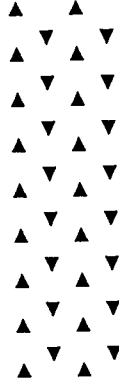


WAR WITHOUT MERCY

RACE AND POWER IN

THE PACIFIC WAR



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APES AND OTHERS

Despite the kill-or-be-killed nature of the fighting in the Pacific, hundreds of Japanese did become prisoners. Many were ill, wounded, or unconscious when captured. Others were taken by surprise and offered little resistance. Still others took the initiative to surrender, usually at considerable risk. And with few exceptions, their behavior as prisoners confounded initial expectations. The ferocious, fanatic foe suddenly revealed himself to be exceedingly mild and cooperative. Since most had been told they would be killed or tortured if they fell into Allied hands, they expressed gratitude at receiving good treatment. About four out of every five prisoners actually demonstrated “remarkable cooperation,” in the words of an internal U.S. report, in such ways as providing military information and offering to assist in trying to persuade other Japanese to surrender.¹

Presumably, such behavior should have jarred those on the other side who encountered it, and forced them to rethink their stereotypes of the enemy. To some extent this did happen. Intelligence analysts in Washington, as well as in MacArthur’s command after the return to the Philippines, concluded that a serious psychological-warfare campaign directed to the Japanese could expedite surrenders in the field and hasten the end of the war; but such ideas had little impact.² The war was so savage and war hates ran so deep that even individuals who encountered the Japanese as prisoners ordinarily found it impossible to change their views. General Blamey’s kind of war words were gospel: the Japanese were subhuman.

There may be no better witness to this than the journalist Ernie Pyle, whose down-home style earned him the status of a folk hero among American war correspondents. He was, in American terms, a humanist: he not only gave the names of the soldiers he wrote about, but also the streets on which they lived in the United States and the numbers of their houses. Pyle gained his fame covering the war in Europe, and was transferred to the Pacific in February 1945, three months before Germany surrendered. By this time, his dispatches were carried by almost seven hundred newspapers and reached an estimated fourteen million readers.

What Pyle told this impressive audience, right away, was that the enemy in Asia was different. "In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people," he explained in one of his first reports from the Pacific. "But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice." To Pyle himself, this seemed a perfectly appropriate response, for he went on to describe how, soon after arriving, he had seen some Japanese prisoners in a fenced-in enclosure. "They were wrestling and laughing and talking just like normal human beings," he wrote. "And yet they gave me the creeps, and I wanted a mental bath after looking at them."³

So commonplace was this attitude that a popular American scientific magazine could publish a short entry in 1945 entitled "Why Americans Hate Japs More than Nazis" without first demonstrating that this was the case. No one questioned such an observation. And although the explanation offered may have been simplistic (the Japanese were more hated because of their greater outward physical differences), the very manner in which the magazine phrased the problem was suggestive in unintended ways. In addition to using the conventionally pejorative "Japs" for Japanese, the article followed the telltale phrasing of the war years by speaking not of the Germans and the Japanese, but of the Nazis and the Japanese. A well-publicized wartime book by a *New York Times* correspondent who had been assigned to both Germany and Japan followed this pattern with a chapter entitled "Nips and Nazis." A poster by the Veterans of Foreign Wars sharpened the distinction even further, in a familiar way, with the warning, "Remember Hitler and the Japs are trying to get us fighting among ourselves." Songwriters caught the same bias in a patriotic song called "There'll Be No Adolf Hitler nor Yellow Japs to Fear."⁴

The implications of perceiving the enemy as "Nazis" on the one hand and "Japs" on the other were enormous, for this left space for the

recognition of the "good German," but scant comparable place for "good Japanese." Magazines like *Time* hammered this home even further by frequently referring to "the Jap" rather than "Japs," thereby denying the enemy even the merest semblance of pluralism. Indeed, in wartime Japan, the notion of "good Japanese" came to take on an entirely different meaning than that of "good Germans," as Admiral William F. Halsey emphasized at a news conference early in 1944. "The only good Jap is a Jap who's been dead six months," the commander of the U.S. South Pacific Force declared, and he did not mean just combatants. "When we get to Tokyo, where we're bound to get eventually," Halsey went on, "we'll have a little celebration where Tokyo was." Halsey was improvising on a popular wartime saying, that "the only good Jap is a dead Jap," and his colleagues in the military often endorsed this sentiment in their own fashion. Early in 1943, for example, *Leatherneck*, the Marine monthly, ran a photograph of Japanese corpses on Guadalcanal with an uppercase headline reading "GOOD JAPS" and a caption emphasizing that "GOOD JAPS are dead Japs."⁵

