

2013

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Recommended Citation

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Undergraduate Honors Theses. Paper 635.
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Creating an American Identity—Propaganda During the Second World War

Introduction

Propaganda is a familiar facet of American culture. The federal government has a history of involvement in the formulation and release of propagandistic messages through direct control of the public sector, or influence in the private sector, especially during times of conflict. During World War II the federal government used propaganda conveyed through popular cultural media to create an “us versus them” mentality by releasing information and images that both demonized the enemy and explained the righteousness of the American people and their cause. In doing so, federal officials explicitly and effectively mobilized the population to support the American war effort. Wartime propaganda in the form of radio, film, cartoons, and posters were directly influenced and at times controlled by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration and federal agencies, like the Office of War Information, created by the exigencies of the conflict. Throughout the war years (and even before the United States entered the conflict), there was a release of information that was targeted specifically at the American civilian population in order to garner support for American interests in both the European and Pacific theaters. The distribution of information relating to the war from the federal government to American civilians was carefully formulated to create an American identity based on a set of commonly held values that could be defended.

The relationship between the “producers” and “consumers” of propaganda was not characterized by simple top-down communication from the government to the people. Rather, this relationship was two-sided; federal officials had to monitor, and at times alter, their release of information in order to meet the changing expectations and attitudes of the American population.

In examining propaganda as an effective means of popular mobilization, it is important to understand propaganda as a science or the theoretical foundation for how people form opinions. Theodor Adorno offers one approach to how and why humans make decisions and focuses on the difference between what he calls “pathological opinion” based on prejudice and rumor and “normal opinion,” a “subjective consciousness restricted in its truth content.”¹ In Adorno’s scenario, human decision-making either adheres strictly to facts, or is too heavily influenced to be independent. His contention is that the former produces rational opinion and the latter leads to dangerous adherence to potentially false beliefs. This division between the two sides of opinion-formation is joined by Adorno’s corollary argument that people tend to make decisions *en masse*. Adorno’s model argues that human beings tend to conform both to the prevailing authority’s and the majority’s opinions when making value judgments, and that the border between healthy and “pathogenic opinion” is drawn *in praxi* by the “prevailing authority,” not informed judgment; we are, inherently, then an “opinion delusional society.”² Adorno’s contention that “healthy” opinion is that which is derived from “restrictive” truth, and “pathogenic” opinion is that which is derived from authority suggests that opinion that is influenced by authority is delusional.

For the purposes of this thesis the “prevailing authority” refers to the *elite* of a population. During World War II in the United States the defined “elites” were those who visibly held power, including the federal government and its agencies. According to Adorno, then, the popular decision-making process influenced by elites would be inherently delusional. Michel de Certeau suggests another possible framework for understanding the relation of propaganda to opinion formation through his theory of “implicit conformism.” His argument is congruent with Adorno’s especially in his claim that there are “taboos placed on anything that does not

¹Adorno, Theodor. *Critical Models*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. 98.

²Ibid 109

stubbornly reproduce what already exists.”³ Together, Adorno and de Certeau’s arguments provide a framework for understanding propaganda and decision-making during the Second World War and they also complement each other when examined individually. Adorno argues that opinion that is not independently formed is influenced too much by societal elites, which in turn leads to an “unhealthy” decision-making process. De Certeau’s model, in turn, holds that people “conform” to the ideas that they believe are socially acceptable—these ideas can be influenced by Adorno’s elites, who thus contribute to unhealthy public opinion.⁴

Adorno and de Certeau’s distinctions between the opinions molded by propaganda and those developed organically by individuals and the means through which both are formed provide a model for understanding the mechanics of popular decision-making. I argue that while their model is useful, it is flawed. The model assumes there is a clear distinction between informed opinion and opinion shaped by societal factors (and propaganda), but leaves no “gray area” between the two. Can there be independent popular opinion formed under the influence of the political elite? I argue that opinions formed under the premises of restrictive truths and those formed under the influence of prevailing authorities are not mutually exclusive—to assume so would imply that the population has no role in the decision making process apart from being passive consumers of information. I accept de Certeau’s conclusion that the human population tends towards conformism under societal pressure (pressure particularly from Adorno’s “prevailing authority”) but dispute the *extent* to which they conform.

The American population during WWII was not completely independent in its decision-making process, especially in relation to whether or not to accept at face value the information

³ Adorno makes the argument in that people tend to align their opinions with what they believe is societally acceptable [109]

⁴ See citations above for Adorno’s argument; de Certeau as pulled from Adorno’s work; Certeau, Michel De. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

from the federal government about the war, but some individuals did make conscious decisions as to whether or not to accept federally produced “truths” concerning the conflict. Federal influence was inherently limited; as long as there was a politically engaged public, it was possible to communicate the government’s stance on war-related issues, but public apathy and complacency posed a threat to the effectiveness of such communications.

During WWII, federal propaganda constantly evolved in order to retain the attention of the audience. The fact that federal officials and agencies so closely monitored and adjusted both their message and the channels for its delivery to reflect changes in public attitudes and expectations during the war years suggests that the public had a vital role in defining the relationship between the government and the American population.

Adorno argues that humans have a tendency towards narcissism when forming opinions—they gravitate towards what most affects them. The use of the word *narcissism* here invokes a sense of identity—whether physical or otherwise. In this sense, Adorno is arguing that personal opinion becomes part of someone’s identity.⁵ In Adorno’s model, an attack on one’s identity would elicit a strong response because people would view these attacks as explicitly directed toward them. If the government could convince the public that their identities were being attacked by a foreign threat, they could channel the resulting fear into a tool of mobilization to gain support for the war effort. I argue that federal officials and agencies did exactly that by explicitly constructing an American identity to convey to the population at large that appealed to that sense of “narcissism” to which Adorno believes all humans adhere. This “identity” was represented through various forms of propaganda, including movies, cartoons, radio and magazines and called to mind a set of American values (democracy, freedom, “rights”)

⁵De Certeau’s argument as discussed in Adorno’s book (Ibid 107-108).

that symbolized Americans' collective identity. When the public saw that their values were being attacked, they responded in kind— purchasing war bonds, planting victory gardens, and restraining from “loose” conversation, among other actions.

In examining the relationship between the public and the federal government during WWII, it is also important to examine the theoretical background of popular decision-making outside of its tendency to be manipulated towards conformism. What factors influence how individuals process stimuli? To what extent does physical environment help explain how they will react? De Certeau's theory of “critical distance” and “proximity” go a long way towards understanding public perception of an issue.⁶ Colloquially speaking, the “closer to home something hits” the stronger the reaction is to the stimuli—and during WWII the American population was constantly bombarded with propaganda messages. Strong attendance at movie theaters, and the large readership for war posters and large audience for radio indicates propaganda was present in almost all forms of private and public media during the early 1940s.

Censorship During the War Years

During World War II, the federal government used visual culture as a key medium for deploying propaganda to the American public. Propagandists used this medium because in the 1940s Americans went to the movies as many as three times a week.⁷ The Office of War Information (OWI) for instance, realized that “the audience for film...was more susceptible to influence than newspaper readers,” and looked to Hollywood as a potentially effective propaganda machine.⁸ Much of the imagery of the Second World War centered around what the public was *not* supposed to see as opposed to what they *were* supposed to see. Movies and

⁶De Certeau's argument as discussed in Jenkin's book:

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc. 1992. Print. (122).

⁷ Roeder Jr., George H. *The Censored War-American Visual Experience During World War Two*. New Haven and London: Yale University, 1993. 4.

⁸ Roeder, *Ibid* 17

cartoons physically caricatured the enemy while showing the population examples of ideal American soldiers such as *Sahara's* Sergeant Gunn or *The Purple Heart's* Captain Ross, or even Popeye. Pictures, however, were often censored to prohibit the American public from seeing parts of the war that might damage morale, such as American soldiers dying or engaging in lewd behavior.⁹

Censorship was prevalent during both World Wars; it was in effect for the entirety of World War I and for nearly two years after the Second World War began.¹⁰ *Life* magazine was an important medium for chronicling the war visually—pictures were taken in the field, sent back in diplomatic pouches to the Pentagon, and developed under the supervision of censorship officials. Even the captions were closely monitored—both on their own and then in the photo layout.¹¹ Federal officials recognized the role of visual imagery in influencing public opinion, and wielded the medium accordingly. Just as posters with positive messages had been carefully constructed to shape public perception, photographs with explicitly ‘negative’ messages were deliberately withheld from the public.¹² Roeder describes the image selection process as the “psychic impact” of the War—or federal officials’ attempts to shape how the public perceived and conceptualized what was happening overseas. The Roosevelt administration wanted to idealize the struggle in order to keep public attention on the moral aspect of the fight.¹³

However, beginning in September 1943, the fear that “heightened optimism about the war might lead to complacency” prompted leaders such as Elmer Davis of the OWI to press for less restrictive censorship over photographs taken from both the European and Pacific theaters.¹⁴ A

⁹ Ibid 3

¹⁰ Censorship defined here by Roeder as the prohibition of images showing dead Americans in battle (8)

¹¹ Ibid 1

¹² Here I reference positive messages as those that advocate *for* action, such as the purchase of war bonds, the growth of victory gardens the use of discretion, etc.

