

## Enemy Faces: Stereotypes in Political Cartoons and Propaganda

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### General Information

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### Description

Images used in propaganda and political cartoons may affect how we behave towards our adversaries.

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### Transcript

Enemy Faces: Stereotypes in Political Cartoons and Propaganda

BRYANT GUMBEL, co-host:

On AFTER EIGHT this morning, enemy faces. We want to look at how the images used to depict our adversaries, particularly in political cartoons may be affecting how we behave towards those adversaries. Sam Keen is a psychologist who studies this subject and written a book on reflections of the hostile imagination. Why should we be concerned about the faces that we put on our adversaries?

SAM KEEN ("Faces of the Enemy"): Because we portray somebody in a very large extent is going to determine how we react to that person or to that enemy.

GUMBEL: It doesn't, one doesn't follow from the other? You don't have the cause and effect switch?

KEEN: Well I think that it's both ways. The viler the perception of the enemy, the more it causes violence, but it also very often the images come from an enemy who really is vile and who really is vicious. It works both ways; you can't say one or the other.

GUMBEL: Let's give a clearer indication of what we're talking about as we perceive.

(clip begins)

GUMBEL: Dr. Keen, but for such imagery, which we have hated any less that time?

KEEN: Would we have hated less? Probably so. Take the comparison between the way we dealt with the Germans and the way we did the Japanese. We made a distinction between good German and Nazis. And so when the time came to bring that war to an end, when strategically it was over, we were able to do that. For the Japanese we didn't do that. There was a racist character to our imagery and their imagery. So that when the war was actually strategically over, we had a hard time stopping the kind of killing frenzy that went on.

GUMBEL: Let me get a second opinion because joining us here in the studio is political cartoonist Jerry Robinson. He's the creator of the nationally syndicated Daily Cartoon Life with Robinson with which you may be familiar. What's your view of what you've been listening to?

JERRY ROBINSON: Well I think Sam raises a serious problem that political are sensitized to. And that is who do you exaggerate and what fashion do you exaggerate. After all, symbolism and analogy is one of the tools of a cartoonist.

GUMBEL: Is stereotyping essential to the cartoonist?

ROBINSON: If stereotyping you mean symbolism, yes it is. There are certain symbols that are universally known and the cartoonist draws his cartoon with the knowledge the reader is coming with preconceived

notions about that symbol. For all we have to project an idea within a few seconds.

GUMBEL: So you must create immediate impact.

RONSINSON: Exactly. And we have to get across a thought very quickly. What—what an editorial writer might spend a column writing in 500 words we have to do in perhaps a few words and in a few seconds.

GUMBEL: Let me quickly show some cartoons that illustrate what we're talking about. I mean I think our first one here relates to our trade problems and we see Uncle Sam underneath saying, "Ready to reform?" with a big Japanese sumo wrestler over him. The second one has a bulbous-nosed Arab obviously from OPEC with American Lifestyle going into the breach. And the second one has Gorbachev Soviet Missile advantage with the good Europeans hiding behind Uncle Sam. Could you make those points without using the stereotypes?

KEEN: Yea, well I think. The question is do the stereotypes really distort what it is that we're trying to say. Are cartoonists always sensitive? For instance I think with the Arab image you find out that they're very often insensitive. That particular cartoon of the Arab here suggests, for instance that the Arab is the one who is greedy. Just remind me who is it that uses the majority of the world's petroleum?

GUMBEL: But that's a problem that runs deeper than cartoons.

KEEN: Absolutely.

GUMBEL: I mean that's an across the board problem that there's a great deal of discrimination directed against Arabs right now in this country.

KEEN: That's right. That's right. And we're very uncritical of those imagery. Now the point is, when you use an image like an image of a rat to characterize, say Arafat, which is still quite common in American political cartooning, that image has certain kinds of effects. You can see what it did...

GUMBEL: Sure.

KEEN: ...to the Jews during the Second World War when Hitler used that.

GUMBEL: It's dirty, it's distasteful...

KEEN: It's dirty.

GUMBEL: ...it needs to be eliminated, it's a pest.

KEEN: Yea.

GUMBEL: Will you allow any cause and effect relationship, negative relationship between what you draw and the hatred the people might feel?

ROBINSON: Well yes, I think there could be. I think if it's not used in proper way. I myself rarely use those kind of symbol. I prefer to focus on the individual. But I think most thoughtful cartoons would do that. They'll make a distinction between the policy of the person or the administration or even of the organization such as the Nazi party or the Klu Klux Klan, as opposed to the southerner let's say or the German people.

GUMBEL: But would you make the same distinction where it was clear that the person you were stereotyping was a bad guy almost universally?

ROBINSON: Well if you focus on the individual then I think that's correct. I mean there's the policy of the individual. I mean we're talking about for example, the policies of the administration and not of the American people. Whereas, the Russian might stereotype Uncle Sam and saying this represents all the

people.

GUMBEL: It would seem there's no bottom line on this one. Only to raise the sensitivity issue and the consciousness we'll hope some understanding proceeds. Dr. Keen thank you very much. Mr. Robinson thank you.

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