Hollywood movies of the war years practically canonized these contrasting perceptions of the enemy. The closest counterparts to good Germans and bad Germans which they seemed able to muster for Asia were good nationalities (the Chinese, the Filipinos) and bad (the Japanese). That this distinction between the enemy in Asia and the enemy in Europe derived less from the events of the war than from deep-seated racial bias was reflected in the opening months of 1942, when the U.S. government incarcerated Japanese-Americans en masse, while taking no comparable action against residents of German or Italian origin. Indeed, U.S. citizens of Japanese extraction were treated with greater suspicion and severity than German or Italian aliens—despite the fact that the German-American Bund (with an estimated membership of twenty thousand) had agitated on behalf of Hitler in the United States prior to the outbreak of war, and despite the fact that there never was, at Pearl Harbor or later, any evidence of organized subversion among the Japanese community.

In fact, the treatment of Japanese-Americans is a natural starting point for any study of the racial aspects of the war, for it reveals not merely the clearest racial stigmatization of the Japanese, but also the official endorsement this received.⁶ Under Executive Order 9066, signed by President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, more than 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from California, Oregon, and Washington and interned in ten camps in the interior of the United States. The

president of the United States, the secretary of war, the U.S. military establishment, the Department of Justice and eventually the Supreme Court, and the U.S. Congress—all actively participated in enacting and upholding this policy. Similar internments were carried out in Canada, Mexico, and Peru. Such official consecration of anti-Japanese racism was profoundly symbolic: if every man, woman, and child of Japanese origin on the western coasts of the Americas was categorically identified by the highest quarters as a potential menace simply because of his or her ethnicity, then the real Japanese enemy abroad could only be perceived as a truly faceless, monolithic, incorrigible, and stupendously formidable foe.

Obviously, "blood told" where the Japanese—but not the Germans or Italians—were concerned, a point clearly articulated by some of the white Americans who supported the relocation of the Japanese. "Blood will tell," declared the mayor of Los Angeles in a public statement urging the government to move against Japanese-Americans on the grounds that they were "unassimilable," and his West Coast counterparts agreed almost to a man; of all the mayors of large cities in the three westernmost states, only one (the mayor of Tacoma, Washington) opposed forced relocation. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who assumed major responsibility for the decision to go ahead with Executive Order 9066, recorded in his diary for February 10, 1942, that in his estimation second-generation Japanese-Americans were even more dangerous than their immigrant parents. They either had to be removed from the coastal areas as part of a general evacuation, he continued, "or by frankly trying to put them out on the ground that their racial characteristics are such that we cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese. This latter is the fact but I am afraid it will make a tremendous hole in our constitutional system to apply it."

Such blood-will-tell racism was encoded in a variety of formulaic images and expressions. The *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, turned to reptilian metaphor: "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched—so a Japanese-American, born of Japanese parents, grows up to be a Japanese not an American." In a telephone conversation shortly before the order for evacuation was signed by President Roosevelt, John J. McCloy, the influential assistant secretary of war, agreed with the more prosaic summation of the problem made by Lieutenant General John L. De Witt, commander of the Western Defense Command, to the effect that whereas Germans and Italians could be treated as individuals, "a Jap is a Jap." General De Witt, who administered the evacuation, still found

this phrasing felicitous over a year later when called upon to testify before a congressional committee as to why the incarcerated Japanese-Americans, even bonafide citizens, still could not be allowed to return home. "A Jap's a Jap," he reiterated in public testimony in April 1943. "You can't change him by giving him a piece of paper." Indeed, in General De Witt's view, the menace posed by the Japanese could only be eliminated by destroying the Japanese as a race. In his testimony of early 1943, the general went on to state frankly that he was not worried about German or Italian nationals, "but the Japs we will be worried about all the time until they are wiped off the face of the map." This was, by then, familiar rhetoric in the nation's capital. A day before the president signed the executive order of February 19, a member of the House of Representatives had declared that the Japanese should be removed "even to the third and fourth generation." "Once a Jap, always a Jap," exclaimed John Rankin of Mississippi. "You can't any more regenerate a Jap than you can reverse the laws of nature."⁷