¹³ Later defined by the author as the “struggle between good and evil”

¹⁴ Ibid 11

pragmatist, Davis wanted to pursue a “strategy of truth” and argued that “telling the truth, not deceiving or manipulating, would build the strongest public support for the war effort.”¹⁵ As the head of the OWI, Davis believed that showing the war as it actually was—including the human cost—would be more effective in mobilizing public support. His battles with the War Department and the Department of the Navy illustrate the struggle over the question of whether government propaganda should expose the vulnerability of American soldiers. Naval officials’ initial embarrassment after the attack on Pearl Harbor fueled their opposition to any changes in censorship. The U.S. had been militarily weakened, and officials did not want to release any pictures that might corroborate American military ineptitude.¹⁶ The War Department’s censorship policies were congruent with that of the Navy—the imagery released to the public presented the war as a conflict “between good and evil” they restricted publications that would contradict this idea, such as portrayals of G.I.s engaged in racial violence, recuperating from shell-shock, etc.¹⁷ These and other such images were kept in a vault at the Pentagon aptly named the “Chamber of Horrors.”¹⁸ Davis threatened to resign if President Roosevelt did not instruct the Departments of War and the Navy to “cooperate” with the OWI. Davis argued that less censored pictures would better emphasize human cost and make “a distant war seem real.”¹⁹ Military leaders’ earlier “fear that victory would lead to overconfidence” was mitigated when events in late 1943 signaled a positive turn in the Allied war effort; the success of Operation Torch in North Africa, the neutralization of the threat from German U-boats, and the impending Italian surrender contributed to the success of Davis’ plea to the executive branch for a wider range of

¹⁵ Ibid 2

¹⁶ Ibid 3

¹⁷ Ibid 3

¹⁸ Ibid 1

¹⁹ Ibid 1

releasable images.²⁰ In light of the military successes of 1943, the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations along with FDR and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson released over 200 pictures from the archives at the Pentagon.²¹ The results were immediate: an OWI survey conducted in October 1943 found that 75% of their sample population (war plant workers) thought that one of the pictures released (of American casualties in Italy) would be effective if used as a visual to aid the selling of war bonds.²²

Ironically, the early restriction of wartime visual information appears to have backfired on the OWI. Whereas the Office had initially censored pictures in order to preserve American morale, their censorship practices ultimately threatened to give the American public a false sense of the human cost of the war. Davis' action to reduce visual censorship perhaps stemmed from the pervasive worry that censored propaganda that painted the war in a positive light might increase "public skepticism." Historian George Roeder cites surveys from July 1942 and June 1943 that respectively showed 28% and 39% of the public thought the government was making "the situation look better than it was."²³ Public mobilization was important, but leaders felt support would stagnate unless the population was continually stimulated visually. The 1943 turn of events in censorship demonstrated the government's careful control of the information to which the public was exposed, and the survey information from the OWI shows that the population sampled had begun to resist earlier forms of visual propaganda—that is they began to question the authenticity of the material they witnessed. The relationship displayed here—between the federal government and the American population is clearly not one-dimensional. As people responded to stimuli, the government material evolved to align with the expectations and

²⁰ Ibid 10-11

²¹ Ibid 12

²² Ibid 14

²³ Ibid 11

perceptions of the public. In this way, the propagandistic aspect of visual imagery—and the forces that shaped it—was fluid.

Propaganda Through Radio—Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats

During the Second World War, radio was the most common—and effective means of mass communication. According to scholar Gerd Horten, “90% of American families owned at least one radio set and listened to an average of three to four hours of broadcasting a day.”²⁴ The number of national news commentators increased during the war as well—from six to over sixty. Public opinion polls taken in 1939 and again in 1945 are evidence of both radio’s mass appeal and the importance of its place in the American household—when asked “from which one source do you get most of your news of what is going on—the newspaper or the radio?” 25% of the population named radio as their source in 1939; in 1945 that number jumped to 61%.²⁵ President Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats facilitated the evolution of radio as it became “the number one news medium” during WWII.²⁶ Historian Geoffrey Storm argues that Roosevelt’s use of radio had a “profound impact” on Americans’ “perception” of themselves and the world in which they lived, and was one of the main sources of information for individuals in making “political decisions.”²⁷

The Fireside Chats are useful in examining both President Roosevelt’s foreign policy and radio propaganda during the Second World War. For the purposes of this project, I analyze Roosevelt’s Fireside Chats as the primary examples of top-down radio propaganda during the war. Beginning in May 1933 and continuing until his death in 1945, FDR’s thirty-one Fireside Chats helped initiate a new relationship between the president and the American people.²⁸

²⁴ Horten, Gerd. *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II*. University of California Press, 2003. Print. (2).

²⁵ Ibid 14.

²⁶ Ibid 13-14.

²⁷ Storm, Geoffrey. “FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats.” *New York History*, 88.2 (Spring 2007): 196.

²⁸ Buhite, Russell D. and David W. Levy. *FDR’s Fireside Chats*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. xv.

William Leuchtenburg contends that this relationship was characterized by Americans' "unprecedented familiarity" with the President and federal government. The federal government moved from "neutral arbiter," to "protector" personified by the figure of Franklin Roosevelt.²⁹ This shift in Americans' attitudes towards the presidency was important because it solidified a foundation of trust between the public and the federal government. Leuchtenburg argues that this closer relationship was fostered by the particular way Roosevelt addressed the American people—he "talked like a father discussing public affairs with his family in the living room."³⁰ "There was a real dialogue between Franklin and the people," Eleanor Roosevelt remembered when asked about her husband's radio legacy.³¹ Historians Russel Buhite and David Levy characterize this dialogue as "relaxed...informal conversation."³² This "conversation" was an important medium of propaganda in a time when the majority of American families owned a radio, and relied on it for world news. Examining four of FDR's Fireside Chats at different moments of American involvement during the war demonstrates how he helped formulate—and propagate—particular definitions of American identity.

Roosevelt's "chats" mobilized Americans to support the war effort in part because they highlighted for listeners the specific ways in which their identity as Americans was being attacked. Roosevelt's December 1940 "talk" titled "The Arsenal of Democracy" was delivered one year before the United States entered the war, and before the Lend-Lease Act was passed or implemented.³³ At the time, the Battle of Britain was depleting the forces of the Royal Air Force

²⁹Perkins, Frances, *The Roosevelt I Knew*. New York: 1946. 72. And Asbell, Bernard, *When F.D.R. Died*. New York: 1961. 161. As quoted in Leuchtenburg (Leuchtenburg, William Edward. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963. 331).

³⁰ Ibid 330.

³¹ Ibid 331.

³² Buhite and Levy xv.

³³ The Lend-Lease Act was devised by the Roosevelt administration as a solution to aid Britain as it was resisting Nazi aggression. The Act did not sell the British the military tools to fight the Germans (which would have violated the Neutrality laws passed in the 1930s, but rather "lent" them to the British (Ibid 163-164).

(RAF) as Nazi Germany's Luftwaffe bombarded English cities and towns in the hope of draining civilian resolve and military resources.³⁴ Roosevelt was faced with the difficult task of easing a country still in the throes of an economic depression from an isolationist mentality to one that might accept (albeit grudgingly) more explicit involvement in the conflict.³⁵

This early offering reveals some of Roosevelt's initial attempts to shape American identity. He begins his comments with a warning—"Never before since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock has our American civilization been in such danger as now"—and in doing so establishes that there is an *American civilization* that not only exists, but also is in danger.³⁶ It is not hard to imagine that this phrasing catches the population's attention—even before the United States had any direct involvement in the armed conflict the people are alert to the fact that they are threatened. According to Adorno's theory of narcissism, proximity of this issue to individuals' understanding of themselves would immediately put it at the forefront of popular opinion. FDR continues his warnings by specifically naming the aggressors—the Axis powers—and he cautions that the Axis government and that of the United States could never be reconciled: "in other words, the Axis not merely admits, but the Axis *proclaims*, that there can be no ultimate peace between their philosophy, their philosophy of government, and our philosophy of government."³⁷ The Axis powers that Roosevelt references in his "chat" were "...three powerful nations, two in Europe and one in Asia" or Germany, Italy, and Japan.³⁸ Roosevelt warns that the Axis powers have "a program aimed at world control," and his conversation instills a sense of fear in his audience.³⁹ In the first few minutes of conversation, FDR has primed

³⁴ Ibid 163.

³⁵ Buhite and Levy 163.

³⁶ Ibid 165.

³⁷ Ibid 165.

³⁸ Ibid 165.

³⁹ Ibid 165.

his audience to heed his warnings. By explicitly stating that the Axis powers posed a threat to the “American way of life” and that the Axis “way of life” will “never align with ours,” he seeks to convince the public that war is the only possible response. FDR further mobilizes the public by chastising them as a parent would a recalcitrant child, “...crawling into bed and pulling the covers over our heads” will not make the problem go away—“no man can tame a tiger into a kitten by stroking it.”⁴⁰ He then relates examples of other states that had fallen to the Nazis and been “thrown into modern slavery” noting that “the fate of these nations tells us what it means to live at the point of a Nazi gun.”⁴¹ His warnings about other states are meant to instill a sense of fear and urgency in Americans—if they are not prepared for the Nazi threat they too will suffer as their European counterparts have.

The second part of the broadcast focuses on a more implicit presentation of the American civilization invoked by Roosevelt earlier in the “conversation”. He details the “new order” that the Nazis propose for their conquered territories, saying,

...what they have in mind is only a revival of the oldest and the worst tyranny. In that there is no liberty, no religion, no hope, the proposed ‘new order’ is the very opposite of a United States of Europe or a United States of Asia. It is not a government based upon the consent of the governed. It is not a union of ordinary, self-respecting men and women to protect themselves and their freedom and their dignity from oppression, it is an unholy alliance of power and self to dominate and enslave the human race.⁴²

In speaking as he does here, FDR creates the contrast—the proverbial “us versus them” that establishes what the United States has (liberty, religion, hope) through a warning about what will be taken away if the enemy prevails. The “ordinary, self-respecting men and women” of whom he speaks are Americans—and their identity (as he defines it) is based upon the values the Nazis lack. “We have no excuse for defeatism” FDR says—“we have every good reason for hope—

⁴⁰ Ibid 167-169.

⁴¹ Ibid 167-169.

⁴² Ibid 169.

hope for peace, yes, and hope for the defense of our civilization and for the building of a better civilization in the future.”⁴³ He rallies the population when he calls for the “defense” of the “American civilization”—the proximity of this warning was such that the American population would identify with, and respond to, FDR’s warnings.

