

◀ CHAPTER 2 ▶

“KNOW YOUR ENEMY”

Shortly after the United States entered World War Two, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall summoned Frank Capra, the Hollywood director, and asked him to prepare a series of orientation films for viewing by American troops. When Capra demurred on the grounds that he had never made a documentary before, Marshall retorted: “Capra, I have never been Chief of Staff before. Thousands of young Americans have never had their legs shot off before. Boys are commanding ships today, who a year ago had never seen the ocean before.” The director apologized, and promised “the best damned documentary films ever made.”¹

The films subsequently produced for the Army by Capra and his team survive as classics of wartime cinematic propaganda—a remarkable accomplishment, in retrospect, since each script eventually had to be approved by some fifty military and civilian agencies in Washington. One of the primary objectives of the series was to combat the isolationist sentiments that lingered in the United States, and with this in mind the seven core films that Capra directed were given the collective title *Why We Fight*. President Franklin Roosevelt was so impressed by the first of these documentaries that he urged it to be shown in public theaters as well as to recruits. This was done, and *Prelude to War* went on to win an Academy Award as the best documentary of 1942. During the course of World War Two, the *Why We Fight* films were required viewing for

millions of American soldiers. The series was also distributed abroad, with soundtracks in French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese.²

In a memorandum to one of his aides when the project was still in the planning stage, Capra stated that there were two overriding objectives to the films: to win the war and win the peace. And he quickly hit upon a simple working motto that decisively shaped the style and texture of the films: “Let the enemy prove to our soldiers the enormity of his cause—and the justness of ours.” Capra also expressed this more colloquially. “Let our boys hear the Nazis and the Japs shout their own claims of master-race crud,” he declared, “and our fighting men will *know* why they are in uniform.”³

What this meant was that extensive use would be made of the enemy’s own words and the enemy’s own graphics as these were available in the form of confiscated or captured newsreels, propaganda films, commercial movies, and the like. Capra was known for his boldness in the cutting room and his fondness for contrast and counterpoint; the difference now was that he was working with footage taken by others, and indeed in good part by the enemy. He proceeded to collect millions of feet of enemy film, to cut and edit this until the expressions of the Axis powers became lean anti-Axis images, and to juxtapose the menacing faces and words of the enemy against the bright hope and accomplishments of the American people and their allies.

To be inspired with the will to win, Capra told his associates as they embarked on this work, Americans needed to be shown that they were fighting for the existence of their country, and at the same time were carrying the “torch of freedom” for a better postwar world—a world in which conquest, exploitation, and economic evils had been eliminated, and peace and democracy prevailed. This seemed a clear line, and a familiar one to anyone who recalled the idealistic Allied propaganda of World War One. A team of seven Hollywood writers was asked to prepare rough scenarios for a sequence of films conveying this message.

Although the assignment seemed straightforward enough, the draft outlines Capra received upset him greatly, for in his eyes they were “larded with Communist propaganda.” He quietly dismissed the seven writers and began again, and *Prelude to War* was the first product of the second start. Although the writers deemed leftists had been dismissed, the film took its basic theme from a speech by one of the most conspicuously progressive political figures on the American scene, Vice President Henry Wallace. The theme, the heart of American propaganda, was that two

worlds were locked in mortal combat, the free world and the slave. The corollary, stated outright in this and the later films, was that the enemy was bent on global conquest. One remarkable contrived scene in *Prelude to War* actually depicted "the conquering Jap army" marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. "You will see what they did to the men and women of Nanking, Hong Kong, and Manila," viewers were warned. "Imagine the field day they'd enjoy if they marched through the streets of Washington."⁴

This was potent imagery and rhetoric, unambiguous and uncompromising—and yet, as time would prove, free-floating, capable of being turned against other enemies when the winds of war shifted direction. In *Prelude to War*, the "two worlds" were illustrated as literally as can be imagined by drawings of two globes, one black and the other white. The narrative voice here and in all the other orientation films drove home the same message with repeated references to the irreconcilable conflict of "freedom versus slavery," "civilization against barbarism," "good against evil," the Allied "way of life" as opposed to the Axis "way of death," the historic march of democracy and freedom among the Allied nations, including China and the Soviet Union, as opposed to the historic ambition for world conquest seen in Germany and Japan. One of the previews of *Prelude to War* prepared by its producers as a teaser for commercial theaters epitomized the essence of this wedding of Hollywood and the U.S. Army. Here, the trailer exclaimed, was "55 minutes of Democracy's Dynamite! . . . the greatest gangster movie ever filmed . . . the inside story of how the mobsters plotted to grab the world! More vicious . . . more diabolical . . . more horrible than any horror-movie you ever saw!"⁵ The only conceivable response to such total evil was total destruction.