Another manifestation of this most emotional level of anti-Japanese racism was the routine use of racial slang in the media and official memoranda as well as everyday discourse. "Nip" (from Nippon, the Japanese reading of the country's name) and especially "Jap" were routinely used in the daily press and major weeklies or monthlies such as *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Reader's Digest*. "Jap" was also extremely popular in the music world, where the scramble to turn out a memorable war song did not end with the release of tunes such as "The Remember Pearl Harbor March" and "Good-bye Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama." "Mow the Japs Down!" and "We've Got to Do a Job on the Japs, Baby" are fair samples of the wartime songs, although titles with internal rhymes on "Jap" were even more popular. These included "You're a Sap, Mister Jap," "Let's Take a Rap at the Jap," "They're Gonna Be Playing Taps on the Japs," and "We're Gonna Have to Slap the Dirty Little Jap." There was no real counterpart to this where Germany and Italy were concerned. "Nazis" was the common phrase for the German enemy. Cruder epithets for the Germans (heinie, Huns, Jerrys, Krauts) were used sparingly by comparison.⁸

A characteristic feature of this level of anti-Japanese sentiment was the resort to nonhuman or subhuman representation, in which the Japanese were perceived as animals, reptiles, or insects (monkeys, baboons, gorillas, dogs, mice and rats, vipers and rattlesnakes, cockroaches, vermin—or, more indirectly, "the Japanese herd" and the like). The variety of

such metaphors was so great that they sometimes seemed casual and almost original. On the contrary, they were well routinized as idioms of everyday discourse, and immensely consequential in their ultimate functions. At the simplest level, they dehumanized the Japanese and enlarged the chasm between "us" and "them" to the point where it was perceived to be virtually unbridgeable. As Pyle matter-of-factly observed, the enemy in Europe "were still people." The Japanese were not, and in good part they were not because they were denied even the ordinary vocabularies of "being human."

For many Japanese-Americans, the verbal stripping of their humanity was accompanied by humiliating treatment that reinforced the impression of being less than human. They were not merely driven from their homes and communities on the West Coast and rounded up like cattle, but actually forced to live in facilities meant for animals for weeks and even months before being moved to their final quarters in the relocation camps. In the state of Washington, two thousand Japanese-Americans were crowded into a single filthy building in the Portland stockyard, where they slept on gunnysacks filled with straw. In California, evacuees were squeezed into stalls in the stables at racetracks such as Santa Anita and Tanforan. At the Santa Anita assembly center, which eventually housed eighty-five hundred Japanese-Americans, only four days elapsed between the removal of the horses and the arrival of the first Japanese-Americans; the only facilities for bathing were the horse showers, and here as elsewhere the stench of manure lingered indefinitely. Other evacuees were initially housed in horse or cattle stalls at various fairgrounds. At the Puyallup assembly center in Washington (which was called Camp Harmony), some were even lodged in converted pigpens. The only redeeming touch of grace in these circumstances lay in the dignity of the victims themselves.⁹

Looking upon the Japanese as animals, or a different species of some sort, was common at official levels in Washington and London before Pearl Harbor. A year and a half before the outbreak of the war, for instance, Churchill told Roosevelt that he was counting on the president "to keep that Japanese dog quiet in the Pacific." Secretary of War Henry Stimson picked up much the same image in October 1941 when arguing, as he had long done, in support of economic sanctions against Japan. When President Woodrow Wilson took a hard line against the Japanese in 1919, Stimson reminded the U.S. cabinet, they had retreated "like whipped puppies." During the war, "mad dogs" as well as "yellow dogs"

were everyday epithets for the Japanese among the Western Allies. An American who spent considerable time in Japan between 1936 and late 1941 wrote a wartime article describing the evolution of one of his Japanese acquaintances from a moderate newsman into a "mad dog" ultranationalist military officer. "Mad dogs," he concluded, "are just insane animals that should be shot."¹⁰