President Roosevelt’s May 27 1941 broadcast on “Pan American Unity” shows his move to more fully prepare the public for a potential military confrontation and continue to shape the identity of America populace in contrast to its European enemies.⁴⁴ Roosevelt begins his address by saying citizens must “face cold hard facts” that what had begun as a war in Europe was now a “war for world domination.”⁴⁵ He explains how he has advocated for the appeals of the “arms embargo” and the “traditions” of the “old neutrality laws” and notes that the U.S. has built up its navy and its manpower in an effort to protect against “Hitlerism.”⁴⁶ In explaining the current situation in these terms, Roosevelt not only legitimizes the military buildup of a neutral country (as the U.S. had not yet entered the war yet) but also labels the threat as drawing closer to American shores, the “shadow over the world” that had previously seemed far away.⁴⁷ This initial portion of the broadcast appears informational—Roosevelt discusses the history of the passage of the Lend-Lease Bill, and argues that the U.S. must send aid to Europe because “Every dollar we send keeps the dictators away from our own hemisphere.” In other words, by sending

⁴³ Ibid 173.

⁴⁴ Roosevelt, Franklin “Pan American Unity” *Fireside Chat*. 5 May 1941. *Internet Archive*. Internet Archive, Audio Archive, Radio Programs, Old Time Radio. 10 Mar. 2001. Web. 28 Jan. 2013. <http://archive.org/details/WWII_News_1941>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The “arms embargo” and “traditions” of the “old neutrality laws” to which President Roosevelt were referring in his chat were a number of Congressional laws passed between 1935 and 1937 that prohibited the sale of arms to “belligerent” countries, thereby contributing to the United States’ “neutral” stance towards the war (Ibid 142).

provisions to Europe, the U.S. is inherently protecting itself. “The supply of these tools will not fail,” he promises.⁴⁸

The second portion of the broadcast offers details of the possible consequences if Americans do not look outward. “Your government knows what terms Hitler if victorious, would impose,” Roosevelt warns—“Germany would parcel out the world, hoisting the swastika itself over the entire world and setting up puppet governments under a conqueror.”⁴⁹ The president’s statement is powerful—he advocates the need for constant vigilance, as the American population would become “enslaved” if Hitler and his Nazis were to overpower the U.S. These “enemies” would place the U.S. in an “economic stranglehold” and even “whistling would be found to be subversion.”⁵⁰ Roosevelt touches on two points here: American capitalism and American freedom. His statements are not explicit, he does not say that American freedom will be compromised (although that is certainly his point), but he *shows* that American freedom will be compromised when something as simple as whistling is prohibited in the “Nazi book of world conquest.” His statements take on a greater sense of urgency, as he warns that “trade unions”, collective bargaining”, “farm income,” and “public housing” would all be lost under Hitler, and the “whole fabric of working life...would be mangled and crippled under such a system [of slave labor].” He claims, “Even right of worship would be threatened,” as the “Nazi world only recognizes Hitler as god.”⁵¹ These warnings are important because they create an identity that includes industrial and agrarian labor and the rights to housing and freedom of worship as all aspects of *America*. By telling the population what Hitler will *take away*, he is really telling us *what we have* and *what we are*. The relevance of his comments is twofold in the sense that he is

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

explaining what America is about (the identity that we possess) and mobilizing the people to act immediately in order to guard against the advance of Hitlerism. He rhetorically asks the audience about “our children,” in “a world where moral standards are measured by treachery and bribery.” The country is standing on a precipice, and the people must be ready to act in order to protect the sanctity of the American values he outlines for future generations.⁵²

Roosevelt’s “chat” also focused on another issue over which the United States was divided—military action in the war. Although the America had not entered the fighting, Roosevelt is clearly trying to introduce military values, and the extent to which they are tied with American identity—to his audience. He believes that such values must be protected, and he thereby mobilizes the people to support his views. Arguing that “the war is approaching the brink of the western hemisphere itself—it is coming every close to home” Roosevelt hopes to instill a sense of resolve into the public.⁵³ This portion of his “chat” centers around the need to protect “the freedom of the seas.” He claims that “all American history has been inevitably tied up with those words ‘freedom of the seas,’” and holds that we must “reassert” this “ancient” American doctrine.⁵⁴ Roosevelt’s explicit connection between naval superiority and integrity to American safety and security makes naval power an important American value. He advises “we must limit them to a land war” so that “their cruel forces of occupation will be unable to keep their heel on the necks of the millions of innocent oppressed peoples on the continent of Europe,” which serves as an explicit statement of the future if the U.S. fails in its mission to limit Nazi expansion across the ocean. He goes on to discuss how the U.S. can prepare the Navy for such an endeavor, the global extent to which it must be prepared to fight (“from the North Pole to the Arctic”), and the role of the American people in working to preserve “integrity and

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

independence,” by engaging in military readiness at all levels. He warns, “You’ll never know what hit you” “if you wait to shoot until you see the whites of their eyes.”⁵⁵ Here, Roosevelt rallies this audience to support the coming war by changing the angle of the conflict: the U.S. is “mustering its men and its resources” for defense purposes, not for a preemptive strike, “modern warfare is fast,” he warns, and “we have to be ready.” Roosevelt puts American minds at ease by noting, “If we believe in the independences and integrity of the Americas, we must be ready to fight.”⁵⁶ In other words, by explaining the American military buildup with what he calls “old fashioned common sense” he tells the public that military readiness is inherently connected to the protection of American values. His parting words, “we reassert our abiding faith in the vitality of our constitutional republic as a perpetual home of freedom, of tolerance, and of devotion to the word of God” tells the audience exactly what the U.S. is about, and what it is fighting to protect, and he challenges the public, saying “the nation will expect all individuals and all groups to play their full part...without selfishness, and without doubt, that our democracy will triumphantly survive.”⁵⁷

President Roosevelt’s “War With Japan” speech, delivered via radio on December 9, 1941 is one of the starkest examples of radio propoganda during the Second World War. Declaring war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor (the United States had not entered into war with Germany at the time of the broadcast) FDR called the American population to arms, reminding them what they were fighting for and what was at stake if they lost.⁵⁸ “We are now in this war,” FDR states simply. “We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman, and child

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Buhite and Levy 198.

is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history.”⁵⁹ His choice of words—“our American history”—is telling. He calls for unity, for identity, for strength drawn from past struggles for freedom. “We Americans are not destroyers—we are builders” FDR goes on to say—“the true goal we seek is far above and beyond the ugly field of battle.”⁶⁰ He addresses the population as *one*, calling on their shared identity as “builders” to illustrate the difference between them and their enemies; Americans do not destroy, they fight for a higher cause. He does not say what the people build, or what the “true” goal is, but he draws the parameters of an imaginary shape (or identity) and lets the listening audience ‘fill in’ their ideas of what they build, what they fight for, etc. In doing so, he establishes the boundaries of the American identity, and allows the population the freedom to add in what they personally hold sacred.

In this “conversation FDR lays out the relationship between the private and public sector—the “consumers” and “distributors” of propaganda during the Second World War. The tone of the broadcast shifts as FDR turns to the pressing matters at hand—the fighting. “So far, the news has all been bad,” he states honestly, citing the battles (and American losses) in Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, etc.⁶¹ These losses in question were early examples of Japanese naval superiority in the Pacific—they had managed to hold their captured territory, leading American military leaders to order evacuations from the islands.⁶² The candidness with which he speaks of American strategic losses in the Pacific sets the tone for his the next part of his speech, when he states only information that has been “definitely and officially confirmed” and “will not prove

⁵⁹ Ibid 199.

⁶⁰ Ibid 205.

⁶¹ Ibid 199.

⁶² The Smithsonian Museum of American History, Behring Center. *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Accessed April 15, 2013. <http://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/>.

valuable to the enemy directly or indirectly” will be made public.⁶³ FDR also addresses “all newspapers and radio stations—all those who reach the eyes and ears of the American people...” saying “if you feel that your government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so. But—in the absence of all the facts, as revealed by official sources—you have no right in the ethics of patriotism, to deal out unconfirmed reports in such a way as to make people believe that they are gospel truth.”⁶⁴ FDR acknowledges the power of the “all those who reach the eyes and ears of the American people” including the private sector (albeit influenced by the government during this time) when he says that they have the right to question the truth of what the government is saying. This is what illustrates the relationship—FDR does not expect that he can control media outlets, but his attempts to limit their “unconfirmed reports” is an indication that he is wary of or seek to influence their power in forming public opinion.

The ways in which FDR tailored his Fireside Chats (and the propaganda inherent in them) to acknowledge and address popular expectations and attitudes of the media and the population is initially evident in this speech, but is more apparent in later speeches, such as his “Fighting Defeatism” Fireside Chat, delivered in February 1942. When FDR delivered his “Fighting Defeatism” speech, the United States had been at war for a little over two months. During 1942 the overall mood of the population shifted from initial support for the war, to ambivalence, and even discontent. Gerd Horten argues that “...in the spring of 1942, many Americans felt confused about the war-and the officials in the Office of Facts and Figures [OFF] knew it as well. The monthly surveys of American public opinion undertaken by the Intelligence Bureau of the OFF from February through July 1942 chronicled an increasing dissatisfaction with the course of the war coupled with a resurgence of disunity and isolationist sentiments,” and

⁶³ Ibid 200.

⁶⁴ Ibid 201.

that a full 30% of the American population surveyed would “enter into a peace agreement with Germany.”⁶⁵ If one third of the population was returning to “isolationist sentiments,” then public support for the war was clearly waning. FDR’s “Fighting Defeatism” conversation addressed these changing attitudes and signified that there was a dialogue of sorts between the federal government and the people. The President felt he needed to change his message to adapt to the changes in public opinion as the war progressed.