In these grandest of overviews, Japan, Germany, and Italy were hardly to be distinguished. They were the slave world, whose histories were swollen with lust for conquest, whose leaders were madmen, and whose people were a subservient mass, "a human herd." Overall, however, the *Why We Fight* films reflected the strategic priorities of the U.S. government and focused primarily on the struggle in the West. Only one film in the series was devoted exclusively to the war in Asia. Titled *The Battle of China* and completed in 1944, this was an epic paean to the resistance of the Chinese people against Japan's aggression. ("One fact was obvious," viewers were told, "China was to be the giant back on which Japan would ride to world conquest.") The **Capra** touch was displayed in striking scenes of Chinese dignity and heroism amidst an orgy of Japanese

destruction and atrocity, and such counterpoint was heightened by a commentary in which Japan's rhetoric of "co-existence and co-prosperity" was recited while the screen showed the devastation of China's cities and the mutilated corpses of its men, women, and children. Viewed by some critics as **Capra's** most exaggerated portrayal of pure good versus pure evil, *The Battle of China* was temporarily withdrawn because it omitted any mention whatsoever of problems among the Chinese themselves. It was soon returned to circulation, however, and seen by close to four million people before the end of the war.⁶

In 1945, when the *Why We Fight* series was completed and the war in Europe drawing to a close, the **Capra** team finally turned its full attention to the enemy in Asia. The result again was a film that was withdrawn from circulation, but this time for an entirely different reason. *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was released on August 9, the day Nagasaki was atomic-bombed, and withdrawn on August 28, two weeks after Japan had surrendered, upon orders from General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters. Only decades later, in the 1970s, was it exhumed as a "lost" propaganda masterpiece. And a masterpiece it surely is. The late date at which the film was completed may have aborted its usefulness at the time, but makes it all the more valuable in retrospect. For good reason, it has been praised by cinema buffs as a technical tour de force, the crowning accomplishment of over three years spent refining the propagandist's craft.⁷ In addition, it is of inestimable value to anyone who seeks to recreate the composite portrait of the Japanese that had emerged in the United States and England by 1945.

Despite its late appearance, *Know Your Enemy—Japan* was not an afterthought. The first script for the film actually was drafted in June 1942. The full explanation for the inordinately long time between start and finish remains obscure, but the delay derived in considerable part from uncertainty and controversy about who the enemy in Japan really was: should the film focus more on the Japanese people or their leaders? **Capra** as well as the military authorities responsible for approving the script supported the former approach, while some of the scriptwriters were more inclined to emphasize the role of Japan's militaristic leaders, among whom they included the emperor. To the project's more liberal contributors, the attitude promoted by the Army and Frank **Capra** seemed to border at times on sheer racism.

One early casualty of this disagreement was the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, who had been hired by **Capra** in the spring of 1942 to produce

the Japan documentary. Ivens' presence in **Capra's** entourage seemed odd from the start, since he was known for having produced such left-wing films as the 1937 documentary *Spanish Earth*, and he lasted with the project only until the following autumn. By his own account, Ivens was fired on orders from Washington after producing a script which presented the emperor as a war criminal and suggested he should be executed after the war. Over the course of the next year or so, the War Department rejected a number of draft scripts which attempted to portray the Japanese as ordinary humans victimized by their leaders, and as late as February 1945 the Pentagon was still blue-penciling scripts on the grounds that the passages in question would evoke “too much sympathy for the Jap people.” As a result of such editing, references to “free-thinking” Japanese were all but deleted from the final shooting script, as were detailed allusions to specific leaders; on the other hand, greater emphasis was given to the obedience of the Japanese, their homogeneity, and their sense of divine mission. Still, the victory of the hard-liners was not a complete one. Traces of this behind-the-scenes struggle—glimmerings of a more sympathetic approach to the Japanese common people as opposed to their leaders—can still be discerned, however faintly, in the final product.⁸