After his repatriation from Japan in the first half of 1942, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew, whom some Westerners regarded as an oracle on things Japanese, drew equally upon the insect and animal kingdoms in his lectures about the enemy. He never attempted to conceal his personal respect and affection for certain "moderate" members of the cultured upper classes in Japan, but his most often-quoted statements about the Japanese people in general were those which also basically depersonalized them. For instance, Grew described Japan as a bustling hive of bees all servicing the queen (in real life, the emperor), and this image of the busy, buzzing swarm or its grounded counterpart the anthill was also popular with many other Western writers. An American sociologist explained on a wartime radio broadcast sponsored by General Electric that the Japanese were "a closely disciplined and conformist people—a veritable human bee-hive or ant-hill," in sharp contrast to the "independent and individualistic" Chinese. This, he continued, made Japan a "totalitarian" nation long before the word was invented to describe the fascist and Nazi systems. When Japanese ground forces lost the initiative in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the antlike imagery was evoked in a somewhat different fashion. One reporter described the mid-war battles as a time when "the Japs turned into ants, the more you killed the more that kept coming." General Slim, Great Britain's commander in the epic Burma campaigns, used a similar metaphor in describing how his own forces finally seized the offensive. "We had kicked over the anthill," he wrote in his memoirs; "the ants were running about in confusion. Now was the time to stamp on them."¹¹

Former Ambassador Grew also spoke of the Japanese as sheep, easily led, which easily led one awkward publicist for the U.S. Navy to compare the frenzy of obedient Japanese soldiers to "angry sheep." *Yank*, the weekly magazine of the U.S. Army, referred to the "sheep-like subservience" of the Japanese (whom the magazine also called "stupid animal-slaves"), but by and large the sheep metaphor did not become a dominant one for the Japanese (in Churchill's menagerie, as in Stalin's, it was the Germans who were sheep). The more general description of the Japanese

as a "herd," or possessing a "herd mentality," however, was routine. With various turns of phrase, the herd was one of the pet images of a group of distinguished Far Eastern experts assembled by Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs to give advice on enemy Japan at the end of 1944. An Australian war correspondent went further, explaining that Japanese enlisted men not only behaved like, but also looked like, cattle. "Many of the Japanese soldiers I have seen have been primitive oxen-like clods with dulled eyes and foreheads an inch high," he wrote in a 1944 book directed to American readers. "They have stayed at their positions and died simply because they have been told to do so, and they haven't the intelligence to think for themselves."¹²

Other, more random metaphors reinforced the impression of a sub-human enemy. Westerners writing about their personal experiences in Japan, for example, frequently described the Japanese as "hissing," a snakelike impression whether witting or not. As the Japanese extended their overseas imperium, even prior to Pearl Harbor, cartoonists depicted the country as an octopus grasping Asia in its tentacles. In *Know Your Enemy—Japan*, Frank Capra's team enlisted animators from the Walt Disney studio to present this as a central image, with the tentacles of octopus-Japan reaching out to plunge daggers into the hearts of neighboring lands, and groping toward the United States itself. The bucktoothed Japanese became a standard cartoon figure, prompting comparison to the Looney Tune creation Bugs Bunny; the Warner Brothers studio followed up on this with a short animated cartoon titled *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*.

Without question, however, the most common caricature of the Japanese by Westerners, writers and cartoonists alike, was the monkey or ape. Sir Alexander Cadogan, the influential permanent undersecretary of the British Foreign Office, routinely referred to the Japanese in his diary as "beastly little monkeys" and the like even before the war began (or alternatively, in February 1941, as "yellow dwarf slaves"). During the early months of the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia, Western journalists referred to the "apes in khaki." The simian image had already become so integral to Western thinking by this time that when General Yamashita Tomoyuki's troops made their lightning move down the densely jungled Malay Peninsula to capture Singapore, rumors spread that they had accomplished this breathtaking advance by swinging from tree to tree. In mid-January of 1942, *Punch*, the celebrated British satirical magazine, drew upon the same utterly conventional image in a full-page cartoon entitled "The Monkey Folk" that depicted monkeys swinging

through the jungle with helmets on their heads and rifles slung over their shoulders. In much the same way, U.S. Marines in the combat zones made jokes about tossing a grenade into a tree and blasting out "three monkeys—two bucktooths and a real specimen," a witticism that the *New Yorker* carried to its upper-class readership in cartoon form late in 1942 and *Reader's Digest* reproduced for its own huge audience soon after. It portrayed white riflemen lying in firing position in a dense jungle, where the trees were full of monkeys along with several Japanese snipers. "Careful now," one white soldier is saying to another, "—only those in uniform." An American radio broadcaster informed his audience early in the war that it was appropriate to regard the Japanese as monkeys for two reasons: first, the monkey in the zoo imitates his trainer; secondly, "under his fur, he's still a savage little beast."¹³

