

Cartoons, Psychological Warfare, and World War II

or Willy and Joe Get Drafted



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Faculty Lecturer of the Year
2008-2009

April 21, 2009

Chaffey  **College**

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Photo by Ardon Alger

The road Dan travelled to get to the stage today was nothing less than circuitous. As a self-professed kindergarten dropout, Dan's parents fought an uphill battle just getting him to go to school every day. Aside from whatever class the public school system offered that ended with the word "shop" i.e. metal, wood, auto, etc., Dan had little use for or interest in school.

In High School Dan set records for truancy that still stand at Upland High today. Upon his graduation, his counselor simply said, "Thank God." With diploma in hand and a promise of: "rent if you don't go" ringing in his ears – Dan enrolled as a student of Chaffey College in 1981.

One of the first classes Dan enrolled in was Modern U.S. History with Dr. Barbara Mitchell. One day when she was leaving class she turned around, got right up into Dan's face, and asked him, "What are you going to do with your life?" Without missing a beat Dan said, "I'm going to be a Professor of History – I tell good stories too." Dan recalls of his initial experience at Chaffey, "I flunked some of the best teacher's classes on campus – right before I dropped out."

As a college dropout, Dan worked at many different jobs. He worked as an aerobics instructor, a bouncer, a plumber, an electrician, and a waiter at Bobby McGee's where he worked in costume as Ali Baba. Although these jobs were rewarding, Dan could not help but feel like he had missed something in his life. One day he decided that the thing he had missed was that he never had really given school and learning in an academic setting a chance.

In 1987, Dan returned to Chaffey, met with a counselor, declared a major, and sought out the teachers that he had connected with before he left, Chuck Cargill and Barbara Mitchell. For the next two quarters, Dan made the Dean's List and then transferred to Cal State San Bernardino. Dan graduated from CSUSB in 1990 with a Bachelor's Degree having studied Modern U.S. and Asian History. Two years later, he graduated with Highest Honors from Cal State Fullerton. His Master of Arts carried a dual emphasis on Modern European and U.S. History. Since then Dan has continued his studies at the University of California, Riverside where he has begun to branch out into graduate course work synthesizing the fields of history and art history.

Dan began working at Chaffey as adjunct faculty in 1993. Dan joined the Faculty fulltime in 1998. Since then he has been busy in many different projects including the development of curriculum for the Humanities program, leading a team of students to the Gulf Coast to build houses for survivors of Hurricane Katrina with Habitat for Humanity, and starring as Vince Fontaine in Chaffey's production of *Grease*. Currently he is the Faculty Chair for the recently established G.E.M. (Green Earth Movement) Committee.

Forward

I want to start by recognizing those who have made this day possible. To The Faculty Senate, Chaffey's Administration, and Governing Board, you have created this day. Thank you for all that you do and represent here at Chaffey.

To the Faculty of Chaffey College who for reasons I am not sure I understand, thought it might be a good idea to bestow this honor upon me – I Humbly Thank You All. I am touched and honored beyond all measure. I miss you Barbara.

Chuck Cargill and Kipp Preble. Every time I began to lose my nerve, you encouraged me to go on with my research. You are my Dear Friends.

To my Parents, Brothers, and Sister. You have always been there when it mattered.

To Kaci and Jess who have always been able to make me laugh when life was just too weird to take seriously.

To my Wife, Rebecca. You are my Best Friend and Colleague. You are the rudder to my keel. I love you.

You have all, when called upon, graciously given your advice, brilliant observations, your own personal knowledge, unconditional support, and an unwavering ability to convince me you were still interested in hearing me talk about this paper long after it lost any meaning to you. I Thank You All.

World War II created the world we live in today. There is little doubt or debate about this fact. As a person who grew up in both the shadow of World War II and the light of Television – I have had to realize that I live in a much different time than did my parents who were children when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

On December 7, 1941, most Americans received the news of Pearl Harbor from their radios. When the terrorist attacks happened on September 11, 2001 – we all sat in horror glued in front of our televisions – including those in our classrooms. Today, there are over 200million televisions in 99% of America's households. There were fewer than 10,000 televisions in the United States in 1945 the year World War II ended. Those who lived through World War II were much more limited in their ability to follow the war. There were many reasons why. First, as a nation functioning under a Congressional Declaration of War – the government used its Constitutional power to control the media. The second reason is that the human race had yet to invent the satellite technology that we use today to bounce communication signals to everywhere in the world. The world was a much larger place in 1941 than it is today and it was a world where the news and time literally moved much slower. As a result, if Americans wanted to “see” the news beyond what they could glean from a picture in a newspaper they had to go to the

movies, which they did vigorously. Out of the 130million Americans who lived through WWII, 90million of them, 70% of The Nation's population went to the movies every week.

The “Talkies” had been around for more than a decade prior to World War II and systems of Mass Communication had been the co-opted tool of wartime governments for centuries. Unlike any of the preceding wars, countries involved in World War II used the newly invented and rapidly growing medium of Talking Motion Pictures to educate, entertain, and unite the people of the industrialized world. During World War II, heroes were born, villains created, entire ethnicities racially disparaged, and national identities forged by what has become one of the most powerful industries ever invented by humankind. Most of this material still exists for our study.

Originally, it was my desire to focus on the history of the media during World War II. As I began to research and compile data – much of which is DVD versions of the old news reels it became obvious that this topic was much too broad for an hour lecture. In attempt to narrow my research I began to poke around in an area that I figured to be relatively unplowed soil. The truth be told, I think I found a reasonably fresh topic, but I also discovered that I had not narrowed the subject by much. I feel for the most part the topic of the media during WWII is like a giant attic that I have climbed into with a flashlight. Anywhere I shine the light I discover a wonderfully rich history waiting for exploration. The question ultimately became, “What part of the attic do I wish to shine the light on?” As I further reflected, I decided that I would focus on World War II Cartoons.

Truthfully, more than once I looked at myself in the mirror and asked out loud, “Am I really going to talk about Cartoons as a scholarly subject for the Faculty Lecture of the Year?” The answer obviously was, “Yes.” Not because I myself grew up watching Bugs Bunny and all of the other cast members of Merrie Melodies, which I did by the way, but because these characters and others like them became soldiers for the war department pressed into service for our country and most importantly offer a unique version of the war. World War II, via the cartoon, also introduced us to artists and characters we had never known before.

Isolationism vs. Dr. Seuss

War and Pre-War

On September 19, 1931 The Kwantung Army of Japan used what is now known as “The Mukden Incident” as an excuse to invade Manchuria. Fighting would continue off and on between China and Japan for the next several years until all out war erupted on July 7, 1937. The killing would not stop until sometime after Japan surrendered in 1945 ending World War II.

Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini came to power in their respective countries of Germany and Italy through a series of coups that would see them both forging strong alliances with industry through rearmament and fascist dictatorships in the name of nationalism and racial superiority. Although World War II in Europe officially began when Germany invaded Poland September 1, 1939, it had clearly been in the planning stages long before this date. Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and sent troops to aid the fascist Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Germany remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936 and “merged” with a reluctant Austria in the *Anschluss* of 1938. September 27, 1940 marked the signing of the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Although Americans want to believe that World War II began with the Bombing of Pearl Harbor – Dec. 7, 1941, it did not. Dec. 7 is the day World War II began for us.

When the war in Asia first began – Herbert Hoover was President of the United States not Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). Americans, consumed in their own economic miseries via The Great Depression and still bitter from The Great War (World War I, WWI) steadfastly opposed fighting a war in Europe ever again. Furthermore, any form of intervention in Asia was unthinkable. To attest to this fact in response to Japanese aggression in China our Federal Government passed a series of Neutrality Laws, beginning in 1934, which completely forbade any form of aid to any country involved in any conflict with any other country.