Know Your Enemy—Japan followed **Capra's** rule of thumb (Let the enemy speak for himself) in an exceptionally evocative manner, for it drew extensively on original Japanese footage that included not only conventional newsreels and captured propaganda films, but also a variety of samurai movies and domestic dramas from the 1930s. There was an exotic fascination in the raw stuff itself, and this was spliced and reassembled in a montage that did not just set Japanese madmen against Allied torchbearers of civilization, but moved within the Japanese scene to counterpose the traditional against the modern, the war front against the home front. Despite the patchwork way in which it had been written, or perhaps even partly because of it, the narrative was terse and vivid. Beneath its dazzling surface imagery, however, the message was simple, conveyed in a stark metaphor and a striking visual image. The audience was told that the Japanese resembled “photographic prints off the same negative.” Visually, this was reinforced by repeated scenes of a steel bar being hammered in a forge.⁹

These were stereotypes of a familiar sort among Westerners, and the Japanese films which the **Capra** team cannibalized provided ample scenes of group activity and regimentation to reinforce the impression of a people devoid of individual identity. The narrative referred to “an obedient mass

with but a single mind,” although the point that **Capra** and the Army were hammering home was not that the Japanese were passive. Rather the collective will which moved the Japanese was shown to be fantastic and fanatic—riddled with the ghosts of history and dead ancestors, taut with emotional tensions, and fired by blind and relentless nationalistic ambitions. Writ small, the Japanese soldier epitomized this. Trained from birth to fight and die for his country, he was a disciplined, proud, and able fighter on the battlefield—and also given to “mad dog” orgies of brutality and atrocity. Writ large, nothing better illustrated the insanity of the collective Japanese mind than the current war, for Japan’s single, unified ambition was described, as in the earlier Army films, as being nothing less than to rule the world.

Know Your Enemy—Japan was a potpourri of most of the English-speaking world’s dominant clichés about the Japanese enemy, excluding the crudest, most vulgar, and most blatantly racist. The filmmakers adopted a strongly historical approach, offering a lengthy survey of those aspects of Japan’s past which Westerners believed had made the Japanese a modern menace. They began as almost everyone began in those days, and many still do, with scenes of samurai, echoes of a disciplined killer past. The film then cut to a commentary on the Japanese mind, which was portrayed as being imprisoned in an ideological cage built of two unique elements: the Shinto religion (as perverted by the modern state) and belief in a divine emperor whose role was both sacred and secular. Out of this Shinto-emperor amalgam came Japan’s cult of racial superiority, its sense of holy mission, and its goal of placing the “eight corners of the world” under a Japanese roof (encapsulated in the slogan *hakko ichiū*). Warrior ideals of bravery and fanatic loyalty, as well as warrior practices of ruthlessness and treachery, were traced back to the emergence of feudal society around the twelfth century. The lust for overseas conquest was garishly illuminated by the invasion of Korea ordered in the late sixteenth century by Hideyoshi, the megalomaniac who ruled Japan (with the emperor as mere figurehead) and dreamed of an empire embracing Korea, China, and the Philippines. The invasion was abandoned when Hideyoshi died in 1598, leaving a ruined landscape in Korea and a grisly memento in Kyoto in the form of the “ear mound,” which contained pickled ears and noses from forty thousand enemy corpses. This became part of the historic memory of the Japanese people, it was explained, an ember that remained alive, waiting only to be fanned into flame again. Three centu-

ries later, that flame licked out: Japan struck against China in 1894 and embarked upon the course of conquest that led to Pearl Harbor.

For most of the three centuries between Hideyoshi and the new imperialism of 1894, the narrative continued, Japan slept, closed off from the outside world under the seclusion policy that was imposed by the Tokugawa shoguns and lasted until the 1850s. To the filmmakers, who followed the best contemporary Anglo-American scholars in this regard, the Tokugawa seclusion was not merely perverse; it was cataclysmic, for it twisted and retarded the development of Japanese society in a manner that made the current war in Asia all but inevitable. In closing their country's doors and windows, the Tokugawa rulers cut Japan off from the spiritual, political, and economic revolutions that shaped the modern world. They proscribed Christianity, with its "revolutionary doctrine of peace on earth," and froze the country in a feudal mold at the very moment when the West was embarking on its great democratic and industrial revolutions. Thus, when Commodore Matthew Perry prodded Japan out of its long slumber in 1853 (offering the hand of friendship in the interest of trade), Japan was woefully ill equipped to compete in the global arena of modern nation-states.

On the surface, for a half century or more, awakened Japan appeared to be modernizing internally and competing internationally with extraordinary speed and skill. This was, alas, but a "cruel joke," for beneath the facade of parliamentarianism and progress persisted feudalistic forms of oppressive control. The modernizing Japanese state was run by militarists (the first team), industrialists (the second team), and political elites (a weak third team of "stooges"). The individual was thoroughly subordinated to the state, with the whole educational system being geared to the mass production of obedient subjects who absorbed what they were told like sponges. Those mavericks and dissidents who managed to resist the stultifying brainwashing of the schools were knocked into line by the regular police, the military gendarmerie, the special thought-control gestapo, the vigilante thugs of the patriotic societies—and, indeed, by the myriad "ghosts" of Shinto and the emperor-system ideology.

