's capital with murals covering the walls and ceiling, a place where tourists may see the great story of America in pictures.²⁹

Although this extravagant bit of speculation, harking back to Steichen's earlier dream of a 'portrait of America', was never carried out, it suggests the underlying attitude toward photography, and the even more ambitious scale of activity, which produced *The Family of Man* eight years later. The conciliatory, humanistic message of *The Family of Man* reflected the special concerns of the early 1950s; but the practice that shaped it and the form in which it finally appeared owed more than a little to the precedents set in *Road to Victory*.

29. George Bailey, 'Photographer's America', *New York Times Sunday Magazine* (31 August 1947), pp 259-60.