Once war had broken out in Europe, Anti-Interventionists or Isolationists such as Charles Lindbergh, Father Charles Coughlin, Senator Burton K. Wheeler (D-Montana), and John Haynes Holmes demanded that the U.S. stay out of the conflict. In fact, FDR had sought and won an unprecedented third term as President in 1940 by promising America that he would continue to keep us out of the war. This is not to say that Americans were unsympathetic to the wars abroad. For the most part, they were. However, President Woodrow Wilson had promised America that The Great War would be “The War to End All Wars” and certainly, this had not been the case. The general feeling then was Americans emerged from World War I believing that they had been foolish to take a side in yet another European conflict the likes of which had been going on for millennia.¹

¹Shannon. *Between The Wars: America, 1919-1941*. pg. 257-259.

If war itself was unthinkable, then certainly the concept of war propaganda was even more ridiculous. Allan M. Winkler in his book, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* identifies that George Creel headed the Committee for Public Information (CPI) that controlled the propaganda of WWI. Creel had so dominated the media during World War I that not only were Americans anti war, they also viewed any kind of campaign that prompted a U.S. entry or intervention into another war as nothing short of deceptive political propaganda. As a result, Americans had become highly skeptical of the media in general. FDR was one of those skeptics. He had served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during World War I, and had both witnessed the horrors of war and a propaganda campaign run-a-muck, and thus was reluctant to get involved with either if possible.

With the invasion of Poland Americans began to change their opinions about America's entry into the war. Perhaps this was because Americans genuinely felt an obligation to halt the aggressions of Hitler. Others argued that the media subtly constructed this growing interventionist feeling. After the war in Europe had started, Hollywood began to make war movies. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, authors of *Hollywood Goes to War – How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* discuss how various movies created at this time seemed to be pro-war propaganda. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, starring Edward G. Robinson that premiered in May of 1939 – four months before the invasion of Poland, and *Sergeant York*, starring Gary Cooper premier date: July 2, 1941 had caught the attention of Senator Gerald P. Nye and Burton K. Wheeler. Both Senators were rabid anti-interventionists and insisted that Hollywood was glamorizing war for getting the United States to intervene on behalf of the Jews and or the British against Nazi Germany. Wheeler, who was the Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), knew that much of Hollywood's profits came from Europe and believed greed inspired anti-Nazi and pro-war movies. Subsequently, Wheeler and several other anti-interventionist Senators lodged their protest against movies that, in their opinion, promoted any aspect of war that were released after the beginning of the war in Europe in 1939 and before Pearl Harbor via the Wheeler/Nye Hearings.

The truth was that the owners of the various movies studios were clearly anti-Nazi even before Pearl Harbor and the movies they produced proves this point. Claiming the protection offered by the First Amendment, Hollywood repeatedly took considerable privileges in crafting movie plots to make the Germans appear stupid or incompetent. Few beyond the most strident of isolationists seemed to mind, as it was practically impossible to defend Hitler and Germany whether for or against the war because most Americans believed that Hitler and the Nazis were the Bad Guys.

This belief was certainly compatible to the Fireside Chat FDR had given December 29, 1940 when through the use of the radio he outlined the atrocities of both of the wars in Europe and Asia and claimed that for matters concerning our own National Security, America must become The Great Arsenal of Democracy.

Cartoons, Psychological Warfare, and World War II or Willy and Joe Get Drafted

FDR also outlined a few days later what it was the United States stood for in his State of the Union address that he gave January 6, 1941. In his speech, he identified “The Four Freedoms” – The freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear from an act of physical aggression by any neighbor. According to FDR, these freedoms were a global possession of all humanity. However, at this time the U.S. was still nowhere near a pro-war, interventionist mindset.

Suffice it then to say that any propaganda generated in America before the Bombing of Pearl Harbor came from the pens of private citizens who believed that it was imperative for America to get into the fight in Europe and Asia. One of these people was Theodor Geisel. Theodor Seuss Geisel had long before the War adopted the pen name “Seuss” (his middle name) while at Dartmouth to protect himself and his cartoons from college authorities. Prior to the war, Dr. Seuss had been able to sustain himself by drawing cartoons for “Flit” a bug-spray, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and publishing his own books. However, with the outbreak of The War in Europe in 1939 Geisel sent a cartoon to *PM*, a New York newspaper denouncing Virginio Gayda the editor of Italy’s fascist newspaper. According to Richard Minear, The author of, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel*, this cartoon accompanied by a letter to the editor of *PM* earned Seuss a position with *PM* where he published three cartoons a week as an editorial cartoonist. In early 1941 until 1943 Seuss’ cartoons fearlessly lambasted isolationism, racism, and war profiteering. From the beginning of January 1941 until two days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor Dr. Seuss published sixty-one anti-isolation cartoons. Charles Lindbergh, the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, and a staunch isolationist was the target of twelve of these Dr. Seuss cartoons. The only man to appear in Seuss’ cartoons more than Lindbergh was Hitler himself. One of the cartoons was titled: The Lindbergh Quarter.”



“Since when did we swap our ego for an ostrich?”

This cartoon appeared in *PM* on April 28, 1941. The caption reads, “Since when did we swap our ego for an ostrich?” This and the others were direct attacks on the anti-interventionists population of America. Seuss believed anti-interventionists lived in a dream world at the expense of those with whom we had a great deal in common. A highly poignant cartoon published October 1, 1941 states, “... and the Wolf chewed up the children and spit out their bones... But those were Foreign Children and it didn’t really matter.” In the cartoon,



the wolf is named “Adolf” and the old woman who is reading the story is wearing the words “America First” on her sweater. “America First” was a slap at the America First Committee of America that sought to keep the U.S. out of the war abroad. Seuss’ messages were constant no matter who was the subject of the cartoon and this message was: **Eventually the war would come to America even if Americans refused to go to war.** In an act that nearly resembles a giant “I told you so” Dr. Seuss published the following cartoon on Dec. 8, 1941:



Other cartoonists such as the creators of Superman - Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were also decidedly anti-fascist. However, the publications of Superman comic books during this time seem to reflect a reluctance to involve Superman with world politics. As the first edition of Superman appeared in *Action Comics*, June 1938, The Man of Steel began his quest for "Truth, Justice, and the American Way" by confronting corruption in Washington D.C.. The next edition had him fighting a warmonger in San Monte, a fictional person and place. In 1939 the October Edition (issue #17) of *Action Comics*, one month after Germany had invaded Poland the cover of the magazine shows Superman lifting up the front of a tank all the while drawing machine-gun fire from enemy soldiers. The November and December 1939 issues also depict Superman battling either planes or a giant gun. For the entire year of 1940 three different issues - *Superman* Nov. Dec. (issue #7), *Action Comics* February (issue #21), and December (issue #31) have some war related cover.



Despite the appearance that Superman was intimately involved in the war – beyond the covers of the two different comic books that he appeared in – *Action Comics* and *Superman*, Superman had surprisingly little to do with actually fighting Allied enemies. An example of this is the cover of *Action Comics* No. 31 that shows Superman swooping down to stop a firing squad from killing a man. At first glance, it would appear by the shape of the helmets the soldiers are wearing that the soldiers are Nazis. However, if one looks closely they discover that the emblems on the side of the soldier's helmets are not Swastikas. Furthermore, the pre-war comic books did not have any actual stories about Superman fighting the war whether the cover alluded to it or not.

One exception to this was when *Look Magazine* on February 17, 1940, printed a cartoon titled, "What If Superman Ended the War?" When the cartoon appeared, the war had been limited to the invasion of Poland by Germany and The Soviet Union and the subsequent invasion of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia by the U.S.S.R.. As a result, Shuster and Siegel placed the blame for the war squarely with Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, not Benito Mussolini nor Japan's Emperor Hirohito. The cartoon ends with a guilty verdict for both Hitler and Stalin for "Europe's present ills" by the League of Nations all courtesy of Superman and his desire to end the war.