Despite the description of the Japanese as prints off the same negative and the overwhelmingly dominant footage of regimentation, fanaticism, and brutality—all of which the U.S. Army insisted upon—the influence of Capra's more generous scriptwriters was apparent in portions of *Know Your Enemy—Japan* that extended sympathy to those at the

lowest levels of the social ladder, above all the poor peasants. The film was especially attentive to the miserable plight of rural women, who as adolescents were often contracted out to factories or brothels, and whose assigned role as adults was little more than to perform as “human machines producing rice and soldiers.” The comfort of the masses was of scant concern to Japan’s modernizing elites, whose eyes were fixed on overseas conquest rather than raising the standard of living.

Abroad as well as at home, the Japanese moved swiftly. China was brought to its knees at the end of the nineteenth century, giving Japan its first colony: Formosa. Russia was humbled in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, placing Japan in Korea and Manchuria. Korea was annexed in 1910. Participation in World War One on the side of the Allies gave the Japanese a seat as one of the victorious Big Five powers at the Paris Peace Conference, as well as control under a League of Nations mandate over the Pacific islands north of the equator formerly possessed by Germany; these were the Marianas, Marshalls, and Carolines, where some of the most terrible battles of the Pacific War would take place.

In retrospect, the film continued, it was clear that these territorial acquisitions were but the first courses on a greedy imperialist menu. It was only in the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, that the world became aware of Japan’s insatiable appetite. The sensational Tanaka Memorial, said to have been submitted to the emperor by the prime minister in 1927, was described as “Japan’s *Mein Kampf*” in the film, using a familiar comparison of the day. (Most scholars now agree that it was a masterful anti-Japanese hoax).¹⁰ And the record of the final rush into global war was recorded with staccato clips from newsreels and newspaper headlines that most Westerners already had seen many times: Japan’s takeover of northern China beginning with the Manchurian Incident of 1931; its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933; the China Incident and the Rape of Nanking in 1937; Pearl Harbor in 1941; the Bataan Death March in 1942; the wanton slaughter of civilians in Manila in 1945; the incredible suicide attacks by kamikaze planes in the battles for the Philippines and Okinawa. . . . At home, Japan became a frenzied nation, “turning sweat into weapons of war” and relentlessly forging, constantly hammering out, the most formidable weapon of all: the obedient, fanatical Japanese soldier. On this latter point—the Japanese soldier as Japan’s supreme weapon—the documentary was in full accord with the Japanese propagandists themselves. The end, however, was clearly at hand, and the final

frames of *Know Your Enemy—Japan* depicted a vast American armada closing in on the little nation of fanatics.

From all that had preceded, however, no American or Englishman could fail to understand that even after the war had been won, the task of winning the peace would remain formidable in Japan. Nothing less would suffice than to overthrow the whole legacy of centuries of militaristic and undemocratic development that had just flashed across the screen in a single, breathtaking hour. More than any other single source from the war years, *Know Your Enemy—Japan* thus captured the passions and presumptions that underlay not only the ferocity of the clash in Asia and the Pacific, but also the sweeping agenda of reformist policies that the Allied powers subsequently attempted to impose upon defeated and occupied Japan.¹¹

But let us, in the moviemakers' idiom, fade to a different scene.

On New Year's Day of 1941, Colonel Tsuji Masanobu and a small intelligence unit of the Imperial Army stationed in Formosa began the immense task of preparing a report containing all information pertinent to a Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia. They were given six months to complete the assignment, and threw themselves into the job with great intensity—gathering information from a multitude of sources, undertaking personal reconnaissance missions, participating in practice maneuvers in Formosa, Kyushu, South China, and Hainan Island. Their findings were submitted to the General Staff in Tokyo around July, and provided the basis for the subsequent "move south" that brought about war between Japan and the Allied powers.