FDR begins by discussing General George Washington as a “model of moral stamina” during the American struggle for freedom during the Revolutionary War—“throughout the thirteen states there existed fifth columnists—the selfish men, jealous men, fearful men, who proclaimed Washington’s cause was hopeless, and that he should ask for a negotiated peace.”⁶⁶ Immediately, he sets the tone for the broadcast—there were “fifth columnists” during the earliest years of the Republic, and suggesting they might exist in 1942 as well. He proclaims “you [the listeners] and I have the utmost contempt for Americans...” and cites examples of these Americans: those that “suggested slyly that the government has withheld the truth about casualties,” those that “served the enemy propagandists,” and those that believed that the government was not telling the truth about the number of casualties at Pearl Harbor, believing there to be “11,000 or 12,000 killed...”⁶⁷ Clearly, FDR is talking about the skeptics—those who doubted the veracity and integrity of his administration during the conflict. A key aspect of his talk, however, is that he is *addressing* the American public that was not included in Horten’s “30%.” By speaking to the people who are not “inherently disbelieving”, he is attempting to pull them away from the skeptics, and influence their opinion. Clearly, the President feels threatened enough to do so. He both placates and admonishes the public, stating “your government has

⁶⁵ Horten 48.

⁶⁶ Buhite and Levy 207.

⁶⁷ Ibid 212-213.

unmistakable confidence in your ability to hear the worst, without flinching or losing heart. You must, in turn, have complete confidence that your government is keeping nothing from you except information that will help the enemy in his attempt to destroy us.”⁶⁸ By acknowledging the fears of the public, he reassures them that the government is not hiding anything from them, but rather that FDR and his administration would censor only information that might “help the enemy.” He legitimizes the actions of the government and in doing so clarifies the “push and pull” or interdependent relationship between the federal government (elites) and the American population. In such a relationship, one side cannot simply alter the opinions and actions of the other side, they must explain their ideas and methods to convince the other side that it is in their best interests to agree. This speech, like the previous three examined here, shows us how FDR understood the American public during the war. By having a “conversation” with the people via radio, he explained the importance of war, and the threat to *their* civilization. As popular attitudes shifted in 1942, Roosevelt’s comments reacted to these popular changes and focused on the need for people to trust in their government. Analyzing FDR’s Fireside Chats make visible the relationship between the people and the government—propaganda might have been top down in its creation but was definitely influenced by the “bottom up” pulsing of a restless public.

Propaganda in Film

A second significant source of propaganda during World War II was that conveyed through film. The Office of War Information (OWI) was instituted in 1942 to monitor the release of information (specifically visual imagery) of the war. The OWI was meant to replace the Committee on Public Information, which had been headed by George Creel during World War I.⁶⁹ According to Elmer Davis, head of the OWI during the Second World War, “the easiest way

⁶⁸ Ibid 213.

⁶⁹ Roeder 9.

to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it go through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized."⁷⁰

Scholar Robert Fyne estimates that 300 movie propaganda films were made during the war years.⁷¹ Unlike radios, televisions were not household staples during the 1940s, but Americans did frequent movie theaters—and “the War saw record attendance despite a large federal tax increase on theater admissions.”⁷² Audiences sat through a variety of films depicting action in both the Pacific and European theaters, and were constantly exposed to messages of varying explicitness as to the nature of the enemy, the Allied forces, and the conflict at large. Common themes were “military strength, Home Front sacrifices, ethnic harmony, underground resistance, individual heroism, and Allied cooperation,” all of which “attested to the total victory motif.”⁷³ Examining a cross-section of these films released at different times during the war illuminates the role they played in the formulation of an American identity.

The values that American heroes (be they military or civilian) portrayed on screen, and the antithesis of those values (portrayed by the Nazi and Japanese enemies) presented a not-so-subtle glimpse of how the OWI through Hollywood wanted American viewers to think of themselves and the American war effort. Fyne argues, “Hollywood, of course, reduced the War to simplistic terms because the industry understood the components of film propaganda.”⁷⁴ Historians Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black contend that there was a direct relationship between the OWI and Hollywood, to the extent that

Officials of the Office of War Information... issued a constantly updated manual instructing the studios in how to assist the war effort, sat in on story conferences with

⁷⁰ Koppes, Clayton R and Gregory D. Black. *When Hollywood Goes to War*. New York: The Free Press, 1987. 64.

⁷¹ Fyne 9

⁷² Ibid 13.

⁷³ Ibid 10.

⁷⁴ Fyne, Robert. *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994.156.

Hollywood's top brass, reviewed the screenplays of every major studio (except the recalcitrant Paramount), pressured the movie makers to change scripts and even scrap pictures when they found questionable material, and sometimes wrote dialogue for key speeches.⁷⁵

This relationship—between the OWI's Domestic Branch (through the movie liaison office) and Hollywood filmmakers makes visible the ways in which the federal government directly influenced movie propaganda.⁷⁶ As Koppes and Black further argue, an “idealized portrait of America was fine with OWI, which wanted to project a picture of a prosperous, wholesome, democratic America,” after all “the war is not just for high-sounding ideals but for a better life, reminiscent of the Four Freedoms.”⁷⁷ Analyzing films produced during the war make clear the “picture” the OWI wanted to paint—and sell to the public.

Director William Wyler's 1942 film *Mrs. Miniver* stands as one of the earliest, and most important, examples of the Hollywood propaganda that pervaded the private sector during the war—it “glamorized the quiet heroism of the British people...” exemplifying the bravery of the average citizen in the face of conflict.⁷⁸ Set in rural England in 1939, the story follows a middle-class English family as they navigate the through the fear, loss, and shifting of values in their community during the first years of British involvement in WWII. Although focused on the British experience the film has several similarities to other examples of Hollywood propaganda, most namely on its propagation of values such as bravery, resolution, and endurance in the face of what is depicted as a war to preserve civilization. The film enjoyed widespread popularity in the United States at the time of its release—an American poll in 1942 ranked *Mrs. Miniver* as one of the top two best movies of the year—demonstrates its relevance as an example of

⁷⁵ Koppes and Black vii.

⁷⁶ Ibid 58.

⁷⁷ Ibid 143, 168.

⁷⁸ Fyne 94

American produced propaganda.⁷⁹ In many ways, the film represents the triumph of the average citizen in the face of adversity and threat. Mrs. Miniver calls herself “frivolous” and “extravagant” but is a self-proclaimed middle-class citizen; her husband Clem heroically embarks on a rescue of the British soldiers at Dunkirk—in a small civilian boat.⁸⁰ The film continues as the Miniver family endures the bombings, (during one their home is destroyed), fear as Vin and his father Clem are sent to join the war (Vin in the RAF and Clem as a volunteer to rescue the stranded soldiers at Dunkirk), and even the enemy as Mrs. Miniver bravely confronts a stranded German pilot that lands in her yard.⁸¹ Throughout the film, the audience watches the family endure trial after trial as they repeatedly rally to keep faith in the war effort.⁸² Their local vicar reminds them at church that they [the parish] must “defend again” the “freedom that we now enjoy.”⁸³

Belief in god is a recurring theme in the movie, as the inhabitants of the Miniver’s village turn to the perceived contrasts between their faith and that of the Nazis. This focus on faith not only reinforces an “us versus them” framework for understanding the war, but also suggests a common identity to which all the inhabitants can relate. Mr. Ballard, the local bellman, explains to Mrs. Miniver “you can’t beat the Bible when it comes to deep feelings” and that “no one that’s thrown that [the Bible] over is going to win this war.”⁸⁴ Such confidence and religious faith characterizes the protagonists in the film—they are God-fearing, loyal, and love freedom—and as such will triumph over those who have “abandoned” God.

⁷⁹ Koppes and Black 222.

⁸⁰ *Mrs. Miniver*. Directed by William Wyler. Produced by Sidney A. Franklin. By Arthur Wimperis, George Froeschel, James Hilton, and Claudine West. Performed by Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Teresa Wright, and May Whitty. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1942. DVD.

⁸¹ *Ibid*

⁸² The two major events that the Miniver family witness are the Battle of Britain (also known as “the blitz”) during which time the German Luftwaffe bombed several English cities (and targeted civilians) in order to break the morale of the civilian population (Buhite and Levy 163).

⁸³ *Ibid*

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

During the early months of the war the Miniver family's struggles to keep their faith and retain some semblance of normalcy in their daily lives routine point to the steadfastness of their conviction to endure. As the family hides in their bomb shelter during an air raid, Mr. Miniver drinks coffee, Mrs. Miniver knits, and they read *Alice in Wonderland* to their children. The family remains tranquil, as set in their routine as in their religious beliefs, and one grasps that the people in the story are truly unbreakable by war.⁸⁵ At the end of the film, the vicar addresses his congregation one last time, and his words reinforce the underlying themes discussed above—(belief in God, the triumph of the righteous, freedom, etc.). He states “this is not a war of soldiers in uniform, it is a war of the people...of all the people” and that “every man, woman, and child who loves freedom...will inspire us with an unbreakable determination to free ourselves and those who come after us from the tyranny and terror that threatened to strike us down.” “This is the peoples war!” he cries passionately “we are the fighters—fight it then! And may God defend the right!”⁸⁶ The vicar's words echo those of Lt. Davidson's in *So Proudly We Hail!* The idea that the war was not just for soldiers, but also for the entire population was a strong motivating force to mobilize film viewers to action.

So Proudly We Hail! was directed by Mark Sandrich and released in 1943, and stands as one of the best examples of anti-Japanese propaganda during the height of the war in the Pacific. The movie not only depicts the Japanese as cruel, but also champions the role of the heroic American soldier in times of crisis. The movie's importance as a source of propaganda lies not only in what it tries to tell the viewers about the strength and resilience of the American forces, but also in what it relates about the destructiveness of the Japanese.⁸⁷ The story surrounds eight

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Fyne states that in the film, “immediately, the cruelty of the Nipponese invaders was delineated and their wanton disregard for civilization became an ominous warning.” (Ibid 36).