By examining the war related cartoons, comics, or movies prior to America's entry into the war it is clear that at least for the creators of this media, and to a number of Americans whose ranks were swelling daily the war in Europe was a crime against humanity with villains acting with impunity. In fact, there were those American citizens who were so convinced of this that they left the United States and volunteered to fight for Great Britain and as soon as they did, Hollywood was there to put these men on screen. Two movies titled, *A Yank in the R.A.F* starring Tyrone Power and *International Squadron* starring Ronald Reagan portrayed Americans so moved by the war abroad that they joined Great Britain's Air Force (R.A.F) to help fight the Germans. What is also evident is the belief on the part of the creators in the power of propaganda in that media could be a tool to shape public opinion.

Without judgment regarding the overall morality of these acts or whether at the time it was understood to be so – this was indeed Psychological Warfare. Colonel Alfred H. Paddock Jr. in his essay titled, “Psychological and Unconventional Warfare 1941-1952: Origins Of A “Special Warfare” Capability For The United States Army” states that the definition for psychological warfare had been given by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Supporting Committee. One of the members of this committee was Colonel William “Wild Bill” Donovan who would eventually head the OSS during World War II. According to the Supporting Committee, Psychological Warfare was:

...the coordination and use of all means, including moral and physical, by which the end is attained—other than those of recognized military operations, but including the psychological exploitation of the result of the recognized military actions – which tend to destroy the will of the enemy to achieve victory and to damage his political or economic capacity to do so; which tend to deprive the enemy of the support, assistance or sympathy of his allies or associates or of neutrals, or to prevent his acquisition of such support, assistance, or sympathy; **or which tend to create, maintain, or increase the will to victory of our own people and allies and to acquire, maintain, or to increase the support, assistance and sympathy of neutrals.**²

As stated earlier it is uncertain whether any of those who created these various media expressions were aware that they were partaking in an act of psychological warfare. However, it is clear that those who did create these movies, comics, or cartoons were sympathetic to those who would become our allies or those anti-isolationists at home. They also sought either to create support or sympathy for their particular viewpoint in neutral populations within the United States of America. Furthermore, these movies, comics, or cartoons also sought to deprive the Axis Powers (Germany, Japan, and Italy) or the isolationists in America of the support, assistance, or sympathy of neutral Americans. In the case of American anti-interventionists, the cartoons of Seuss also attempted to destroy the will of the enemy to achieve victory and to damage his political or economic capacity to do so.

²Paddock, Alfred H. Jr. “Psychological and Unconventional Warfare 1941-1952: Origins Of A “Special Warfare” Capability For The United States Army.” pgs. 17-18.

After the Day of Infamy

On December 8, 1941, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare that a state of war existed between Japan and the United States the moment the attack on Pearl Harbor began. Congress agreed. With this declaration, Roosevelt and the Department of War believed it would be necessary to bring massive amounts of social, political, and economic power under the control of the President in order to fight World War II. There had been attempts to centralize power for the war even before Pearl Harbor. Allan M. Winkler in his book, Home Front U.S.A. writes that attempts to get U.S. industry to convert from a domestic to a wartime economy met with tremendous resistance.

After ten years of the Great Depression and the boost the American economy received from various programs for war supplies to Britain such as “Cash and Carry” (est. Nov. 1939) and “Lend Lease” (est. March, 1941) industry was finally making a profit. Therefore, when FDR asked industry to close down the consumer markets of automobile and truck manufacturing and begin to produce war materiel industry declined. As a result, Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB) in January of 1942 and placed at its head Donald Nelson, President of Sears and Roebuck. The first act of the WPB was to outlaw the manufacturing of cars and trucks so that literally American industry had no choice but to build war materiel.³

The attempt to centralize mass communication was experiencing similar problems. Allan M. Winkler, in his book The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945, describes that there had been several attempts to control the media in order to coordinate war information even before America’s entry into the war. There had been The Office of Government Reports – established September 1939. The Division of Information of the Office of Emergency Management, March 1941. The Office of Civilian Defense – May 1941 under Fiorello La Guardia, Mayor of New York City. The Office of the Coordinator of Information created August 1941 under Robert Sherwood. Finally, the establishment of The Office of Facts and Figures with Archibald MacLeish as director occurred October 1941. These organizations had been ineffective for several different reasons. One reason was that no singular agency had been powerful enough to oversee every aspect of war related communications. Another reason was that these offices received tremendous resistance from various institutions within the U.S.. Congressmen, both Democrat and Republican alike were against any measures that amounted to government control of the press as they believed among other things that it was an attempt by FDR to concentrate even more power in his administration or to begin his candidacy for a third term. The press in general was opposed to any type of government-generated media believing it to be a violation of the First Amendment. Another problem was that the military did not intend to

³Winkler. Home Front U.S.A. pg. 7

report troop movements or battle strategies to any civilian run agency. Yet another problem was the inability of the various leaders to agree on what the difference between “information” and “propaganda” was, and finally who would be responsible for generating such information or propaganda.

Germany had clearly merged the two words under Dr. Josef Goebbels and was using “information” and “propaganda” interchangeably. Archibald MacLeish and Robert Sherwood felt that there was no need to blur the lines of distinction between information and propaganda when it came to reporting the news to the American people as we had truth on our side. However, propaganda was in fact a different subject. Colonel William G. “Wild Bill” Donovan believed that America needed to “augment” (author’s quotes) the truth in order to counter Germany’s propaganda machine. This clearly demonstrates the difference between information and propaganda. Information according to MacLeish and Sherwood was the truth. Propaganda, in the eyes of Donovan was something less than the truth. It is interesting that subsequently Donovan became the director of the Foreign Information Service (FIS) within the Office of the Coordinator of Information under Sherwood. According to Winkler once “Wild Bill” Donovan was in charge of the FIS he began to develop America’s branch of espionage and subversion abroad. Donovan believed in the power of propaganda and wrote in a letter to Roosevelt that it needed, “a judicious mixture of rumor and deception... to foster disunity and confusion in support of (enemy) military operations.”⁴

This smattering of offices of information without clear delineation of purpose is evidence of how disorganized and ill prepared the Roosevelt Administration was at the onset of World War II. This disunity which fostered differences of opinion was status quo and beneficial to America during peacetime but, was disastrous to the war effort. Agencies were in competition with one another for information all the while the American public was starving for news about the war.

In an attempt to address these problems FDR established the Office of War Information (OWI) on June 13, 1942, which brought all branches of communication under one roof. Selected to head the OWI was Elmer Davis who supervised the film industry including the Bureau of Motion Pictures, which produced educational films and reviewed scripts submitted by the studios, and the Bureau of Censorship, which oversaw film exports. Davis himself was a reporter and came into his role believing that Americans deserved the truth when it came to news. However, when it came to propaganda Davis wrote, “The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people’s minds is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized.”⁵

⁴Allan M. Winkler. The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945. pgs. 27-28.

⁵Koppes and Black. Hollywood Goes to War – How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies. Pgs. 64.

After a lengthy process regarding what role the OWI would play in the war – it did begin to oversee what films would be released both home and abroad. The OWI created “The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry” in the summer of 1942. In it was the criteria used to evaluate a film’s overall significance to the war effort. The OWI asked the creators of motion pictures to consider the following questions:

1. Will this picture help win the war?
2. What war information problem does it seek to clarify, dramatize, or interpret?
3. If it is an "escape" picture, will it harm the war effort by creating a false picture of America, her allies, or the world we live in?
4. Does it merely use the war as the basis for a profitable picture, contributing nothing of real significance to the war effort and possibly lessening the effect of other pictures of more importance?
5. Does it contribute something new to our understanding of the world conflict and the various forces involved, or has the subject already been adequately covered?
6. When the picture reaches its maximum circulation on the screen, will it reflect conditions as they are and fill a need current at that time, or will it be outdated?
7. Does the picture tell the truth or will the young people of today have reason to say they were misled by propaganda?⁶

These questions clearly state the motive for movie making. All movies to be made were to help the war effort somehow. The truth be told, it did not require much coercion on behalf of Washington D.C. to get the movie studios to comply. World War II had united America in ways that we had never been united before or since for that matter. The government had made a call for all Americans to pitch in and help and Hollywood was more than willing to join in the fight and had already adopted the resolution that movies in fact would be a medium for propaganda. True, movies would be subject to the censure of the OWI and this bothered some of the people in Hollywood. However, as it turns out the most heavily censored films and cartoons during World War II were ones that tended to go overboard.