Among the Allied war leaders, Admiral Halsey was the most notorious for making outrageous and virulently racist remarks about the Japanese enemy in public. Many of his slogans and pronouncements bordered on advocacy of genocide. Although he came under criticism for his intemperate remarks, and was even accused of being drunk in public, Halsey was immensely popular among his men and naturally attracted good press coverage. His favorite phrase for the Japanese was "yellow bastards," and in general he found the color allusion irresistible. Simian metaphors, however, ran a close second in his diatribes. Even in his postwar memoirs, Halsey described the Japanese as "stupid animals" and referred to them as "monkeymen." During the war he spoke of the "yellow monkeys," and in one outburst declared that he was "rarin' to go" on a new naval operation "to get some more Monkey meat." He also told a news conference early in 1945 that he believed the "Chinese proverb" about the origin of the Japanese race, according to which "the Japanese were a product of mating between female apes and the worst Chinese criminals who had been banished from China by a benevolent emperor." These comments were naturally picked up in Japan, as Halsey fully intended them to be, and on occasion prompted lame responses in kind. A Japanese propaganda broadcast, for example, referred to the white Allies as "albino apes." Halsey's well-publicized comment, after the Japanese Navy had been placed on the defensive, that "the Japs are losing their grip, even with their tails," led a zookeeper in Tokyo to announce he was keeping a cage in the monkey house reserved for the admiral.¹⁴

The variations on the simian theme were endless. Americans learned from Ernie Pyle that Marines in the Marianas had coined the word

"Japes," a combination of "Japs" and "apes." A comparable neologism was "monkeynips." As early as February 1942, *Leatherneck* ran an unusually wild comic strip in which an unkempt white soldier—infuriated when a canteen of liquor is shot out of his hands by the "slant-eyed jerks" and "jaundiced baboons"—plunges into the jungle and emerges with four dead creatures with monkeys' bodies and Japanese faces, tied by their tails and hanging from his shoulders. "They're a bit undersized," he exclaims, "but I got four of 'em!" A booklet prepared by the U.S. Navy Pacific Command during the final months of the war, in anticipation of the occupation of Japan, related these stereotypes to Japanese atrocities. When Westerners learned of these atrocities, it was explained, they scrapped their picture of the average Japanese "as a comical little person and substituted a blood-soaked beast—half man and half monkey." (The Navy guide, it should be noted, was devoted to repudiating such gross stereotypes.) The *Army's Infantry Journal* took a different tact in warning of the danger of overconfidence that might come from thinking of the enemy as merely "a buck-toothed, near-sighted, pint-sized monkey." (He was better seen, it was suggested, as "a robot-like creature.") Following Japan's capitulation, General Robert Eichelberger, one of MacArthur's key commanders, wrote to his wife that "first, monkeys will come to Manila," in reference to the impending Japanese mission to MacArthur's headquarters to arrange the surrender procedures.¹⁵

One of the better-known American cartoons of the war years was published in April 1943, after the news of the execution of some of the Doolittle pilots was released. It depicted the Japanese as a slaving gorilla labeled "Murderers of American Flyers"—with the huge pistol of "Civilization" pointing at its head—and can be taken as a concrete illustration of the U.S. Navy's explanation that such animal imagery was directly related to Japanese atrocities. This explanation, however, is too simple. Reports about Japanese atrocities undoubtedly contributed greatly to the Western perception of the Japanese as beasts, but the simian personification existed independently of such associations. This was perhaps the most basic of all metaphors traditionally employed by white supremacists to demean nonwhite peoples. It was more often used in a way that portrayed the colored subject as ridiculous rather than savage. And it was a racist archetype that thoroughly obsessed Westerners, as any survey of the popular graphics of the war soon reveals. Even when one reviews the political cartoons of wartime America and Britain with foreknowledge of the fondness for apish imagery in depicting the Japanese enemy, the

extensiveness of such representation is startling—as is also the fact that the Japanese were portrayed, not just as apelike but as apes plain and simple. While Hitler and the Nazis also occasionally emerged as simians, this was a passing metaphor, a sign of aberration and atavism, and did not carry the explicit racial connotations of the Japanese ape.¹⁶