American nurses who emerge as heroines from the “black sorrow and tragedy of Bataan and Corregidor,” which, as the audience will later see, means the loss of life and resources that result from Japanese bombing of American hospitals and jungle camp sites as the nurses are evacuated.⁸⁸ The film opens as the nurses are delivered to Melbourne, Australia following a forced evacuation from Corregidor, Philippines. Their story is told in flashback, as the nurses’ new commanding officer asks for an explanation of their experience in the war thus far. The nurses were originally to be stationed in Hawaii in December 1941, and began their military careers on a convoy headed to Pearl Harbor; the Japanese attack rerouted them to Bataan farther east. Aboard ship, they cared for survivors of torpedo attacks, socialized with their male counterparts, and learned about the importance of their mission. At a Christmas party, the chaplain delivered a moving speech meant to inspire the soldiers—and the viewers—about the strength of America’s armed forces: “we” are “a sentimental people,” “tough about the things we believe in” and “we will fight to the death to make those tender and sentimental beliefs like Christmas a reality forever.”⁸⁹ Evidence of the commitment of the nurses is illustrated through the care the nurses take of their patients, and of each other.

The protagonist and leader of the group, Lieutenant Janet Davidson (“Davy”), counsels a younger nurse, Olivia, through her rage and sorrow as she struggles to cope with the loss of a fiancé who died at Pearl Harbor. Olivia wants to give in to her feelings and “kill Japs” in revenge, believing that she is just a nurse, and is not bound to be anything higher. “There’s more than that now that we’re at war,” Davy gently reminds her, and the audience sees the sense of

⁸⁸ *So Proudly We Hail!* Directed by Mark Sandrich. Produced by Mark Sandrich. By Allan Scott. Performed by Claudette Colbert, Paulette Goddard, Veronica Lake, George Reeves, and Barbara Britton. United States: Paramount, 1943. DVD.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*

American restraint and rationality in the face of pain and loss.⁹⁰ On Bataan, the nurses face food and medicinal shortages, but continue to work to save their patients, even as their situation worsens. Lt. John Summers confides to Davy that they are extremely “outnumbered” as the Japanese “keep pouring in.” “They don’t give quarter and they don’t ask for it,” he says bitterly, reflecting on the presumed Japanese resolved to fight to the death. The character of the Japanese army is again referenced as the nurses grow increasingly concerned for what would happen to them if they were left behind and the Japanese advanced—specifically sexual assault. “They fought over a woman like dogs!” one of the nurses cries fearfully, referencing her time in Nanking.⁹¹ The nurses all react fearfully as they recall the brutal Japanese invasion of Nanking, China in 1937.⁹² Despite the constant threat, the nurses continue their work, even as they become the self-titled “Battling Orphans of Bataan.” Abandoned by General MacArthur and without reinforcements, the nurses face crippling malaria and are constantly moved from one jungle hospital to another. Japanese brutality again surfaces as the nurses finish furnishing what is to be their final hospital on Bataan. They display a Red Cross symbol on the ground outside the main tent—large enough so that it can be seen from the air and clearly a mark of a hospital. “She [Davy] gave them the benefit of the doubt, though even she didn’t doubt” Lt. Joan O’Doul narrates ominously.⁹³ Her fears are confirmed as the Japanese begin to bomb the hospital. Nurses and doctors mobilize immediately and try desperately to save their wounded charges. Airplanes machine-gun the tents killing doctors, nurses, and soldiers alike—the audience is to understand the horror and desperation of these American heroes and heroines and the lack of decency and honor of the Japanese who indiscriminately kill the incapacitated. The nurses strengthen their

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Smithsonian, Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid

resolve and evacuate Bataan for Corregidor, where they are “bombed and shelled without mercy.”⁹⁴

From the film, it is evident that America (or at least the War Department) had not come to terms with the American retreat at Bataan. “Imagine [the surrender at Bataan] happening to us...Americans!” O’Doul’s lover Kansas exclaims to O’Doul as he laments the arrival and subsequent evacuation of the Marine reinforcements. “It’s not the end of the fight,” she rebuts.⁹⁵ Scenes like these reaffirm American military pride and strength, and reassure the audience that the marines were *ordered* off Bataan, and that they did not leave due to a lack of resolve. “Remember Valley Forge? That was no strawberry festival!” O’Doul says cheerfully as she and Kansas aid the evacuation.⁹⁶ By evoking images from a trying time in American history, the audience is meant to associate the struggle on Bataan with the near-futile attempts to secure liberty during the Revolutionary War.

Corregidor proves to be a “prison” for the nurses, and the strain takes its toll as the Japanese continue to bombard the island. Davy’s subsequent soliloquy is revealing—and useful for analyzing the role the film played in boosting civilian morale—and resolve—to continue the fight on the home front. Davy surprises those around her by saying that what was happening in the Pacific was their own fault. When the group starts protesting, she explains herself: “We believed we were the world, that the United States of America was the whole world.”⁹⁷ This is a key part of the film because it is indicative of the relationship between consumers and producers of information during the war, and signals that government officials needed to alter war propaganda. By making a movie about the perceived defeat of the Marines at Bataan, (a contrast

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

between the previously illustrated invincibility of American troops during the war) officials were shifting some of the responsibility for success onto the civilian population. “I hope to God the people back home aren’t losing it for us” Davy says fretfully.⁹⁸ Upon analysis of Davy’s speech at this point in the movie, it is possible to draw links between the crisis in visual culture and censorship that characterized the OWI in 1943, and the shift in public attitudes towards the war in 1942. The poll that Roeder cited in June 1943 showed that 39% of the public thought the government was making “the situation look better than it was.”⁹⁹ FDR delivered his “Fighting Defeatism” speech in the midst of a change in how the public perceived the government’s portrayal of the war. Even OWI head Elmer Davis had voiced his fears about the changing public sentiments, saying in August 1942 that he felt “we could lose this war” in August 1942.¹⁰⁰ Historians Koppes and Black posit that “...the tendency to avoid the ideological aspect of the war, to sugarcoat unpleasant realities, and to package wartime issues as although they were soap and soft drinks” during this period “could only mean a further dilution of public understanding.”¹⁰¹ Significant portions of the public believed that censorship had covered up too much of the realities of war and the lines of the actors in *So Proudly We Hail!* appear to be addressing these fears. When Davy speaks of “the people back home” she implicitly calls on them (the audience) to keep faith, and keep fighting.

Davy and the other nurses are eventually evacuated from Corregidor, as the Marines are unable to hold the island against the Japanese. The guilt the nurses feel as they leave the wounded behind is assuaged by a letter that arrives in Melbourne from Lt. Summers, who writes about the war and its lasting legacy. “[There is] something new in this war, something

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Roeder 4.

¹⁰⁰ Koppes, and Black 82.

¹⁰¹ Ibid 135.

good...this is a people's war because they have taken it over now and they are going to win it...and end it with a purpose...to live like men with dignity and freedom."¹⁰² Summer's last letter offers viewers a sense of purpose and challenges home front residents to recognize their role and the importance of the war—their “dignity and freedom” is what is at stake.

Director Zoltan Korda's *Sahara* (1943) emerges from its historical context as an example of American courage and bravery in a situation in which the soldiers have a “100 to 1 shot” of surviving the outcome.¹⁰³ The setting for the film is based on the North Africa campaign, specifically Operation Torch, when the Allied forces attempted to oust the Nazis from the continent. Humphrey Bogart's Sergeant Joe Gunn is the leader of the IV Armored Corps during the North Africa campaign early in the war. The characterization of Gunn communicates to the viewer the importance of the leadership and resolve of American soldiers. It is June 1942, and Gunn and his tank crew come across Captain Halliday and his small group of stranded British Eighth Army soldiers (British and French) while retreating from enemy fire. Gunn immediately asserts his authority over an impertinent British soldier when the soldier asks him why the Americans are leaving and that he will not be riding in that “metal hearse” (Gunn's tank). It is not clear in the film if Gunn technically outranks Halliday, but Gunn's immediate assertion of authority over his British counterpart is meant to inform the audience that the United States, while allied with other countries, remains militarily superior. “First, we're not running away, we're obeyin' orders” Gunn says gruffly, and “when I go into Berlin I'm going to be ridin' that tank.”¹⁰⁴ Gunn is confident in ultimate American victory, and he makes it clear that the Army

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ *Sahara* Directed by Zoltan Korda. Produced by Harry Joe Brown. By John Howard Lawson, Zoltan Korda, James O'Hanlon, and Philip MacDonald. Performed by Humphrey Bogart, Bruce Bennet, Lloyd Bridges, Bruce Bennet, J. Naish, and Dan Duryea. United States: Columbia, 1943. DVD.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

does not run from a position, they only abandon a fight if they are told to do so. In a move symbolic of American military leadership over its European allies, Halliday gives up his “immediate authority” and assumes a position under Gunn. Together, the Americans, the British, and the French advance across the Sahara desert in search of water.¹⁰⁵ Gunn’s leadership is tested again when the group finds a Sudanese soldier and an Italian prisoner. The Italian begs to be taken on the tank, but Gunn, the forward-thinking leader, knows the group will not survive if they have another thirsty body (and an enemy) on board, and agrees to take only the Sudanese soldier. Amidst protestations from his European counterparts, Gunn remains stalwart and orders the tank to leave. When he later shows mercy and allows the tank to go back for the Italian, it is *his* decision; he is swayed only by his conscience and not by the perspectives of other soldiers and officers.¹⁰⁶ The ease with which the American tank crew attracts representatives from each country to work under their command highlights the superiority of the American military and its leadership.

