

World War II and the Media, Warrington Campus, University of Chester

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“Not like U.S.”: Enemy Image Creation and American National Identity

Abstract:

Using wartime poster images of the German and Japanese enemies this paper contends that designations of “us” and “them” act as a powerful and revealing expression of the relationship between World War II and American national identity. The process of enemy image creation was vital not only in explaining “why” and “who” we are fighting but also became a mirror for considerations of who *we* are and what *we* stand for. National identity then was formulated and articulated not only on the basis of traditional American staples; equality, liberty, freedom and democracy but also in response to, or in opposition to, American understandings and assessments arrived at through the process of “knowing” their enemies. Posters were one of the favoured mediums for propagandising the domestic population in many and varied ways and have been studied extensively, but these enemy image posters have been overlooked in terms of what they say about “U.S.”

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