The simian image was ubiquitous in the American and British media, appearing in publications both conservative and liberal, popular and highbrow. The *American Legion Magazine's* contribution to the genre was a cartoon depicting monkeys in a zoo who had posted a sign in their cage reading, "Any similarity between us and the Japs is purely coincidental." *Collier's* featured several full-color covers by the British artist Lawson Wood portraying Japanese airmen as apes, and *Time* ran a cover portrait pertaining to the Dutch East Indies in which a Japanese apeman dangled from a tree in the background. The esteemed antifascist cartoonist David Low, whose work appeared in the *Evening Standard* in London and was widely reproduced, contributed some of the most blunt and memorable graphics of this sort. In July 1941, months before Pearl Harbor, Low produced a cartoon depicting three stalwart white servicemen standing stripped to the waist beneath a palm tree and gazing out into the Pacific; they were identified as the United States, Britain, and the U.S.S.R. Hanging by its tail from the tree was a monkey labeled "Jap," wearing eyeglasses, clutching a dagger, and contemplating which white man to stab in the back. In October, Low portrayed Tōjō's assumption of the premiership with a drawing of a gorilla in admiral's uniform taking command of the Japanese ship of state. Immediately after the outbreak of war, Low presented the Japanese army, navy, and air force as three monkeys on a beach outside Singapore. In March 1942, he returned to the imagery of the previous July to render Japan's grab for power in Asia once again as a monkey suspended by its tail—in this case with an armful of coconuts, precariously reaching for more (representing India and Australia).¹⁷

The *New York Times* found the latter cartoon so effective that it reproduced it on the front page of its Sunday book-review section, as an illustration for a review of books on Japanese policy. The *Times's* practice of featuring political cartoons from other newspapers in its Sunday edition provides a convenient source through which to gain an impression of the thoroughly conventional nature of the simian fixation. Thus, in mid-1942, Japanese soldiers in the Aleutians (who died almost to the last man) were depicted as an ape on a springboard. Later that year, the Japanese took

the form of a monstrous King Kong figure with a bloody knife. In 1943, they were portrayed squatting in the trees among monkeys, and on a wanted poster in a cartoon entitled "It All Depends on the Neighborhood." In the latter, Hitler was "Public Enemy No. 1" for England and a jug-eared, monkey-faced Japanese was Hitler's counterpart for the Allies in the Pacific. In 1944, as the U.S. Pacific offensive gained momentum, readers were offered a monkey labeled "Japs" with coconuts falling on its head. At the end of 1944, when the bombardment of the Japanese homeland was commencing, the *Times* reproduced a cartoon of a bawling ape with horn-rimmed eyeglasses and buckteeth. Early in 1945, in a column of random clever observations regularly featured in its Sunday magazine, the *Times* called on its own staff for the following entry:¹⁸

—MEN OR BEASTS?

To size up the Japanese hasn't been easy at this great distance. One opinion is that they are no more than monkeys; another that they are human beings, after all.



though in a state of arrested development. Nicosia Osmena, son of the Philippines President, who has had to live with them for three grim years, offers a compromise theory. To him the Japanese is the Missing Link.

Obviously, the depiction of groups and individuals by nonhuman forms or symbols is not in itself inherently demeaning. The American eagle and British lion are ample proof to the contrary. The Japanese, on

their part, celebrate "Boys' Day"—and "manly" struggle against adversity—with the symbol of a carp leaping against the current (a rather unusual choice by Western standards), and medieval warriors had adopted heraldic emblems depicting wildlife as various as hawks, horses, deer, pigeons, and plovers, as well as butterflies and dragonflies. What we are concerned with here is something different: the attachment of stupid, bestial, even pestilential subhuman caricatures on the enemy, and the manner in which this blocked seeing the foe as rational or even human, and facilitated mass killing. It is, at least for most people, easier to kill animals than fellow humans. Indeed, it may be easier for many hunters to kill animals by closing their minds to the fact that they are sentient beings that know fear and feel pain. Thus, in a rather rare document, a diary kept by an ordinary American seaman during the entire course of the Pacific War, we find breathless descriptions of what Marines told the sailors when they came on board: "Fighting the Japs is like fighting a wild animal. . . . The Japs take all kinds of chances, they love to die." A profile of the Japanese fighting man in a serviceman's magazine also argued that "he isn't afraid to die. In fact, he seems to like to die." Indeed, this article went on to note that "when they die," it was said that the Japanese enemy "turn over on their backs and smile and face the sun."¹⁹ By such reasoning, it was almost a favor to kill the Japanese. Beyond this, of course, being beasts, they deserved to die.