The soldiers’ first encounter with the enemy occurs when they shoot down a German fighter plane over the desert. The Nazi they capture is blonde, pale, well built, and sneers at his captors as he refuses to cooperate—a caricatured representative of the German enemy. The Nazi refuses to be searched for weapons by any man of “an inferior race,” and his disdain for others is clear.¹⁰⁷ Gunn, exercising control over his men’s passion and wish for revenge, orders that the German be spared. “You got a lot to learn Frenchie” Gunn says as he chastises the French soldier for initiating the idea.¹⁰⁸ The American soldier is self-controlled and clings to his sense of duty; he does not let emotion (clearly present in the Europeans) sway his decision to not kill a prisoner

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

of war.¹⁰⁹ Gunn's second encounter with the enemy, a scene in which he talks to the Italian prisoner, indicates the superiority not only of the American soldier but also of the American way of life. The Italian, Giuseppe, discusses the motto of Mussolini—"obey, believe, work" and how he is the "prophet" of Hitler's "god." A sense of camaraderie between the two men manifests as Gunn asks why Giuseppe could live in such a world dominated by the ideals of Mussolini.¹¹⁰

At the climax of the movie, Gunn and his men face the ultimate test as they discover that a force of over 500 hundred German soldiers from the Afrika Korps are on their way to the American position at Bir Acroma. Gunn, ever the ideal representative of the American way of life, discusses the situation with his men and gives them the chance to leave. He does not order that they stay and fight, but rather presents the situation to them democratically.¹¹¹ Film scholar Robert Fyne argues that "as a propaganda device, following the OWI's directives, the group vote was always an effective scene, reiterating every wholesome trait found in the Allied forces' credo. Democracy was not fascism, the OWI echoed, every man had his say."¹¹² "It's so much more than the line of duty," Gunn says, but he explains that their situation is not unique. "Why Corregidor?" "Why Bataan?" He asks, naming other American strategic losses that were accompanied by horrific treatment of American soldiers by the enemy—in this case the Japanese. The soldiers who perished might not have won the ground, but "they delayed the enemy." His speech inspires a sense of duty and purpose in his men, and all prepare for the inevitable confrontation.¹¹³ The Germans descend, and offer terms of surrender to the badly outnumbered Allies. Gunn, given the chance to save the lives of himself and his men, steadfastly

¹⁰⁹Gunn's decision earlier in the film to leave the Italian prisoner (to a sure death) was not the same as killing him outright as the Frenchman suggested.

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Fyne, 97.

¹¹³ Sahara

refuses. “Water for guns” he says—the Germans gain access to Bir Acroma’s water supply if they give up their weapons. The ensuing battle kills each of the allies, as one by one they die defending their position against the invading army. “It sounds impossible, but we gotta do it,” says Gunn as his men lose their resolve, the fight is about “the dignity of freedom.”¹¹⁴ The outnumbered force was doomed from the beginning, but the most propagandistic message of the movie lies in its characterization of the American soldier or officer (personified in Gunn), the American resolve and cooperation (personified in the Allied force) and the American sense of duty and bravery in the face of nearly impossible odds. The glorious death of Gunn’s division may have been but a small loss in the grand scheme of the war, but Gunn’s character succeeds in instilling a sense of purpose in their deaths. American soldiers’ commitment to duty is evident throughout the film, and is successful in the sense that turns an American defeat into a glorious last stand rooted in dedication for the American cause.

Finally, Director Lewis Milestone’s 20th Century Fox Film *The Purple Heart* is, as Fyne argues, “the best propaganda film of the war” because “probably no other motion picture stoked up such hatred towards the Oriental enemy; the storyline—from start to finish—emphasized the savagery of life under Japanese captivity.”¹¹⁵ The film opens in a Japanese courtroom as the defendants (an eight man team from a botched bombing raid) are led in. The fact that the soldiers do not have proper legal representation is an immediate distinction between the American and Japanese judicial systems, and even though the Americans and various foreign news correspondents protest the fact that the civil court unjustly claims jurisdiction over a case

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid 63-64.

involving prisoners of war, but the trial proceeds.¹¹⁶ It is clear in the film that the trial is unlawful on the grounds of the Geneva Convention.¹¹⁷ The maniacal General Ito Mitsubi—played by Richard Loo—mirrors the Japanese caricature reflected in war posters during the time. His protruding ears, large front teeth and squinty eyes call to mind popular images of the “hated Jap” that was so prevalent during the war.¹¹⁸ General Mitsubi tortures each of the men, but no one offers information about the origins (or objective) of the raid. Mitsubi chastises Captain Ross for failing to reveal information, stating that the Japanese are “united in hate for foreigners” and as such will inevitably win the war.¹¹⁹ Captain Ross never wavers in his allegiance to the United States and his faith in American total victory. It is his confidence that leads the men through their final hours as they are given the choice between “talking” and execution. The stalwart Ross adheres to the democratic ideals of his country, allowing his men to vote on their collective answer. When the group decides that they would rather die than betray their country Captain Ross delivers a final soliloquy in which he echoes the resolve of the men “in this moment of pain, agony, and pride” and leaves with a parting threat to the Japanese—though they may defeat his bombing crew, others will come for the Empire of Japan and the United States *will* have total victory.¹²⁰ General Mitsubi shoots himself in defeat after failing to break the soldiers’ resolve, and the soldiers walk triumphantly to their deaths as the Battle Hymn of the Republic plays. In

¹¹⁶ *The Purple Heart*. Directed by Lewis Milestone. Produced by Daryl F. Zanuck. By Jerome Cady and Darryl F. Zanuck. Performed by Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, Farley Granger, Kevin O’Shea, Don ‘Red’ Barry, and Trudy Marshall. United States: 20th Century Fox, 1944. DVD.

¹¹⁷ According to the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (July 1929), “Prisoners of war shall not be subjected by the military authorities or the tribunals of the detaining Power to penalties other than those which are prescribed for similar acts by members of the national forces” (Geneva). The soldiers are not read their rights, they do not have adequate judicial representation, and they do not know (or are able to explain) the circumstances of their “crimes” and arrest. Switzerland. International Committee of the Red Cross. *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*. Geneva, 1929. Accessed April 15, 2013. <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/305?opendocument>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

less than two hours, the audience has seen that the Japanese are lawless, cruel, and immoral, while the American soldiers are unswerving in their dedication and morality. The final message—that the American cause *will* win over the message of hatred spread by the Japanese is hard to miss. The film is not subtle, but it is important because it maintains the identity that I argue was constructed for Americans during the war. As Fyne concludes, “no other motion picture so graphically depicted the wantonness of the Japanese brutality as *The Purple Heart*, no other title conjured up a more determined call for revenge and retribution.”¹²¹

Animated Propaganda

Feature-length films played a critical role in the federal government’s efforts to create a collective identity for the American population and constructed an “us” mentality that stood in contrast to a “them” identity of the “enemy.” While movies showed the American population how “they” looked and acted, animated propaganda cartoons often depicted enemy “faults” even more explicitly and humorously. These propaganda messages were very unsophisticated, because they were conveyed through simple imagery—even the youngest of the American population could understand how the enemy was portrayed. Japanese figures were often portrayed as weak—through caricature of their squinted eyes, protruding teeth, thin frames and cowardice under fire—all of which were congruent with cartoon portrayals of the Japanese military as inept and ineffectual. The Germans, on the other hand, were shown as large, muscular, and strong in conquest against “the weak.” Their anger was often translated into “godlessness,” which led to their eventual downfall.

¹²¹ Fyne 67.

In 1942, “You’re a Sap Mr. Jap,” featuring Popeye, is propaganda in its simplest form.¹²² It is the proverbial “good guy” versus “bad guy” that children, ignorant of the intricacies of war, could understand. In short, Popeye is in the navy. The Japanese sailors that appear on the sea are cartoon caricatures of themselves. They have eyeglasses, squinted eyes, large front teeth, and protruding ears. They speak in broken English and stealthily slink about their ship. They show Popeye a peace treaty, and the unassuming Popeye goes to sign it, saying, “I’m a peace lovin’ guy meself!” The Japanese, however, put an explosive in Popeye’s shoes when his back is turned as he signs the treaty.¹²³ This is a powerful image, and illuminates the betrayal many Americans felt in the immediate aftermath of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese, unable to face Popeye in an honorable battle, must resort to trickery to defeat their foes. Popeye, undeterred, consumes spinach (his bicep aptly spells “V” for victory) and prepares for a naval battle. The Japanese are relentless as they continuously assault Popeye, who exclaims, “So ya wants to tangle with us Americans huh?” and gallantly crawls onto the enemy ship under fire as Yankee Doodle plays in the background. “Double-crossin Japansies!” Popeye mutters as he works his way to the ship’s commander.¹²⁴ In the end, the Japanese leader swallows gasoline and bullets and attempts to “save face” by blowing his face off. The last thing the viewer sees is the Japanese flag sinking into the ocean accompanied by the sound of a toilet flushing.¹²⁵ The cartoon shows the dichotomy between the strong, honorable American, who wins by his brawn and bravery, and the “sneaky” Japanese who ultimately resort to suicide, as their dishonorable efforts to best the Americans are honorably defeated.