Included among the materials submitted to the General Staff was a seventy-page booklet written by Tsuji entitled *Read This and the War Is Won* (*Kore dake Yomeba Ware wa Kateru*). Couched in simple, straightforward language, this was designed, as Tsuji put it, to be read by men lying on their backs on hot, crowded ships. All officers and enlisted men were given a copy immediately after embarking for the south, and tens of thousands of fighting men thus already had it in their hands before Pearl Harbor. *Read This and the War Is Won* explained not only how to behave in a tropical combat zone, but also why the Japanese had to fight there. This was, in its limited way, a Japanese counterpart to Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* propaganda—although the words were conspicu-

ously different from the ones Capra selected in pursuing his policy of letting the enemy “speak for himself.”¹²

While these activities were going on within the Japanese military, a separate project concerned with domestic indoctrination and morale was underway in the Japanese civilian bureaucracy. This reached the public in August 1941, when the Ministry of Education issued a major ideological manifesto entitled *The Way of the Subject* (*Shinmin no Michi*).¹³ *The Way of the Subject* told the Japanese who they were—or should aspire to be—as a people, nation, and race. At the same time, it offered a critical analysis of modern Western history and culture. In Japanese eyes, it was the non-Axis West that aimed at world domination and had been engaged in that quest, with conspicuous success, for centuries; and it was the value system of the modern West, rooted in acquisitiveness and self-gratification, that explained a large part of its bloody history of war and repression, culminating in the current world crisis. The Japanese thus read Western history in much the same way that Westerners were reading the history of Japan: as a chronicle of destructive values, exploitative practices, and brutal wars. The picture of the Anglo-American enemy presented here and in the Army pamphlet persisted through the war. Where revision occurred later—during the exhilarating early victories that followed Pearl Harbor, and then during the months of defensiveness and defeat that brought the Allies within bombing range of the Japanese homeland—it was in the direction of calling greater attention to Western hypocrisy and atrocities. The early Western defeats and quick surrenders revealed the flabbiness of Western society, Japanese at home were told. Later, the American bombing of Japanese cities was offered as proof beyond any conceivable question of the bestial nature of the enemy.

The southern region, embarking troops were informed in *Read This and the War Is Won*, was the treasure house of the Far East and a land of everlasting summer. It was also a place where a half million British ruled 350 million Indians, and another few score thousands of Englishmen ruled 6 million Malaysians; where two hundred thousand Dutchmen governed a native population of 60 million in the East Indies; where twenty thousand Frenchmen controlled 23 million Indochinese, and a few tens of thousands of Americans ruled over 13 million Filipinos. Eight hundred thousand whites, the tally went, controlled 450 million Asians; if India was excluded, the count was 100 million oppressed by three hundred thousand. “Money squeezed from the blood of Asians maintains these small white minorities in their luxurious mode of life—or disappears to the

respective home-countries," the Japanese soldiers were told. The white men were described as arrogant colonials who dwelled in splendid houses on mountainsides and hilltops, from which they looked down on the tiny thatched huts of the natives. They took it as their birthright to be allotted a score or so natives as personal slaves. Ties of blood and color linked the Japanese to these oppressed peoples of Asia. And because the latter had been all but emasculated by generations of colonial subjugation, it was left to Japan "to make men of them again" and lead them along the path of liberation.

Japan had already secured Manchuria against the ambitions of the Soviet Union and freed most of China from Anglo-American exploitation. The next objective was to assist Thailand, Indochina, and the Philippines in becoming independent, and likewise to bring freedom to the rest of Asia, including India—in short, to "liberate East Asia from white invasion and oppression." In the final analysis, this was "a struggle between races." At the same time, the southern advance also had a hard material rationale, for Japan could not survive without the oil, rubber, and tin of the area, and the Western powers were attempting to choke off this lifeline. Gaining control of the resources of the southern region, moreover, would enable Japan to strike a blow at the U.S. military machine by cutting off its access to rubber, tin, and tungsten. All this was a cause worth dying for, and each soldier was advised to prepare himself for this eventuality by writing a will before disembarking and enclosing with it, as a keepsake for relatives back home, a lock of hair and a fingernail paring. The bodies of the dead might never be recovered, but they would not have died in vain. Soldiers and sailors could find solace in a famous verse from the *Manyōshū*, the most ancient of the country's poetic anthologies:

*Across the sea, corpses soaking in the water;
 Across the mountains, corpses heaped upon the grass.
 We shall die by the side of our lord.
 We shall never look back.*

So central was this sentiment that the poem was quoted not once but twice in Colonel Tsuji's text. And when Prime Minister Tōjō read the imperial rescript declaring war over the radio, his broadcast ended with the playing of the martial song *Umi Yukaba* (Across the Sea), which took as its lyrics the same poem.¹⁴