The movie *Little Tokyo* released by Twentieth Century Fox – July 8, 1942 was so flagrantly racist toward Japanese-American citizens that the OWI was compelled to be more proactive in its evaluation of scripts. The reason behind this was there was a belief that if we so villainized the Japanese Americans during the war, there would be no way they could ever rejoin American society afterward. Cartoons that overly defused our fear of the enemy also fell under the scrutiny of the OWI.

⁶Ibid. Pgs. 66-67

Despite whatever censure there may have been, those in the cartoon industry vigorously applied their trade to World War II with full support from the OWI. Michael S. Shull and David E. Wilt authors of the book, *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945* contend that from January 1939 to September 1945 there were “290 commercially-released short cartoons reflecting an awareness of the world crisis.”⁷ On the surface, this might not appear to be a great amount but when one considers the absence of computer generated imagery, and that each frame for every cartoon was hand painted – this was indeed a tremendous amount of work. Furthermore, this does not include the training films made by Disney for The War Department, nor does it include comic books, or political cartoons. Even though there were hundreds of different types of cartoons each production tended to convey relatively similar messages. The messages of these cartoons fit into one of three different categories with two different viewing audiences. They are:

1. The Homefront – Shown to Civilian audiences.
 - a. Support for the War. These cartoons instructed the average American what they should be doing to help fight the war. This included but was not limited to the support of rationing, complying with blackouts, paying taxes, buying war bonds, draining swamps to prevent malaria, planting Victory Gardens, and volunteering to fight in the war.
 - b. What we are fighting for. These cartoons were explicitly about what we would lose in the event that our enemies were to emerge victorious.
2. Identification of the Enemy. – Shown to Civilian audiences.
 - a. This particular type of cartoon informed America who exactly was the enemy. In this case, a cartoon could be about Italy, Germany, or Japan. However, cartoons that fit into this category also included Un-American behavior at home, or Americans thought to be sympathetic to the enemy. It bears mentioning that as soon as Germany declared war on the Soviet Union many of the cartoons created actually portrayed Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union as our friend and ally.
3. Life as a soldier. – Shown to Military Personnel.
 - a. These cartoons fit into two subcategories. One subset would be about what soldiers should be doing – beyond risking their life every day, to help ensure victory. The particular medium for this was the invention of “Private Snafu” who was the antithesis of a good soldier. Another subcategory would be the cartoons drawn by Bill Mauldin regarding what life was really like as a soldier. Mauldin’s cartoons appeared in the Newspaper “Stars and Stripes”

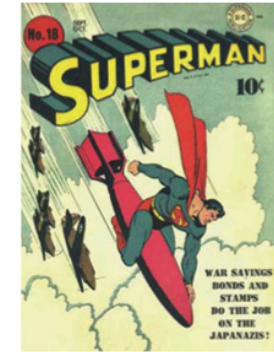
⁷Shull and Wilt. *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*. pg. 15

Homefront – Support for The War. What we are Fighting For.

After much debate it was determined that we were fighting for the preservation of “The Four Freedoms” that President Roosevelt outlined in his State of the Union address January 6, 1941 – The freedom of speech, freedom of worship, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear from physical aggression. There was no mention of Democracy, as our allies in China, and The U.S.S.R. did not have democratic governments. Nor was there mention of the eradication of Empire, as our ally Great Britain did not intend to get rid of theirs. In keeping with Roosevelt’s message, cartoons began pouring out of the major movie studios. Disney as well as RKO, Warner Brothers, MGM, 20th Century Fox, Columbia, Paramount, and Universal Studios all contributed to the war effort by making animated cartoons with some pro-war message. Good Americans whether or not they were a rabbit, a duck, a bear, a pig, a dog, a Sailor man, or The Man of Steel, found ways to fight the war abroad or at home if they were unable to enlist, or in fact declared 4F.

The creators of Superman both wanted Clark Kent to enlist and fight for America, but also thought it might make the struggle seem too easy if Americans believed that Superman was fighting on our side. The decision was then, that Superman would enlist – because he was an able-bodied man (or alien from another planet) but that he would flunk his physical. The writers pulled this off by having Superman with his X-Ray vision, accidentally read the eye chart in the next room and failing his eye test.⁸ Despite this, Superman did fight against the Germans who were secretly trying to gain a stronghold in America through covert operations. The typical plot would be that as Lois Lane was running down a lead she would inevitably stumble onto a ring of German spies, which would lead to her capture as she was covering a story. When all appeared to be hopeless, Superman came to her rescue.

The popularity of comic books skyrocketed through the duration of the war so much so that the period between 1938 and 1945 marks the time of “The Golden Age” of comic books. Americans went from buying 12 million comic books a month at the beginning of the war to nearly 60 million a month by 1945. From Pearl Harbor to the end of the war – even though Superman never actually engaged the enemy on the field of battle he appeared on the cover of *Action Comics* and *Superman* in war related scenes 26 out of 70 editions. Many of these covers even though there were actually no stories in the comic book itself about Superman and the war show Superman promoting War Savings Bonds and Stamps – to either “Slap A Jap” or to bomb the “JAPANAZIS”



On December 8, 1941, the United States of America invaded Disney Studios. As Disney’s studios were in close proximity to major industrial centers such as Lockheed Aircraft, Disney was the recipient of a seven-hundred-man antiaircraft unit. Leonard Mosley, the author of *Disney’s World* and Richard Schickel, the author of *The Disney Version* both explain long before the troops arrived, Disney had already felt the bite of World War II. The release of the animated feature *Pinocchio* was in 1939 – the same year World War II began. With Disney’s dependence on European theatres and the fact that Europeans were not much in the mood to see a marionette whose nose grew every time he told a lie come to life – the movie failed to turn profit. *Dumbo*, (which was released six weeks before Pearl Harbor) *Fantasia*, and *Bambi* all suffered similar fates.

Among the myriad cartoons Disney produced during the war including instructional cartoons about the finer points of flush riveting airplane wings, vaccinations, and the malaria mosquito, he also allowed his art department to design “Airplane Nose Art” for the Army Air Corp. and Navy. Walt Disney also produced through the Treasury Department two cartoons titled *The New Spirit* released in 1942 and *The Spirit of ’43* released the same year of the title. Both cartoons were nearly

⁸Winkler. *Home Front U.S.A.*, pg. 35

identical to one another as they show Donald Duck toiling over the decision as to whether or not he would spend his money or save it for taxes to fight the war. The cartoon *The New Spirit* was booked in 11,700 different theatres for the six weeks leading up to March 15, 1942 or tax day.⁹

In each case the message was that the war and its successful outcome was the responsibility of every American. Furthermore, the battle(s) were battles of conscience and the battlefields were within each person. *The Spirit of '43* has scenes where Donald is fighting with himself over what he wants to do – spend his money vs. what we are told by the narrator he and everyone else should do and that is pay his taxes. In *The New Spirit* the cartoon even takes time to show in detail how Donald can calculate his taxes correctly. *The Spirit of '43* shows us the exact date the quarterly taxes were due. The characters that symbolize the struggle for Donald's conscience are Donald's Uncle Scrooge McDuck representing good and evil is represented by a slick, huckster type, dressed in a zoot-suit who at times looks like Hitler. Clearly the struggle that Donald faced in the course of the cartoons were struggles that Disney believed Americans in general were going through and as Donald was entreated with some needed counsel – and prodding from the Treasury Department disguised as his conscience he ultimately made the “right” decision.