¹²² Fleischer, Max. Paramount Pictures. "You're A Sap, Mr. Jap." Cartoon. *Internet Archive*. Internet Archive, Moving Image Archive, Animation and Cartoons, Animation Shorts, World War II Propaganda Cartoons. 10 Mar. 2001. Web. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://archive.org/details/WorldWarIIPropagandaCartoons>>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

“Tokio Jokio” is another short animation that was rife with propaganda messages. Looney Tunes’ 1943 cartoon was a satirical news clip titled “nipponews of the week” and took a different angle than that of “You’re a Sap Mr. Jap.”¹²⁶ Popeye’s cartoon depicts the Japanese as sneaky, dishonorable, and as only being able to gain military advantage by resorting to trickery. “Tokio Jokio,” on the other hand, characterizes the enemy as inept and incapable. The first cartoon was released in 1942, soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, when the memory of the Japanese attack was still fresh in American minds. By 1943, the U.S. had defeated the Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway, which helped the American public gain confidence in the military. “Tokio Jokio” is representative of this military confidence. In the short, the Japanese are portrayed in the usual racist/stereotyped way—they have glasses, big teeth, and are altogether caricatured. The cartoon trivializes different aspects of the Japanese war machine; it shows their “most advanced air raid siren” (a Japanese man yelling as another kicks him), their “airplane spotters” (a man painting dots on an airplane), and their “fire-prevention headquarters” (which have clearly failed as the camera pans to a set of charred buildings).¹²⁷

The animation grows more explicit as it progresses showing a scene where a Japanese man is blown up after trying to roast a hotdog over an incendiary bomb. Most importantly, the cartoon satirizes other angles of the Japanese military besides their strategic ineptitude. In “Kitchen Hints” a Japanese man attempts to make a meat sandwich—by placing a meat-rationing card between two bread-rationing cards. “Nippon-Nifties Syle How” shows a “Japanese victory suit”—a Japanese man in a diaper. Both of these segments critique the Japanese readiness for war and show the audience (children) that America’s enemy should be laughed at.¹²⁸ The second

¹²⁶ Warner Brothers. "Tokio Jokio." Cartoon. *YouTube*. YouTube, 02 June 2007. Web. 25 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjLfyo0JQEc>>.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

part of the cartoon, “Headline Poisonalities” introduces the audience to Admiral Yamamoto, the military leader of the Japanese.¹²⁹ He appears imposing at first as he is at his desk—then it is revealed that he is standing on stilts, thus depicting him as of a slight stature and therefore less powerful as smallness is associated with weakness. In another stereotypic scene another Japanese general illustrates Japanese “resolve” under fire by running around frantically during an air raid eventually hiding fearfully in a log, which prompts the resident skunk to put on a gas mask.¹³⁰ The final segment of the carton shows the audience the “Japanese Navy all at sea,” a half-constructed submarine swimming through the ocean as “very very technical” sailors play inside on slot machines. Further along, the scene changes to a Mine Sweeper (a boat with a broom) and the “busiest aircraft carrier” (which is covered with the ruin of downed Japanese planes).¹³¹ The cartoon clearly depicts Japanese leaders as weak and ineffective and Japanese naval resources as inferior and not to be feared. The cartoon’s lasting message is that the Japanese military is inept, ineffectual, and unprepared. Whereas the enemy might have been feared in the vulnerable months after the American defeat at Pearl Harbor, they were now a laughingstock, and should not be a source of intimidation.

Anti-Nazi cartoon propaganda was also prevalent during the Second World War, and focused less on stereotyping German bodies as weak instead highlighting the barbaric and undemocratic ways the Nazis treated their enemies. Walt Disney’s “Der Fuehrer’s Face,” released in 1943, exemplifies this type of cartoon.¹³² It centers on the Nazis, and gives the audience a powerful sense of what Americans have—and stand to lose—under Nazi rule. By the

¹²⁹ Admiral Yamamoto was the chief military strategist behind the attack on Pearl Harbor, and as a result was targeted by American propagandists.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Walt Disney Production, R.K.O Pictures, Inc. "Der Fuehrer's Face." Cartoon. *YouTube*. YouTube, 23 Nov. 2009. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA6HHgJC5BE>>.

end of the animation, the audience is left with a clear message of what it is to be American, and the values associated with this national identity. The cartoon opens with Nazi and Japanese soldiers marching around singing, “we bring the world new order” and “we is the master race!”¹³³ Donald Duck is sleeping in a house nearby—as he wakes up with a start he first “heils” the portraits of Hitler, Mussolini, and Emperor Hirohito that adorn his otherwise plain walls. Everything heils Hitler—the alarm clock, the rooster outside, and even the bird from the cuckoo clock.¹³⁴ Right away, the audience sees that Hitler pervades every aspect of life. After Donald puts on his uniform, he prepares breakfast, which consists of squirting perfume labeled “aroma de bacon and eggs” into his mouth, and using a saw to cut his bread.¹³⁵ Clearly, the enemy is running low on rations. Donald also must “improve the mind” by reading *Mein Kampf* over breakfast—yet another nod to the presumed German fascination with Hitler’s work. After breakfast, Donald must report to work—and is escorted by German soldiers walking behind him, pointing bayonets in his back. The narrator explains that Donald and his fellow workers are “lucky” to “work 48 hours a day for the fuehrer.”¹³⁶ As Donald feverishly tries to keep up with his work on the factory’s conveyor belt, he must heil every picture of Hitler he sees. “Is this not wonderful? Is not the fuehrer glorious?”¹³⁷ the narrator exclaims. Donald clearly does not think so, as he is teetering on the edge of exhaustion. Just as he is about to collapse, his is given his “vacation with pay,” and a landscape backdrop falls behind him. His “vacation” is cut short as he is informed that he has “been chosen to work overtime.” Clearly, it is a privilege to work for the fuehrer. Donald struggles to keep up with the demand for shells, and eventually cracks from the

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

pressure.¹³⁸ Just as he is going mad, he wakes up from a dream—in American flag pajamas in his bed with a “home sweet home” sign above. “Am I glad to be a citizen of the United States of America!” he exclaims as runs to his window and hugs the statue of liberty.¹³⁹ The cartoon portrays the Nazis as fanatical, oppressive, and anti-democratic. “Der Fuehrer’s Face” is unique in the sense that it illustrates how “lucky” Americans are to be Americans. It does not give the audience an explicit list of common values that Americans share, but through the dream life of Donald Duck, we see that we would have sub-par food, be forced to work copious hours, have no vacation time, and lose all sense of self amidst strict regulation. Viewers are left with a sense of what Americans have, without the cartoon specifically saying what those ‘haves’ are.

Walt Disney also released “Education for Death,” in 1943.¹⁴⁰ The cartoon told the story about the “Making of the Nazi” by following the life of “one of ‘Hitler’s Children.” “What makes a Nazi?” the narrator asks, “How does he get that way?”¹⁴¹ The story is told as a narration, through the birth, education, adolescence, military conscription and eventual death of the main character, Hans. At the beginning of the story, Hans parents must present their son’s birth certificate and family history to the German authorities—this is done, the narrator says, to show that they are “pure Aryan” and that their son’s prospective name is not on the “verboten list.” The camera pans to the couple’s “hereditary passport” on which they will list Hans along with their future children. The passport has space for twelve children—which the narrator says is “a subtle hint Germany needs soldiers.”¹⁴² The piece is laden with references to German stereotypes—the couple receives a copy of “Germany’s best seller” (Mein Kampf) after the birth

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Walt Disney Production. R.K.O. Radio Pictures, Inc., "Education for Death." Cartoon. *YouTube*. YouTube, 05 June 2008. Web. 18 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i6ozLpNr3Q>>.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

of their son, alluding to a belief that all Germans share Hitler's ideology. The cartoon continues through Hans' childhood, or "molding the young Nazi mind."¹⁴³ From the earliest fairytales Hans learns at home to the official lessons he receives in school the contrast between Nazi and American ideology is highlighted. The Nazi version of the popular children's fairytale "Sleeping Beauty" pits Hitler (the "brave handsome knight") against democracy (the evil dragon that threatens Sleeping Beauty). Hitler is caricatured as a slight, thin man with a large nose and a loud, angry voice. His face turns red as he yells orders faster than he can breathe. Sleeping Beauty, whom he rescues, is portrayed as a German Princess, similarly caricatured with a large nose, and so large in girth that Hitler can barely lift her as he rides away into the sunset. As the story ends, the narrator says "the moral of this Nazi fairytale seems to be that Hitler got Germany on her feet, climbed into the saddle, and took her for a ride."¹⁴⁴ This seemingly innocent fairy tale references Hitler's rise to power in Germany after the First World War—he "got Germany on her feet" after the destruction of the Treaty of Versailles that left Germany economically and physically stricken, and "climbed into the saddle," or rose to Chancellorship. By "taking her for a ride," the narrator is presumably talking about the path of military aggression and expansion on which Hitler set Germany. By associating all of Germany with Hitler (through the love of *Mein Kampf* and that of a "damsel in distress," the cartoon effectively characterizes all Germans as Nazis. As the story continues through Hans' life, examples of Nazi cruelty emerge. As a child, Hans is sick, but his mother is afraid to get treatment for him because the "unfit are taken away by the state and never heard of again." As the concerned mother worries over her child, an angry German soldier appears at the door. He is an imposing figure who towers over the family as he yells at the mother that "the state will have to step in and take over" if she does not stop

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

“mollycoddling” her son. The audience is left with a clear idea of what “the state” in Germany is like—and how it is different from the United States. The Nazi soldier is caricatured similarly to Hitler—both indulge in uncontrollable fits of rage as the targets of their anger cower in fear.¹⁴⁵

As Hans continues through school, he learns to not only accept this requirement of fear and adoration for Hitler, but to embrace it. Hitler is everywhere—even in Hans’ primary school. There, Hans takes a “daily pledge to fight, obey, and die for his fuehrer,” and portraits of Goering, and Goebbels adorn the walls. Both men’s faces are twisted into sneers—their portraits make them look evil and demented. As the school lessons commence, the students learn a “lesson in natural history” about foxes chasing and devouring rabbits—a metaphor depicting the contours of the “natural” hierarchy for the strong and the weak. Hans’ expression of pity for the rabbit is met with not only disdain from his fellow classmates but also punishment from his teacher—he is forced to sit in the corner in shame. The narrator comments on the correct answers Hans must learn: “The world belongs to the strong! And to the brutal! The rabbit is a coward and deserves to die.” The audience could apply this metaphor to any of the European states already conquered by the Nazis in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The cartoon presents Nazi cruelty in the simplest of terms—as Hans learns “the correct Nazi way of thinking” so too does the audience learn how and why the Nazis think the way they do, and that “Germany will likewise destroy all weak and cowardly nations” as the narrator explains. Hans’ teacher, after relieving Hans of his punishment, goes on a verbal tirade and red faced and passionate, he resembles the angry German soldier and Hitler as he shouts: “Germans are a super race! All others will be slaves! Germans are unconquerable! They fear no one!” the narrator translates.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

The final segment of the animation is perhaps the most important, because it makes visible the main reason to hate and fear the Nazis—they disdain religion. The cartoon shows Nazi soldiers marching through a red and fiery background, looking almost like devils as they carry torches to burn books. The *Holy Bible* is replaced with *Mein Kampf*, the Crucifix changes into a Nazi sword with the Swastika in the middle, and the stained glass windows of a church are shattered as fire comes through.¹⁴⁷ This is powerful imagery, and clearly meant to strike fear in the audience. While earlier caricatures portray the Nazis as aggressive men that cannot control their rage, this segment shows that they are also godless demons. In a similar fashion to FDR’s Fireside Chats that warned the American population what would happen if the Nazis were to gain power in the Western Hemisphere, this cartoon shows what would happen to something as foundational as religion under Nazi rule. The animation ends with Hans “hailing and marching” with “no seed of laughter, hope, tolerance, or mercy” as he and his fellow soldiers continue “trampling on the rights of others.”¹⁴⁸ The message of the cartoon is both explicit in the sense that the narrator tells the audience about Nazi ideology—they trample the weak, conquer weaker neighboring nations, burn religious items, and the utter lack “laughter, hope, tolerance, or mercy,” thus reminding the audience not only what they would lose under Nazi control but also what is important—what makes them different from the Nazis.