This was the preface to the practical instructions contained in *Read This and the War Is Won*. The booklet often was recovered by Allied soldiers from the bodies of Japanese killed in the Southeast Asian theater—along with another idealistic item of standard issue, the *Field Service Code (Senjinkun)* first issued by the then minister of war, Tōjō Hideki, in January 1941.* *The Way of the Subject* went further in its critique of the enemy, placing the rapacity of the colonial powers in the larger historical context of Western imperialism, beginning with the earliest European voyages of discovery. The Japanese were informed that Western expansion was inspired partly by love of adventure, but more by desire for local resources as well as markets. And they were reminded that the heavy hand of the Occidental expansionists did not fall on Asians alone. Here the Ministry of Education posed two rhetorical questions that would remain effective propaganda to the end of the war: “How were American Indians treated? What about African Negroes?”

Part and parcel of such destructive avarice, *The Way of the Subject* continued, was a modern value system that emphasized individualism, materialism, utilitarianism, and liberalism—all ways of thinking that “regard the strong preying on the weak as reasonable, unstintedly promote epicurean desires, seek a highly expanded material life, and stimulate the competition for acquiring colonies and securing trade, thereby leading the world to a veritable hell of fighting and bloodshed through complicated causes and effects.” Such survival-of-the-fittest theories had led almost

* “The mission of the Imperial Army,” soldiers were instructed in the *Senjinkun*, “lies in making the Imperial virtues the object of admiration through the exercise of justice tempered with mercy.” On a matter often violated in practice in ways which outraged the outside world, Japanese soldiers were enjoined to “show kindness to those who surrender.” The ultimate objective in fighting for the cause of the Imperial Way was the realization of universal peace, and to this end the Army demanded discipline, unity, cooperation, aggressiveness (“In defense,” this section read, “always retain the spirit of attack and always maintain freedom of action; never give up a position but rather die”), and faith in eventual victory. Among the virtues each soldier was to cultivate were loyalty and filial piety; a proper sense of hierarchy (as manifested in saluting); mutual trust and assistance; exemplary behavior on the part of leaders; a sense of the sacredness of each and every duty; the spirit of self-sacrifice for the state; honor, simplicity, and fortitude; and an austere integrity which would enable each soldier to feel no shame in the sight of gods or men.

When the code was issued, War Minister Tōjō explained that it had taken approximately half a year before agreement was reached on the final draft. The basic model for the new code was the 1882 Imperial Rescript for Soldiers and Sailors, and Tōjō noted that outside scholars had been consulted in attempting to clarify the basic meaning of the national polity (*kokutai*).¹⁵

inevitably to World War One, following which the United States, Britain, and France attempted to impose monopolistic control over the whole world in the hypocritical name of justice and humanity. Other concrete threats to Japan and the peace of the world in general also followed in the wake of the Great War: subversive Communist influences and Comintern intrigues; theories of total war; Western racial discrimination against Japanese and other Orientals; military and economic agreements that were disadvantageous to Japan.

In this setting, Japan's "holy task" was clear. The country was called upon to defend itself, to check the tendency toward world domination by the European and American powers, to stabilize Asia and emancipate its people, and to take the lead in creating a new world order based on moral principles. Where were these principles to be found? Like the twice-told poem in *Read This and the War Is Won*, they were set forth in the ancient classics; and foremost among them were the virtues of loyalty and filial piety under the emperor. In serving the emperor, selfishness was thrown aside, morality was perfected, and private and public life became one. Was this applicable to the whole world? As far as the Ministry of Education bureaucrats and their academic consultants were concerned, yes. And what did this mean then for other countries? That all nations, as the emperor himself had declared in the imperial rescript of September 1940 commemorating the conclusion of the Axis Pact, would find (presumably like all citizens did within Japan) their "proper place."

Each of these exercises in ideology and propaganda can be seen as a tapestry of truths, half-truths, and empty spaces. When the American and Japanese examples are set side by side, the points each neglected to mention become clearer; and it becomes plain that both sides reveal more about themselves than about the enemy they are portraying. Certainly, no one views a documentary film such as *Know Your Enemy—Japan* decades later to learn about the Japanese in the war; they do so primarily to learn about the Americans. Similarly, *Read This and the War Is Won* and *The Way of the Subject* are of retrospective interest not for what they tell us of Japan's enemies, but for what they tell us about the mind-set of the Japanese at war.