The Treasury Department conducted informal case studies through the Internal Revenue Service with regard to the levels of acceptance the audiences who watched *The New Spirit* received the message that paying taxes were equal to fighting the war. The surveys showed that from the beginning the name recognition of Disney and Donald Duck put the audiences at ease and made them receptive to the propaganda. The emotions of the audiences rose and fell with the star and reports told of cheers in movie theatres when Donald ultimately paid his taxes. Eric Smoodin author of the book, *Animating Culture – Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era* claims that the findings of the IRS were that despite the fact that *The New Spirit* was indeed war propaganda, it was so successful because few saw it as such and rather saw it as instructional as opposed to manipulative. Furthermore, Disney had found a way to connect paying taxes with winning the war making it an extremely successful tool for the Treasury Department – so successful that Disney made almost an exact replica of the cartoon a year later.¹⁰

⁹Smoodin. *Animating Culture – Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*. Pg. 172-75

¹⁰Smoodin. *Ibid*. Pg. 172-75

Homefront – Identification of The Enemy

Dr. Seuss continued to publish political cartoons through *PM Newspaper* into January 1943. Despite the fact that his messages and who they addressed had changed, he still drew his cartoons with the same pugnacity and published with the same ferocity that he had prior to Pearl Harbor. In fact, Seuss published another one hundred forty eight cartoons for *PM* before he joined Frank Capra to produce movies for The War Department. The focus of Seuss's cartoons after America's entry into the war continued to be attacks on Mussolini, Hitler, the Japanese, and those Americans who expressed only soft or mild support for the war. However, now included was a new enemy – Japanese-Americans.

On February 13, 1942 the following cartoon appeared in *PM Newspaper*:



The caption simply reads, “Waiting for the Signal From Home.” The scene is a multitude of, buck-toothed, glasses wearing, characters who are supposed to be Japanese Americans that are waiting in line to pick up a brick of TNT. The shed where the TNT resides has a sign that reads, “Honorable 5th Column.” The message is clear. There was no such thing as an American citizen who was from Japanese ancestry that was loyal to the United States of America. Six days after this cartoon appeared – February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued United States Executive Order 9066 using his authority as Commander-in-Chief to exercise war powers to send Japanese Americans to internment camps.

It would be historically inaccurate to claim that Seuss' cartoon caused the internment of 125,000 Japanese Americans. It did not. However, by reading the OSS Supporting Committee's definition of psychological warfare we find the words "tend to" which quantifies the limitations of such cartoons. The definition reads: "...which tend to deprive the enemy of the support, assistance or sympathy of his allies or associates or of neutrals, or to prevent his acquisition of such support, assistance, or sympathy..."¹¹ By this definition then, a cartoon, movie, comic strip or political cartoon would not have to be singularly responsible for such an act as the internment of the Japanese-Americans in order for it to be psychological warfare. It would only have to help create a tendency that might deprive a perceived enemy, in this case the Japanese Americans of support, assistance, or sympathy.

Concerning those countries who had actually declared war on the United States – Japan, Germany, or Italy as there was no support or sympathy for these countries to begin with it is impossible to imagine that American opinion of our enemies could have sunk any lower no matter what cartoon(s) appeared. Despite this fact, hundreds of cartoons appeared in just about every venue portraying the Axis Powers as nothing less than pure evil.

This particular cartoon appeared in *PM*, Dec. 7, 1942. It shows, Hitler, his wife (Japan), and the ill-begotten offspring of their union "Hashimura Frankenstein." The "child" with its clawed feet and misshapen head is certainly nothing less than a maniacal axe-murderer in training.



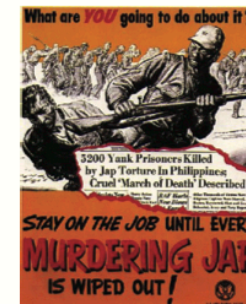
Shull and Wilt authors of, *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*, contend that 1942 produced the most hateful cartoons, as it was a time when the outcome of the war was the least certain. The attack on Pearl Harbor happened at the end of 1941. The losses at Corregidor and Bataan that enabled Japan to gain control of the Philippines all happened in early 1942.¹²

¹¹Paddock, Alfred H. Jr.. "Psychological and Unconventional Warfare 1941-1952: Origins Of A "Special Warfare" Capability For The United States Army." pgs. 17-18.

¹²Shull and Wilt. *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*. pg. 42

Despite allied victories at the battles of the Corral Sea, Midway, and El Alemain – all of which happened in May of 1942 the victories had come with alarming numbers of casualties. Certainly, Dr. Seuss's most caustic and intolerant cartoons appeared during 1942 however; it is not an accurate application of the theory, as he did not stay with *PM* beyond the first week of January 1943.¹³

However, what does appear to be accurate is that in general the cartoons of World War II reflect a much greater hatred of the Japanese than of the Germans or the Italians. In fact every one of the cartoons that were included in this study about Germany or Italy feature Hitler or Mussolini – not the German or Italian people. Consider the following posters:



According to the messages of these posters if you do not join a car-sharing club "You Ride With Hitler", and we are to stay on the job until, "Every Murdering Jap is Wiped Out." It is true that Americans felt a greater hatred of the Japanese than they felt toward the Germans or the Italians – despite the fact that the two most hated people were Hitler and Mussolini. Perhaps this is true because most Americans even to this very day believe that Pearl Harbor was nothing less than a sucker punch Japan threw while we were still trying to broker a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the East. Cartoons shown in movie theaters were no less vitriolic and hateful and seemed to follow a similar pattern of identification of our enemies.

Cartoon shorts that first aired in theatres in 1942 were highly inflammatory. The cartoon "The Ducktators" released by Warner Brothers is identified by Shull and Wilt as Warner's, "greatest "hard" (i.e., overt) propaganda work of 1942."¹⁴ In the cartoon, an Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and a "Japanese" (possibly Hirohito) duck attempt to take over the barnyard. Many war related events take place during the cartoon including the Hitler duck's and Mussolini duck's signing of a treaty and then shredding it in a symbolic gesture of what they did to the Treaty of Versailles. The Japanese duck appears with the familiar buckteeth and horn-rimmed glasses. He shows up after the cartoon has been going for a while and

¹³Smoodin. *Animating Culture – Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*. Pg. 71

¹⁴Shull and Wilt. *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*. pg. 46

claims that he wants to make a “silly axis of himself.” All the while in the barnyard, a dove tries to move the three “ducktators” from their purpose but only ends up trampled by the villains. Ultimately, the dove joins other animals in the barnyard and beats the pulp out of the duktators. The cartoon ends with a printed message that says, “If you want this to be true, this is all you have to do – Buy War Stamps and Bonds.” This cartoon carries many messages.

It gives a brief history lesson of who our enemies are and how the war began. It identifies the Hitler duck as a raving lunatic. The Mussolini duck is an idiot, and the Japanese duck is a Johnny comes lately wannabe who smiles a toothy grin while displaying a button that says, “I am Chinese” hoping to earn the trust of the animals by disguising his ethnic identity all the while concealing his true desires to take over the barnyard (world). Reasoning with these characters is pointless as they cannot be trusted and any attempt to do so will only end in destruction or subjugation of the other animals. As the Dove is symbolic of the United States, the message of Americans being peace-loving people resounds. However, if the animals/Americans truly want peace all of the animals/Americans must join in the fight or at least buy war bonds to destroy the duktators.

Cartoons such as *Blitz Wolf* (MGM, 1942), *Der Fuehrer's Face* (Disney, 1943), *Commando Duck* (Disney, 1944), *Herr meets Hare* (Warner Bros. 1945), *You're a Sap Mr. Jap* (Paramount, 1945) *Bugs Nips the Nips* (Warner Bros. 1944) all communicated the message of who our enemies in World War II were. In addition, in order to preserve the American way of life Americans would have to fight their enemies. The medium used was to offer a cartoon rendering of a stereotypical version of the enemy with who we were at war. These depictions dehumanized our enemies and portrayed them as racially and in many cases biologically inferior to ourselves. Most of these cartoons by today's standards are highly offensive and are no longer for sale by their owners.

