

JUSTIFYING WAR: PROPAGANDA, POLITICS AND WAR
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**Know Your Enemy: The Pathological Enmification of Germany and Japan,
1942-45**

One of the key questions in the United States during World War II was “why we fight.” As a result of this an image of the enemy needed to be constructed in order to mobilize and orient the American nation, embroiled in a ‘total war,’ behind the war effort. This comparative paper argues that images of the two enemies created as part of the answer to this question were integral to justifying the war to the American people. An obvious source of film propaganda would be Frank Capra’s seven part *Why We Fight* series (1943-1945), however it is perhaps more interesting to focus on the lesser known *Know Your Ally, Know Your Enemy* series (1945). This paper will address the “expert” opinion on the German and Japanese “problems” that these series present. Consideration will also be given to documentary film as a source of propaganda. The modes of analysis that were adopted by those commissioned, or personally compelled, to answer this question were, with the benefit of hindsight, most unusual. However, they provide a fascinating illumination of the way that the United States assessed the two enemy powers and justified their actions against them. These studies are brought together in what can best be termed the “medical model.” The medical model of enemy image creation viewed the German and Japanese nations as suffering from a variety of afflictions either related to their psychological, psychiatric, cultural, or biological makeup. Through the systematic invocation of the image of the *enemy as disease* the various proponents of the medical model provided a diagnosis, prognosis and prescription for Germany and Japan. This paper demonstrates that, despite the

subsequent dismissal of the significance of many of these studies, the images of the enemy that they created did have an impact.

Dr. Wendy Toon

University of Worcester