It is helpful to think of such commentaries on the enemy—and the self—as "middle-register" discourse. Whether as film, radio broadcast, or written text, such discourse was ideological and overt, calculated and carefully edited, explicitly designed for public consumption. More refined

than visceral expressions of race hate, it was also less frank and densely detailed than the calculations of power and interest made in secret at high levels. Yet it was not simply a tissue of lies or purely cynical manipulation of emotional rhetoric. Speakers, viewers, listeners alike (so long as they were all on the same side) generally took these statements seriously, and there is much to be learned here in retrospect about language, stereotyping, and the making of modern myths. Because World War Two is the context, the consequences of such seemingly abstract concerns emerge with special harshness. To people at war, after all, the major purpose in knowing one's enemies is to be better able to control or kill them.

Several observations are suggested by the three depictions of self and enemy summarized above. *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, for example, serves to remind us of how much both the professional and the popular mind were shaped then as now by quick, disjointed images and impressions—by headlines, photographs, newsclips, and cartoons; by “symbolic” items and events such as cinema samurai, Hideyoshi's ear mound, the Tanaka Memorial and the Rape of Nanking, Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March; by catch-phrases (“divine emperor,” “world conquest,” “kamikaze”); by sweeping racial clichés (“regimented,” “treacherous,” “fanatic,” “bestial”). In much the same way, the Japanese saw the Anglo-American enemy at least in part through the prism of the cinema (including gangster and Wild West movies); through the stereotyped persona of the arrogant white colonial with his luxurious house on the hill, and the galling memory of symbolic acts of racial discrimination such as those that occurred at the fledgling League of Nations in 1919 and in the United States in 1924; through such catch-phrases as “economic strangulation” and (everyone's favorite) “world domination”; and through sweeping racial and cultural clichés such as “materialistic,” “egoistic,” “selfish,” and “exploitative.”

The gross simplification and reductionism of such disjointed impressions is relatively obvious, their underlying patterns less so. Upon closer examination, however, these portraits of the enemy reveal that stereotypes operated several ways in the war between Japan and the Anglo-American powers. First, they followed predictable patterns of contrariness, in which each side portrayed the other as its polar opposite: as darkness opposed to its own radiant light. Second, the positive self-images of one side were singled out for ridicule and condemnation by the other. Self-stereotypes fed hostile stereotypes: the group became the herd, for example, while the individualist became the egoist. Third, and scarcely acknowledged during

the war years, a submerged strata of common values developed in the very midst of the polemics each side employed against the enemy. Each raised the banner of liberation, morality, and peace. Whatever their actual deeds may have been, moreover, they condemned atrocities, exploitation, and theories of racial supremacy.¹⁶ Fourth, policies and practices that became fixated on exterminating the enemy—and verged, for some participants, on the genocidal—followed depiction of the enemy as incorrigibly evil (or base, or mad). Finally, there was a free-floating quality to portrayals of the enemy—a pattern of stereotyping peculiar to enemies and “others” in general, rather than to the Japanese foe or Western foe in particular. This facilitated the quick abatement of hatred once the war had ended—while also facilitating the transferral of the hateful stereotypes to newly perceived enemies. Much of the rhetoric of World War Two proved readily adaptable to the cold war.

On the Anglo-American side, the first of these patterned stereotypes, that of contrariness or mirror opposites, can be seen in the depiction of Japan as a thoroughly militaristic, repressive, irrational nation. Westerners who accepted this, and there were few who did not, commonly also accepted with little question the counterstereotype of modern Euro-American civilization as fundamentally peaceful, democratic, and rational. To think in this black-and-white manner required ignoring huge portions of the Japanese experience and of Western history as well—including the whole modern epoch of imperialism and colonialism, which to the Japanese lay at the heart of the Western experience. In the United States and the United Kingdom, the road to Pearl Harbor was depicted as a one-way street: Japan provoked war, and did so because of the peculiarities of its own history, culture, and collective psychology. External conditions such as the global Depression and the emergence of quasi-autarkic bloc economies all over the world may have abetted and accelerated these trends, but the essential causes of the war in Asia were peculiarly Japanese. After 1941, few Westerners cared to dwell on the rational and possibly legitimate aspects of “Japan’s case,” or the extent to which Japanese imperialism followed Western precedents.