Karl E. Cohen author of: [Forbidden Animation – Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America](#), identified several World War II cartoons that Warner Brothers has banished from the video market. One of these is the 1944 cartoon *Bugs Nips the Nips* another is the 1942/43 cartoon *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* and still another is *Tokio Jokio* 1943. By viewing these blacklisted cartoons it can be determined the reason why Warner Brothers has forbidden their release to the public is that they are flagrantly racist. It seems impossible to ascertain the standard used to decide why one cartoon is too racist to sell in today's market versus another. By twenty first century standards, every World War II cartoon has some element of racism shamelessly woven into its plot. World War II era cartoons that are for sale today by Warner Brothers come with the following message:

The animated shorts you are about to see are products of their time. They may depict some of the ethnic and racial prejudices that were commonplace in American society. These depictions were wrong then and are wrong today. While the following does not represent the Warner Bros. view of today's society, these animated shorts are being presented as they were originally created, because to do otherwise would be the same as claiming these prejudices never existed.

After this – the cartoon *The Duktators* was still included in this compilation of war cartoons.

What seems evident is that as our enemies were subject to our anger and loathing. Cartoons that depicted our enemies as inferior were not only expressions of these emotions by its creators; they were also cathartic to the viewing audience. In times of great trials, people do join to confront their troubles as one. We watched this happen after 9/11. This unity in the face of a common enemy promotes a national identity or nationalism that invariably demands each citizen take a side. You are either for us or against us – and there is no middle ground. As our enemies were targets of our national aggression, World War II cartoonists sought to identify who these enemies were, and attempted to alleviate our fears by showing this enemy as less evolved genetically, or simply of inferior intelligence. All of which served to reduce the threat of their intent or at least make us feel better watching while their brains were beaten in on screen. Furthermore, as it was or ultimately would be necessary to kill these people cartoons served to ease what otherwise would be a moral dilemma through the dehumanization of this enemy. Is this psychological war? – Of course it is. Let us revisit Donovan and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Supporting Committee's definition of psychological warfare:

...the coordination and use of all means, including moral and physical, by which the end is attained –...which tend to create, maintain, or increase the will to victory of our own people and allies and to acquire, maintain, or to increase the support, assistance and sympathy of neutrals.¹⁵

¹⁵Paddock. “Psychological and Unconventional Warfare 1941-1952: Origins Of A “Special Warfare” Capability For The United States Army.” pgs. 17-18.

Life As A Soldier

Private Snafu

Frank Capra enlisted in the Army after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. “Colonel” Capra began work on a series of films to indoctrinate the troops into the military culture. Part of this effort included the series *Why We Fight* the first installment of which titled: *Prelude to War* won an Oscar for Best Documentary of 1942.¹⁶ Capra also created the *Army Navy Screen Magazine* through the U.S. Signal Corps. The *Army Navy Screen Magazine*, created exclusively for soldiers, typically followed a pattern of showing troops a movie short about the progress of the war, one about life at home, an instructional film about perhaps how to swim through burning oil, and finally a cartoon featuring Private Snafu.

Private Snafu was a creation of Dr. Seuss. Snafu as a character was not very bright. He was a self-centered, complaining, slack-jawed yokel, who through his thoughtlessness and foot-dragging threatened the whole outcome of the war. By challenging conventional wisdom or at least the orders of the military high command, Snafu was a continuous example of how not to do things. There has been quite a lot of analysis regarding Private Snafu. Eric Smoodin contends that the purpose of Private Snafu was to address discord within the armed forces. The mere naming of the character “S.N.A.F.U.” might lead to greater understanding of this character’s purpose. **S**ituation **N**ormal **A**ll **F**ouled (or **F**ucked) **U**p was an expression usually uttered by soldiers when they encountered something regarding military procedure or policy that they knew would not work or simply made no sense. Many of the Private Snafu plots placed Snafu in a situation where he questioned the wisdom of such policy only to discover he was the greatest threat to the war effort.

Shull and Wilt write that there was an entirely different formula to the making of the Snafu cartoons than there had been for those cartoons for civilian audiences. First, the Snafu cartoons were much more sexually explicit containing footage forbidden to civilians. The Snafu cartoons also lacked the patriotic overtures such as the American flag and war bond propaganda. What they contained was a message where, “The Snafus reflect the genuine discontent among the enlisted personnel in regards to the authoritarian and dehumanizing aspects of military life, in which soldiers sometimes felt they were reduced to mere ciphers, the serial numbers stamped on their dog tags, rather than individual human beings.” Furthermore, the Snafu Cartoons addressed those believed to be of a lower social class than civilian audiences were.

¹⁶Koppes and Black. *Hollywood Goes to War – How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*. Pg. 122

¹⁷Smoodin. *Animating Culture – Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*. Pg. 71

¹⁸Shull and Wilt. *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*. pg. 82-83

Smoodin writes, “The enlisted everyman himself, Private Snafu, was clearly marked as lower class through his stereotypical Brooklyn accent and poor grammar. Regardless of demographic reality, therefore, the *Magazine* represented the recruit as poorly spoken, poorly educated, and generally unintelligent.”¹⁹

The typical Snafu cartoon starts with Snafu in one of the various situations in the daily life of an average foot soldier. In the cartoon, *Gripes* Snafu is pulling “KP duty”, in *Snafuperman* he is supposed to be in the barracks studying his field manual, and in the cartoon, *Censored* Snafu is writing to his sweetheart. In these particular cartoons Snafu wishes life for himself could be something different. In all three cases, he gets his wish through the “Technical Fairy 1st Class.”

The Snafu cartoons themselves were produced by Warner Brothers the majority of which were under the supervision of Chuck Jones. Seuss and Jones would collaborate on work long after the war – the most notable of these efforts was the cartoon production, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. The very familiar Dr. Seuss rhyme scheme is contained in the script from the cartoon *Gripes*:

Snafu:

Ah, I joined this here army to join in the fun
To jabbin’ the Japs and huntin’ the Huns
And look at the job they’ve handed to me
(now they’ve got me doin’) K.P.

Policin’ the camp all the trouble is mine
And you get through with this then they stand you in line.

If I ran this army boy I’m tellin’ you
I’d make a few changes that’s what I’d do.

Technical Fairy:

I heard you sayin’ that everything stank
That you’d run things different if you had more rank
So as Technical Fairy I got a good notion
to give you a chance pal here’s a promotion

You’re Master Sar – Superstar doop-a-de-do
You’re the boss of the works – take over Snafu.

I beg pardon sir but do you hear all that hummin’?
I got a suspicion the Germans are comin’

No use they ain’t trained and they got no morale
Your army’s a wash my (flat) footed pal

¹⁹Smoodin. *Animating Culture – Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era*. Pg. 85

The moral Snafu is the harder you work
The sooner we're going to beat Hitler that Jerk.

In *Gripes* Snafu becomes a general and is placed in charge. Under the command of General Snafu, women exist on base and in the barracks, discipline disappears, and when the inevitable attack by the Germans begins – Snafu's solution to his own destruction is to dig a hole in which to hide. When the war as administered by General Snafu begins to turn for the worst Snafu actually begins to wish for things to be back to where they were.