This linguistic softening of the killing process was accomplished most often through two general figures of speech: the metaphors of the hunt, and of exterminating vermin. The evocation of the hunt appears everywhere in American writing about combat in the Pacific, sometimes with an almost lyric quality, evoking images of the Old West and physical pleasures that have always been part of the picture of the good life in the more rural American consciousness. Advertisers played up this theme. A magazine advertisement for the brewing industry, for example, depicted a hunter and his companions with a fine deer trophy, identified as one of the "little things" (along with beer and ale) that meant a lot to a Marine on leave, and went on to note that "he's been doing a different kind of hunting overseas." An advertisement by a cartridge company carried a headline reading "Now Your Ammunition Is Getting Bigger Game," and juxtaposed a painting of a hunter sighting in on a mountain sheep with a scene of ammunition stores on Guadalcanal. An ad for telescopic sights showed a Japanese soldier crouched on his hands and knees, with the cross

hairs fixed behind his shoulder. "Rack up another one," the heading read. Cards for display in automobile windows proclaimed "Open Season for Japs."²⁰

"Good luck and good hunting" was a common sendoff for men embarking on a combat mission, as moviegoers learned from the 1944 Hollywood film *Destination Tokyo*. Sometimes the imagery chosen was of a general nature: of Marines descending from the ridges "to hunt out their prey," for example, or simply shooting "animals" or "predatory animals." Sometimes the hunt was violent. General Slim divided the decisive battle of Imphal-Kohima into four stages, the last of which was pursuit—"when the Japanese broke, and, snarling and snapping, were hunted from the field." At another point, Slim recalled that "relentlessly we would hunt them down and when, desperate and rabid, they turned at bay, killed them." The hunt also could be a joke. A satirical article on mopping-up operations on Guadalcanal described the place as a "hunter's paradise . . . teeming with monkey-men." Very frequently, however, the hunt was pastoral, almost lazy, and the quarry small and easy. A cover story in *Life*, showing GIs walking through the jungle with rifles ready, looking for Japanese snipers, explained that "like many of their comrades they were hunting for Japs, just as they used to go after small game in the woods back home." A 1943 book giving a firsthand account of the combat explained that "every time you hit a Jap [with rifle fire] he jumps like a rabbit." The battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944, in which the Japanese lost three carriers and over 345 aircraft, compared to a loss of seventeen planes on the Allied side, became immortalized as "the great turkey shoot." "Duck hunting" was another popular figure of speech, and naturally brought up references to both dead ducks and sitting ducks. Killing Japanese reminded others of shooting quail. "Tanks are used to flush the Japanese out of the grass," a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist reported from Guadalcanal, "and when they are flushed, they are shot down like running quail."²¹

In its confidential weekly summaries of the social and political climate in the United States (mostly written by the historian Isaiah Berlin), the British embassy in Washington commented in passing at one point on the popular American perception of the Japanese as a "nameless mass of vermin." The observation was accurate, and its implications were clear: vermin must be exterminated. Especially during the last few years of the war, "exterminationist" figures of speech did indeed become a stock way of referring to the killing of Japanese, not only in battle but also in the

cities of Japan's home islands. In the steaming combat zones, the Japanese came to be regarded as almost another form of jungle pest. "Well, which would you druther do—exterminate bug-insects or Japs!?" asked a sergeant in a comic strip in *American Legion Magazine*. A squad mate spraying bugs replied there wasn't much difference, "but slappin' Japs is more satisfyin'!" A more sophisticated series of comic graphics in *Leatherneck* depicted common afflictions suffered by the Marines in the Pacific and concluded with the "Louseous Japonicas," a grotesque insect with slanted eyes and protruding teeth. The first serious outbreak of this pestilence was noted on December 7, 1941, at Honolulu, it was explained, and the Marines had been assigned "the giant task of extermination. Extensive experiments on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan have shown that this louse inhabits coral atolls in the South Pacific, particularly pill boxes, palm trees, caves, swamps and jungles. Flamethrowers, mortars, grenades and bayonets have proven to be an effective remedy. But before a complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area, must be completely annihilated." Other cartoonists picked up the same theme by depicting the Japanese as ants awaiting an application of ant poison, as spiders about to be stepped on, or as "Japanese beetles" being exterminated with the spray gun of American air power.²²