Poster Propaganda

As we have seen in examples of film and cartoon propaganda, the visual culture during the Second World War was important both for “selling” the war to the American public and for creating an American identity. Poster propaganda was the most classic—and simple—form of propaganda because it presented an image or a message (often one without the other). In

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

examining examples of these posters it is possible to analyze the messages that emerge from them—and how those messages evolved over the course of the war to reflect changes in public attitudes. One of the most important examples of propaganda is depicted Norman Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms” set of posters that were published in 1943 (Figure 1). When examined together, they give the viewers a clear perception of American identity—one that is centered around the freedoms *of* religion and speech, and freedoms *from* fear and want.¹⁴⁹ Similar to FDR’s radio proclamations of what will be taken away from Americans if the Nazis and Japanese invade the United States, the posters convey the values that are important to Americans—and in doing so help shape the identity of the population.¹⁵⁰ In a similar visual fashion, the “Warning!” poster from 1942 (figure 2) presents an explicit illustration of the enemy that is reminiscent of portrayals in animated propaganda. The Japanese character is buck-toothed, blood thirsty, and menacing as he brandishes a knife over the United States; Hitler is similarly dark and frightening as he stares, gun in hand.¹⁵¹ The message is clear—“Our Homes Are in Danger Now!” The poster creates a contrasting identity between the enemy and Americans—the foreign aggressors are dark, menacing, and threaten the United States with bloodstained weapons.

The final two posters, “Man the Guns” (figure 3) and “Miles of Hell to Tokyo (figure 4) are important for the context of the paper, because the differences between the two portrayals of the American soldier signify a shift in propaganda during the war years. McClelland Barclay painted the first poster, “Man the Guns,” in 1942. The soldier is tanned, muscled, and wholesome. With a look of determination on his face, he easily lifts a shell as he participates in

¹⁴⁹ United States. Government Printing Office for the Office of War Information. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Save Freedom of Speech*. By Norman Rockwell. N.p.: Curtis, 1943. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html

¹⁵⁰ Ibid “Save Freedom of Worship”, “Ours...to fight for...Freedom from Want”, Ours...to fight for...Freedom from Fear”.

¹⁵¹ United States. General Motors Corporation. NARA Still Picture Branch. *WARNING! Our Homes Are in Danger Now!* N.p.: n.p., 1942. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html>.

the heat of battle.¹⁵² The other poster, “Miles of Hell to Tokyo,” paints a very different picture of the American soldier. Amos Sewell’s 1945 illustration shows a soldier lying wounded on the ground, his clothes ripped and bloodied and his resolve clearly faltering as he attempts to stand up.¹⁵³ The contrast between this American soldier and the one from “Man the Guns” is striking—and telling. The differences in the representation of the military call to mind the censorship changes in 1943, when Elmer Davis embarked on a “strategy of truth” campaign to shift the OWI towards a policy of openness with the American public with regards to the war, partly due to the fact that a large percentage of the population thought that the government was “the situation look better than it was.”¹⁵⁴ As previously discussed, the War Department severely limited any pictures that compromised American military strength—leading to the censorship of images that showed soldiers dying.¹⁵⁵ The change in the presentation of these posters signifies a shift in propaganda as a result of the changes in popular opinion over the course of the war.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined several primary sources of propaganda as evidence that during the Second World War, the federal government attempted to shape a collective American identity based on the foundations of economic and religious freedom through a controlled release of information and images shaped to convey particular messages to viewers, listeners, and readers. This information was communicated through a variety of mediums, including radio, film, cartoon animation, and printed posters. Their relevance lies not only in how they were able to inspire the population to go to war but also in what they told the people about themselves. By

¹⁵² United States. Navy Recruiting Bureau. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Man the Guns—Join the Navy*. By McClelland Barclay. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 1942. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html>.

¹⁵³ United States. Government Printing Office for the War Manpower Division. NARA Civil Reference Branch. *Miles of Hell to Tokyo!* By Amos Sewell. N.p.: n.p., 1945. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013. <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Roeder 2; 11

¹⁵⁵ Ibid 3

demonizing the Nazis and the Japanese, federal propagandists helped create a contrast between Americans and the enemy, specifically concerning the “godlessness” of the Nazis (“Education for Death” explicitly showed of the Crucifix being turned into a sword and swastika, and the Bible transforming into *Mein Kampf*) and the ineptitude of the Japanese (Tokio Jokio’s numerous portrayals of the Japanese failing to maintain their Navy). By mobilizing the home front to support the war effort, propagandists also made the civilian population inherently responsible for military victory. These themes were common across the mediums of propaganda, as movies such as *Mrs. Miniver* and *So Proudly We Hail!* both portrayed characters that spoke of the need for the public to support the military and do their part on the home front.

This contrast between Americans and the enemy and the call for public support on the home front was reinforced by federal officials’ definitions of American identity that was embedded in wartime propaganda—messages that clarified what we are, what we stand for, and why we will ultimately triumph over our adversaries. The construction and selling of this identity was consistent throughout the war, but the federal government had to alter aspects of the message in order to respond to shifts in civilian attitudes at different points during the war. The nuances in government propaganda are indicative of a two-sided relationship between the Roosevelt administration and the American population; the government did not simply force ideas on the people, they instead adapted their ideas to meet and engage the demands of the American people.

Figures



Figure 1

United States. Government Printing Office for the Office of War Information. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Save Freedom of Speech*. By Norman Rockwell. N.p.: Curtis, 1943. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html

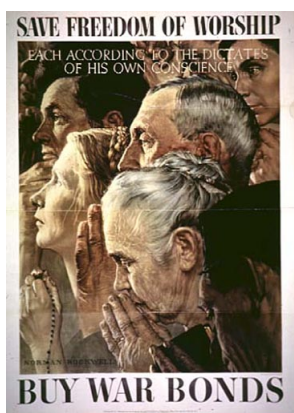


Figure 1

United States. Government Printing Office for the Office of War Information. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Save Freedom of Worship*. By Norman Rockwell. N.p.: Curtis, 1943. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html



Figure 1

United States. Government Printing Office for the Office of War Information. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Ours...to fight for...Freedom from Want*. By Norman Rockwell. N.p.: Curtis, 1943. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html

OURS...to fight for



FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Figure 1

United States. Government Printing Office for the Office of War Information. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Ours...to fight for...Freedom from Fear*. By Norman Rockwell. N.p.: Curtis, 1943. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html



Figure 2

United States. General Motors Corporation. NARA Still Picture Branch. *WARNING! Our Homes Are in Danger Now!* N.p.: n.p., 1942. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 31 Mar. 2013.
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html.

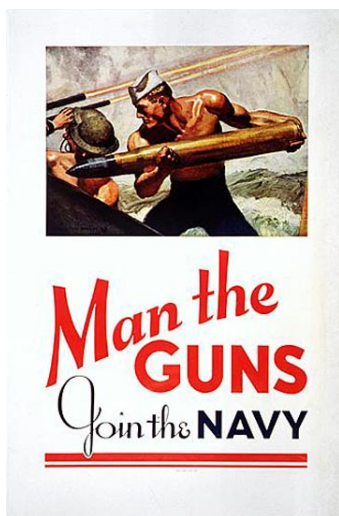


Figure 3

United States. Navy Recruiting Bureau. NARA Still Picture Branch. *Man the Guns—Join the Navy*. By McClelland Barclay. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 1942. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 31 Mar. 2013.
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html.

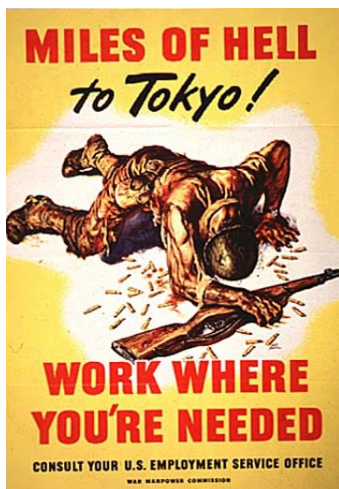


Figure 4

United States. Government Printing Office for the War Manpower Division. NARA Civil Reference Branch. *Miles of Hell to Tokyo!* By Amos Sewell. N.p.: n.p., 1945. *Powers of Persuasion*. The National Archives. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.
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The Purple Heart. Directed by Lewis Milestone. Produced by Daryl F. Zanuck. By Jerome Cady and Darryl F. Zanuck. Performed by Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, Farley Granger, Kevin O'Shea, Don 'Red' Barry, and Trudy Marshall. United States: 20th Century Fox, 1944. DVD.

Sahara Directed by Zoltan Korda. Produced by Harry Joe Brown. By John Howard Lawson, Zoltan Korda, James O'Hanlon, and Philip MacDonald. Performed by Humphrey Bogart, Bruce Bennet, Lloyd Bridges, Bruce Bennet, J. Naish, and Dan Duryea. United States: Columbia, 1943. DVD.

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