Some things are obvious. For instance: Once in charge – Snafu doesn't do something rational like make a superior officer do the job that he was given in an act of retaliation. What he does do is make it possible for everyone to slack off. He does not insist on maintaining the order that will perpetuate his continued leadership of the armed forces. He tells the troops that there will be more money, relaxation, no more saluting officers, or cleaning latrines, and every soldier will have two "dames." In the next scene, Snafu himself enjoys the company of three scantily clad harem girls. In other words, Snafu is completely incapable of doing any other job than the one he already has. Before long, the natural and logical course of history resumes when Snafu returns to his original rank through the work of the Technical Fairy 1st Class. Once this grievous error is corrected a new, motivated, grateful that his wish did not come true, and most importantly obedient Snafu carries on with the understanding that the quickest way to end the war is to simply do what he has been told and remain in the rank he was born to hold. The cartoon ends with Snafu gladly peeling potatoes with his feet, scrubbing pans with his hands, and sweeping with a broom clinched tightly with his buttocks.

In general, the Snafu cartoons suggest that the military viewing audiences were profoundly different from the civilian audiences. First, the women that inevitably find their way into the Snafu cartoons are nothing short of pornographic. In the cartoon, *A Lecture on Camouflage* the cartoon ends with Technical Fairy 1st Class sitting in between two topless and fully breasted mermaids. The title of the theme song that opens each Snafu cartoon is "You're a Horse's Ass" between this and the name of the central character there is profanity interwoven into every cartoon. In other words, Snafu registers a certain crass, boorish type of message that seems clearly directed at an audience of limited culture and education. On the other hand, in the Bugs Bunny cartoon *Herr Meets Hare* shown to civilians, Bugs Bunny meets Field Marshall Goering and quickly passes himself off as Brunhilde as the two dance through the woods to the music of Wagner.

A full edition of *The Army Navy Screen Magazine* might show rescued American soldiers who had been P.O.W.'s in the Philippines or footage from the D-Day Invasion. In the newsreel *So's Your Old Man* the narrator – posing as "your old man" addresses the audience as "son" and informs the viewers that he had signed up for the Volunteer Port Security Force through the Coast Guard. He states that he felt "useless" sitting around in the evening listening "with your mother" to the news on the radio, so he volunteered with all of the other men in the neighbor-

hood who were too old for active duty to help guard the nation's ports for free and for the "duration." "Dad" then states, "but when I stack that up against what you're doin' I don't bust any buttons." Therefore, when combined with the news of all of the people who were sacrificing at both home and abroad the Snafu cartoons that expose and rebuke selfish behavior delivered a powerful psychological message that there is no room for the individual on the team. The Armed Forces must come first in order to achieve victory.

Life As A Soldier

Willie and Joe

December 14, 1943 – ...Our troops are living in a way almost unconceivable to you in the States. The fertile black valleys are knee deep in mud. Thousands of the men have not been dry for weeks. Other thousands lie at night in the high mountains with the temperature below freezing and the thin snow sifting over them.²⁰

These words written by war correspondent Ernie Pyle to the people back home in America attempt to describe the situation as it stood for Allied forces in the campaign to "liberate" Italy. Pyle was trying to explain why it was taking so long for the Allies to take Italy – especially since the Italians had already surrendered. From the beginning there was very little that went right for the allies in Italy. The invasion and conquest of Sicily, the island immediately to the South of Italy had been promising – the entire campaign had lasted only five weeks (July 10, – Aug.17, 1943) and with its fall had brought the Italian surrender. However, the war for Italy, fought entirely by Allied and German soldiers that began September 9, 1943, would still be going on at the time of Germany's surrender in May of 1945.

The war for Italy produced hundreds of thousands of dead and wounded. Many of the wounds suffered by our troops had nothing to do with bombs or bullets. Tens of thousands of U.S. troops lost feet and legs to trench foot and frostbite. Between the rampant theft and thriving, black-market in Naples and the desire to build up materiel in Britain for the Allied landing at Normandy most of the troops in Italy did without even the most basic of essentials.

²⁰Pyle. *Ernie's War – The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches*. Pg. 172

As the campaign began in the fall of 1943 it was not long until the Allied campaign completely stalled out in a wretched winter. The rain and snow turned the country into a tangle of swollen rivers, and muddy bogs that had once been roads. The only ground that was not knee deep mud or rampaging river were the mountains where the Germans were dug in so deeply that not even the constant barrage of Allied bombing raids could dislodge them. Ernie Pyle wrote, "The country is shockingly beautiful, and just as shockingly hard to capture the enemy. The hills rise to high ridges of almost solid rock. You can't go around them through the flat peaceful valleys, because the Germans look down upon you and would let you have it."²¹

Soldiers who were fortunate enough to get a pass to come off of the line (the front) for a few days found, at the rear, Officers and M.P.s who would throw a soldier into jail for the smallest of infractions including long hair, beards, or unshined boots. Todd De Pastino, author of *Bill Mauldin – A Life Up Front*, writes, "Those who looked particularly unkempt or exhibited deranged behavior were whisked away to jail to preserve the facade of order and decorum in the American Sector."²² Ironically, the sentence typically lasted exactly as long as the length of the pass. Those soldiers who were lucky enough to stay out of jail were typically denied entry into places where they could get a bath, a hot meal, or what they really wanted – booze and women. In short, the soldiers who were fighting one of the most difficult campaigns of the war were quickly becoming ticking time bombs of resentment and anger that threatened to go off at any moment.

Bill Mauldin joined the Army in 1940 at the age of 19. Ultimately his unit, the 45th Infantry Division was part of both the campaigns for Sicily and Italy. Although he personally did not see much front line action – the men he trained with sure did. Mauldin's part of the war saw him scurrying around trying to find supplies to continue publishing the newspaper, *45th Division News* he had begun cartooning for in basic training. Typically, Mauldin would spend a few days at the front to get inspiration for his cartoons. It was here that he came to know the men who were fighting the Germans personally. He would then go back to whatever office he could set up at the rear to draw his cartoons. It was there that Mauldin would bump into the other 90% of the soldiers who would never see one minute of true combat duty. To Mauldin the only thing notable about the war was the men who served in it at the front. Eventually Mauldin left *45th Division News* and began to publish for *Stars and Stripes*. His cartoon titled, "Up Front ... By Bill Mauldin" featured two infantrymen named Willie and Joe. Willie and Joe are two soldiers who enabled Mauldin to portray what most soldiers would have called the real war. It was through these characters that Mauldin was able to reflect his love, admiration, respect, and sympathy for the soldiers he simply referred to as "Dog-faces." Although there are some basic similarities, Willie and Joe are the complete alter egos of Private Snafu.

²¹Pyle. *Ibid.* pg. 172.

²²De Pastino. *Bill Mauldin – A Life Up Front*. Pg.132

Snafu, Willie, and Joe are enlisted or drafted foot soldiers. They come from the working class population and range somewhere between their early twenties to early thirties in age. All three possess a lower rank. What was said in regard to the Snafus could equally be said of Willie and Joe in that they, "...reflect the genuine discontent among the enlisted personnel in regards to the authoritarian and dehumanizing aspects of military life, in which soldiers sometimes felt they were reduced to mere ciphers, the serial numbers stamped on their dog tags, rather than individual human beings."²³ Finally, the cartoons themselves exist only for drafted or enlisted men.

The major difference is the origins of these characters. The Military High Command created Snafu. Sergeant Mauldin created Willie and Joe. *The Screen Magazine* rebuked or dismissed Snafu when he complained about the army. Mauldin who drew for *Stars and Stripes* a publication heavily influenced by the enlisted ranks, validated, and even celebrated Willie, Joe, and their complaints. Whereas the Snafu cartoons were military propaganda disguised as lowbrow, sex-oriented humor, Mauldin's cartoons contained a higher intellectual content with captions full of truth, irony, puns, and witty humor as well as drawings filled with telling yet subtle detail. Snafu cartoons talked down at – Willie and Joe talked to the soldier.



I can't git no lower, Willie. Me buttons is in th' way.