Another vivid and familiar expression of this exterminationist sentiment involved depiction of the Japanese as rodents, most often trapped or cornered rats. Allied forces picking apart routed Japanese troops were described as being "like terriers onto rats." Reporters spoke of the "beady little eyes" of critically wounded Japanese, and Japanese soldiers pinned down in caves and tunnels on the Pacific atolls were likened to rats caught in their holes. The hero in *The Purple Heart* told his Japanese captors that they were just "cornered rats"; and in March 1945, *The Nation* used exactly the same image to illustrate the categorical difference between the death in battle of a Japanese fighting man and an American on Iwo Jima. A Japanese soldier's death was "the rat's death, defiant in a corner until all fails," *The Nation* explained, while the Marine's death was "a proud man's death, in the open, advancing, for such simple, noble, and old-fashioned reasons as love of comrades and of corps or ambition to set the flag atop bloody Suribachi." One of the most awesome weapons of extermination employed by the Allied forces in their exhausting battles against the last-ditch resistance of the Japanese on the Pacific islands was the flamethrower, which sprayed a long stream of oil burning at a temperature

of 2,000° F. In February 1945, when the battle of Iwo Jima was taking place, the *New York Times* ran an illustrated advertisement by a U.S. chemical company showing a GI blasting a path "through stubborn Jap defenses" with a flamethrower. The ad bore the heading "Clearing Out a Rat's Nest."²³

On Iwo Jima itself (where U.S. casualties were six thousand killed and twenty-five thousand wounded, while the Japanese defense force of twenty thousand was virtually annihilated), many Marines actually went into battle with the legend "Rodent Exterminator" stenciled on their helmets. Like much of the morbid humor of the war, this reflected the fear, fury, and protective black jokes of combat. Something else was also involved, however, for the metaphor of killing rats was not peculiar to the battlefield. It was also part of everyday life on the home front, among civilians who in many cases had never encountered a Japanese man or woman. After Pearl Harbor, many eateries on the West Coast placed signs in their windows reading "This Restaurant Poisons Both Rats and Japs." Right-wing vigilante groups distributed pamphlets with titles like *Slap the Jap Rat*, and placed stickers with the slogan "Remember a Jap Is a Jap" and the picture of a rat with a Japanese face on the windshields of their automobiles. When concrete plans were broached to evacuate the Japanese-Americans to camps in other states in the interior, or to allow camp inmates to attend nearby educational institutions, the governor of Idaho opposed having any of the evacuees brought into his state and declared that "a good solution to the Jap problem would be to send them all back to Japan, then sink the island. They live like rats, breed like rats and act like rats." If loyal neighbors of Japanese extraction at home could be so summarily categorized as vermin, it is—once again—easy to imagine how such an exterminationist sentiment could be applied not merely to Japanese combat forces in Asia and the Pacific, but to the men, women, and children of the Japanese homeland itself. For a perfect expression of this, we need only attend a patriotic parade in New York City in mid-June of 1942. This mammoth display of martial might and patriotic spirit was the largest parade in the history of New York to that date, and one of its most popular entries was a float called "Tokyo: We Are Coming." As the press described it, this depicted "a big American eagle leading a flight of bombers down on a herd of yellow rats which were trying to escape in all directions." The crowd, it was reported, "loved it."²⁴

The scene is worth dwelling on, for at the symbolic level much was captured here: the Manichaeic dimension of caricature (the eagle versus

the rat); the numerous and undifferentiated pack, devoid not merely of humanness and individuality but even of gender and age; the yellowness of the vermin, as well as their dwarfed size—suggesting not only the "little Japs" but also the yellow hordes of Asia; and also the diminished stature of human targets in the eyes of the bombardier (and in the eyes of the audience on the home front as well). The float was suggestive in another direction also, in that whereas the grand conflict was depicted metaphorically, the technology of the conflict was portrayed realistically: bombers were bombers. Looking back on this expression of grass-roots patriotism, we are reminded that while the expressive forms of race hate remained relatively conventional, a revolution was taking place in military technology and strategy—giving the Allied powers, among other things, the flamethrower, the B-29 Superfortress bomber, napalm, the concept of strategic bombing, the identification of civilian morale as an important and legitimate target in war, the tactical perfection of low-level saturation bombing raids over urban centers, and, finally, nuclear weapons. In the course of the war in Asia, racism, dehumanization, technological change, and exterminationist policies became interlocked in unprecedented ways.