Such anti-Japanese stereotypes, however, had obvious counterparts in Japan’s own propaganda about the Anglo-American enemy, where it was argued and sincerely believed by many that Japan was forced to go to war to defend its honor and very existence against economic and military “strangulation” by the rapacious and hypocritical “white imperialists.” As the Army and Ministry of Education tracts both demonstrate,

it was hardly necessary to expend much effort rummaging through the European or American past to find good examples of prior Western aggression. The histories of the Western powers provided innumerable examples of rapacity and conquest which could be used to argue that it was *their* lust for land or booty and *their* values and internal dynamics that had finally erupted into the current conflict; a simple glance at the contemporary map of colonial Asia and Africa sufficed to show who had taken the initiative in global expansion and “world conquest.” The Japanese made no mention, understandably, of their own energetic activities as a late-developing imperialist and colonial nation—a doubly embarrassing point for them, since the victims of their own imperialism (in Formosa, Korea, and China, including Manchuria) were also, presumed, their “blood brothers.”

In everyday words, this first kind of stereotyping could be summed up in the statement: you are the opposite of what you say you are and the opposite of us, not peaceful but warlike, not good but bad. . . . In the second form of stereotyping, the formula ran more like this: you are what you say you are, but that itself is reprehensible. On the part of the Japanese, this involved singling out the emphasis placed on individualism and profit making in the Western tradition, and presenting this as proof positive that Westerners were fundamentally selfish and greedy, devoted to self-aggrandizement at the expense of the community and the nation as a whole. Westerners, in turn, accepted Japanese emphasis on the primacy of the group or collectivity at face value, and used this as *prima facie* evidence that the Japanese were closer to cattle or robots than to themselves. One side’s idealized virtues easily fed the other side’s racial prejudices.

In this regard, **Capra’s** working philosophy of letting the enemy damn himself captured a critical dimension of wartime Allied propaganda: the extent to which many of the Japanese government’s own cherished words, shibboleths, images, and values could be taken over almost intact and used against Japan. The image of the Japanese as mere prints off the same photographic negative, devoid of individuality, would appear at first glance to be the crassest sort of Western ethnocentricity and racism, for example; but it was, in fact, not very different from the patriotic slogans promoted by Japan’s own ruling groups. During these years the Japanese government’s propaganda, for internal as well as external consumption, harped incessantly on “100 million hearts beating as one,” “the 100 million people as one bullet,” “100 million” as innumerable monolithic

entities.¹⁷ Similarly, to describe the Japanese populace as "an obedient mass with but a single mind," as was also done in *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, surely did violence to a complex people and society, and diminished and dehumanized the Japanese in Western eyes. This was the major point of behind-the-scenes controversy among those involved in the production of the film, and some of the writers who struggled in vain to present a more diversified and charitable picture of the ordinary citizens of Japan feared that such stereotyping bordered on racism. Phrases similar to "the obedient mass with but a single mind," however, could have been lifted from the Japanese government's own pronouncements. In the late 1930s, for example, a Spiritual Culture Institute was created by the Ministry of Education explicitly "to perfect and unify the entire nation with one conviction." It was Japan's own newsreels and propaganda films that showed tens of thousands of arms being raised and lowered, in perfect synchronized obeisance to the emperor; and it was Japan's own formal ideological pronouncements that declared "history shows clearly that Japan is contrary to individualism."¹⁸

While this intriguing overlay of hostile stereotypes and positive self-stereotypes draws attention to the manner in which cultural values were idealized as polar opposites during the war in Asia, these idealizations did not necessarily reflect reality. On the contrary, a classic ideological manifesto such as *The Way of the Subject* is especially interesting because it so clearly reveals the class aspect of Japanese war rhetoric. It was not that the Japanese people were, in actuality, homogeneous and harmonious, devoid of individuality and thoroughly subordinated to the group, but rather that the Japanese ruling groups were constantly exhorting them to become so. Indeed, the government deemed it necessary to draft and propagate a rigid orthodoxy of this sort precisely because the ruling classes were convinced that a great many Japanese did not cherish the more traditional virtues of loyalty and filial piety under the emperor, but instead remained attracted to more democratic values and ideals. At several points, *The Way of the Subject* said this directly. In other words, what the vast majority of Westerners believed the Japanese to be coincided with what the Japanese ruling elites hoped they would become.

The most familiar example of this coalescence of stereotypes and self-stereotypes was the relentless emphasis on Japanese "uniqueness" by Anglo-American and Japanese commentators alike. Japan's leaders harped incessantly on the unique and peculiar qualities of the Yamato race, and the Japanese people ultimately paid a terrible price for this racist and

ultranationalist raving. For on this point, Japan's enemies were all too willing to accept, at the most general level, what the Japanese ideologues said. They agreed that Japan was "unique"—albeit unique in peculiarly uncivilized and atrocious ways. On neither side did the propagandists offer much ground for the recognition of common traits, comparable acts, or compatible aspirations.