In the book, *Up Front* written by Bill Mauldin while he was still on active duty in Italy repeatedly he reflected his love of the Dogfaces. He states,

I don't make the infantryman look noble, because he couldn't if he tried. Still there is a certain nobility and dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with dirt in their ears. They are rough and their language gets coarse because they have a life stripped of convention and niceties. Their nobility and dignity come from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other.²⁴

²³Shull and Wilt. *Doing Their Bit – Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*. pg. 82-83

²⁴Mauldin. *Up Front*. pgs.14-15

The typical Willie and Joe cartoon included the two soldiers in wrinkled uniforms, who had not shaved or bathed for days or weeks. Many of the high-ranking officers or “brass” as Mauldin referred to them thought Willie and Joe – and Mauldin for that matter to be a disgrace to the Army. One such person was General George S. Patton. Patton who was the commanding officer of The Seventh Army had disapproved of Mauldin’s cartoons because Willie and Joe were slovenly and lacked discipline. Eventually Mauldin received orders to meet with Patton to discuss his cartoons. When Sergeant finally stood in front of General, the following cartoons seemed to be the ones that bothered Patton the most:



“My Sir – what an enthusiastic welcome!” *“Beautiful view! Is there one for the enlisted men?”*

The cartoon above to the left pictures Willie and Joe pelting an officer with rotten fruit as he leads an Army procession into a recently liberated town. The cartoon above to the right speaks for itself.

Whatever differences the two shared regarding the usefulness of such cartoons ceased to matter when The Supreme Allied Commander – General Eisenhower (Ike) told Patton to leave Mauldin alone. According to Ike *Stars and Stripes* was a soldier’s newspaper and, “... Officers, Ike stated plainly in a letter sent throughout the European theatre, are not to interfere in such things as Mauldin’s cartoons...”²⁵ The reason why Ike censured Patton and not Mauldin is not exactly clear. Maybe he did so because in real life Ike never really liked Patton all that much. Perhaps Ike understood the gravity of an act that would silence freedom of the press in a war that sought to liberate Europe from Fascism. Or maybe Ike simply understood that in a war where combat soldiers suffered extensively at the hands of the officer corps it was a good thing to let the dog-faces gripe a little through Mauldin if the option was dissent or rebellion. Whatever the motive, Ike understood that what was at stake was far more than just the ego of Patton and the cartoons of Mauldin. News of the Mauldin victory over Patton spread quickly as *Time* magazine published an article that broke the story.

²⁵De Pastino. *Bill Mauldin – A Life Up Front*. Pg. 195

To those who spent as many as sixty-five days straight on the line in what otherwise was a miserable failure of a campaign, often up to his waste in freezing, fetid mud, Mauldin who fearlessly thumbed his nose at Army brass by confronting the scariest son of a bitch that ever wore a pearl handled revolver and his cartoon creations Willie and Joe were the only friends the infantryman had outside of a fox-hole in Europe.

The following cartoon won Mauldin the Pulitzer Prize:



Fresh, spirited American troops, flushed with victory, are bringing in thousands of hungry, ragged, battle-weary prisoners. (News item)

“...There are gentlemen and boors; intelligent ones and stupid ones; talented ones and inefficient ones. But when they are all together and they are fighting ...they are facing cold steel and screaming lead and hard enemies, and they are advancing and beating the hell out of the opposition.”²⁶



“Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life an' I swore I'd pay ya back. Here's my last pair of dry socks.”

²⁶Mauldin. *Up Front*. Pg.15

Conclusion

Those who study World War II learn the meaning of Total War. The Oxford Dictionary defines Total War as: “a war that is unrestricted in terms of the weapons used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the laws of war are disregarded.” The survivors of World War II, those who stayed home, and those who went abroad can talk in very specific terms about what the war meant to them personally because as we have learned the war affected each person in some capacity. The reason why is that those countries involved in this terrible catastrophe called upon every citizen to contribute some element of their being to help win the war for their country. No personal sacrifice was too great no act was too small. The world was at war. As a result, governments re-enlisted the use of propaganda to help manufacture “a will to victory” within its citizens and soldiers.

All of the known purveyors of media – theaters, radio stations, and newspapers were co-opted by the government in order to communicate what the people could do to help win the war, who it was we were fighting both at home and abroad, and what progress was being made in the face of such sacrifice. The creators and producers of media – owners of movie studios, actors, singers, songwriters, artists, scriptwriters, and all who were responsible for recording such effort on paper, tape, or film contributed to the war effort by generating this pro-war message or propaganda. Thousands of movies, songs, newsreels, cartoons, comic books, and political cartoons emerged with incredible speed all in an attempt to get the message out that there was a war going on and its victor had yet to be determined. However, it would not be accurate to say that this propaganda was all government induced.

As this study has shown any propaganda before Pearl Harbor existed despite the wishes at times of even FDR. Once the war began, there were limits to what propaganda the U.S. Government was willing to allow even though our enemies did not know such limits. Furthermore, after Pearl Harbor it really did not take much by way of propaganda or psychological warfare to manufacture a “will to victory” in the people of the United States of America. Americans knew what they were up against and how costly it would be to each citizen if they were to lose. It would also be inaccurate to overestimate the power of propaganda – or psychological warfare for that matter. These devices only helped aid in achieving the desires of countries that were already in the midst of the most devastating event in human history.

In the cartoon above, Willie offers Joe his last pair of dry socks as payment for saving his life. This is humor that no one other than a combat soldier would get – and to him or her it would not be funny. The only way a soldier could escape the dreaded trench foot was by keeping his feet dry. By offering Joe his last pair of dry socks (notice the submerged feet of the two soldiers), Willie is in fact paying Joe back for saving his life. Late in Bill Mauldin's life, a man by the name of Jay Gruenfeld wanted to meet the cartoonist. Gruenfeld was a soldier wounded five times in the Philippines during World War II. In 1945, Gruenfeld was a frightened young man, a long way from home. His father sent him a copy of Mauldin's best-selling book, *Up Front*. Decades later Gruenfeld wanted to meet the man behind the book to tell him how “...Willie and Joe, spoke to Gruenfeld like nothing else had. More important, it spoke for him, expressing his grief, exhaustion, and flickering hope.”²⁷ When Gruenfeld discovered that Mauldin had been hospitalized he wrote to many different newspapers informing them that his hero was near death. When the word got out World War II Veterans from all over the country came to see Bill Mauldin. Those who could not travel sent the creator of Willie and Joe pairs of dry socks. They spoke in letters of how Mauldin had been the Army's **Secret Weapon** and how he was their champion.

If we once more evaluate the definition of psychological warfare we find, “...the coordination and use of all means, including moral and physical, by which the end is attained – other than those of recognized military operations, ...which tend to create, maintain, or increase the will to victory of our own people... .”²⁸ Mauldin's cartoons represented so much more than just poking fun at the absurdities of war. They were elements of psychological warfare that encouraged our soldiers who believed that the only way they were going to leave the battlefield alive was through some life-altering wound to fight one more day. Indeed Mauldin was their secret weapon and by sending their dry socks all of the “Willies” who made it back alive from Italy wanted “Joe” to know that they were thankful to him for saving their lives and helping them win the war.

²⁷De Pastino. *Bill Mauldin - A Life Up Front*, pg. 2.

²⁸Paddock, Alfred H. Jr.. “Psychological and Unconventional Warfare 1941-1952: Origins Of A “Special Warfare” Capability For The United States Army.” pgs. 17-18.

What can be said of cartoon propaganda is that it ultimately led a subtle and yet effective psychological war on U.S. citizens and soldiers alike. It is unclear whether the creators of such cartoons were even aware that the term psychological warfare existed before or during the war. It appears that Nazi Germany immediately before World War II invented the concept of modern psychological warfare.

However, it does not change the fact that everyone involved in the creation of cartoon propaganda believed that this was his or her contribution to the war effort.

They also believed that viewers who watched such cartoons would find it more difficult to reject the overall message communicated through the cartoon. Finally, they believed that if the message achieved its goal, viewers would be encouraged to give greater support to the war. It also reflects a wartime mindset that all things are subject to conscription and impressment during times of Total War.